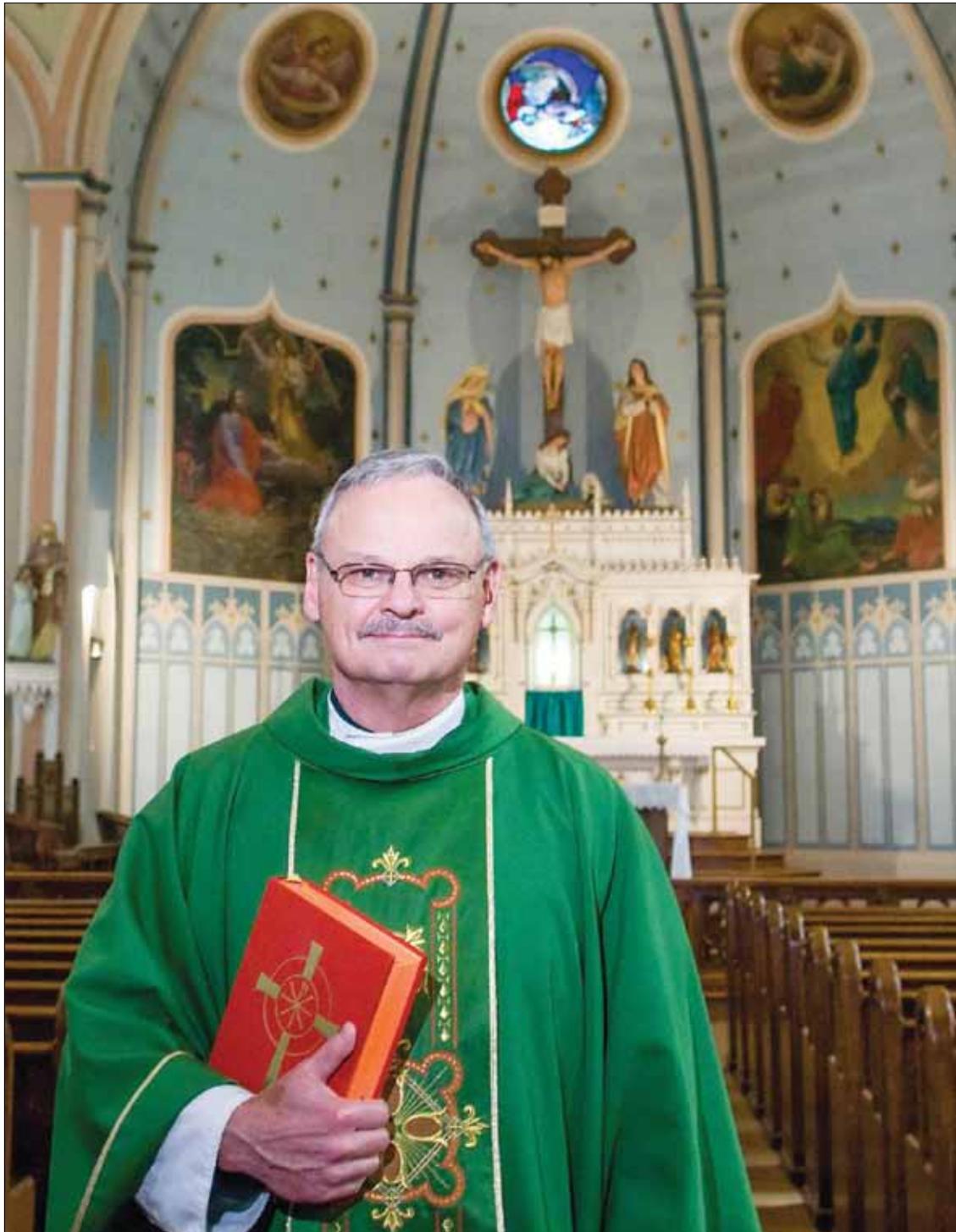




# Connections

## Fr. Jerry's Grateful Goodbye



# Pastor's Musings

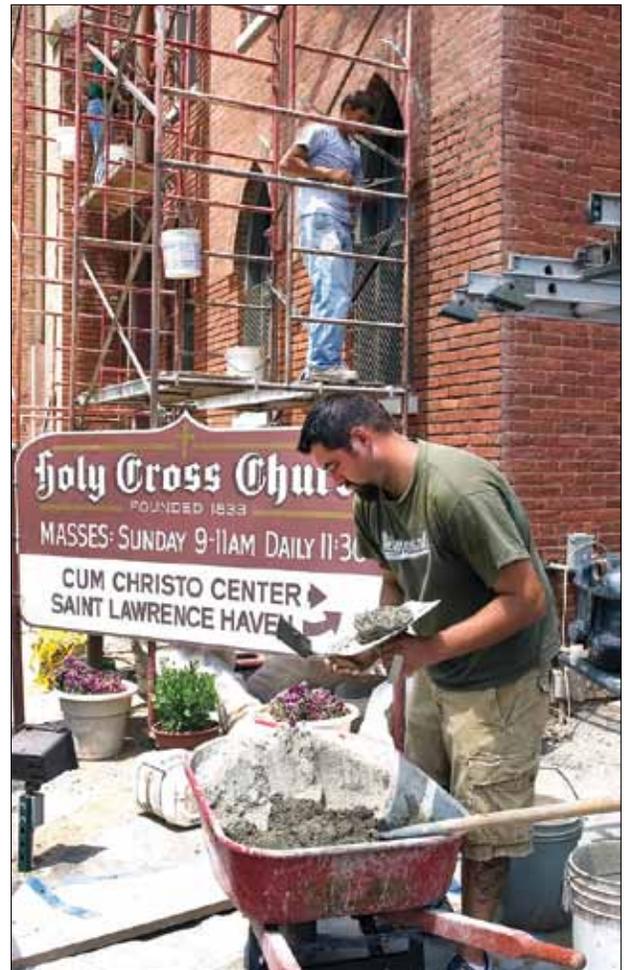
By Fr. Jerry Stluka

**As** I look forward to my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and retirement, I find myself especially thankful for the Gift of these last 14 years of Grace as pastor of Holy Cross Church.

What a privilege it has been to experience the on-going 1.2 million dollar restoration of our beautiful and historic church. Dedicated in 1848, our church building is the oldest in the city of Columbus. Since the year 2000, our generous parishioners have replaced the copper steeple, roof and down spouts. The entire brick exterior has been tuck pointed and sealed. A new sound system helps us to speak and hear the Word of God more clearly. A new heating and cooling system provides year round temperature control. The beautiful stained glass windows, imported from Germany in 1920, have been polished, framed and sealed with protective glass.

A new asphalt parking lot and concrete sidewalks

*See Pastor's Musings Pg. 7.*



*From Pg. 2 Pastor's Musings*

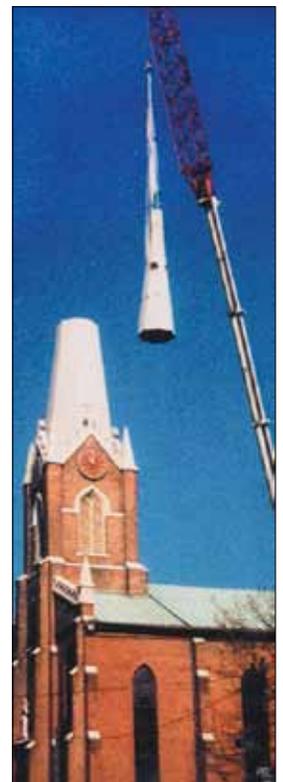
have been installed. A new prayer garden, including an outdoor Stations of the Cross, serves as an entry way for St. Lawrence Haven which feeds about 400 hungry folks five days a week. A new hard wood flooring enhances the sanctuary. Most recently, a 29 rank tracker pipe organ was installed and voiced.

All of these improvements express the wholehearted faith and generosity of our small and significant congregation of 200 households.

Spiritually, my faith has been strengthened by the faith of this wonderful and prayerful parish community. Our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and RCIA serve our children and adults in their faith formation.

What a sacred privilege for me to have celebrated 119 Baptisms, 51 confirmations, 74 First Communions, 208 weddings, 165 funerals and one ordination to the priesthood (Father Dan Dury, son of our parish).

I thank God for the GIFT that you are in my life and I thank you for all your generosity over the years. May our Good God continue to bless you and others through you!



# Three Fond Farewells

by Jack Kustron

*Back in late 2006 Fr. Jerry asked Jan and I if we would help him produce a parish newsletter. He asked for a one year commitment. The first issue, which was titled "You Name It!" was published in February of 2007 and when the May 2007 edition was published it had the name "Holy Cross CONNECTIONS."*

*Eight years later we're still publishing, what we hope is, a meaningful and enlightening newsletter for our parishioners and friends of Holy Cross.*

*This edition features a farewell from Fr. Jerry and we thought that it might be appropriate to ask three of the people who have worked most closely with him to share some of their memories.*

*What follows are the comments from Sr. Pat, Sr. Anne and Mike Agriesti.*

## Community, Celebration and Gratitude

By Sister Pat Pieper, SND



As I looked back on my 8 ½ years at Holy Cross in ministry with Fr. Jerry, what I remember most vividly can be summed up in three words:

– COMMUNITY – CELEBRATION – GRATITUDE

The office staff was a **community** experience, beginning with Fr. Jerry, Msgr. Corcoran and Robert Carter, and later when Robert left, Mike Agriesti adding his unique spirit. It was not just sharing one computer but interest, concern, enjoying and relaxing with each other as well as working hard together. We shared painful as well as joyful experiences. Fr. Jerry lost his brother and both he and I gave our mothers back to God during those years and we all grieved the last months and death of our beloved Msgr. Corcoran. Fr. Jerry supported and encouraged my SND community involvement at the expense of several months, two different summers of my being in

Namur. There was an openness to and willingness to start something new in the parish, often at others' suggestions.

What can I say of **celebrations**? Fr. Jerry loved having dinners to welcome in and celebrate anything he could imagine. The retired priests' suppers were special occasions, as were parish dinners, the Feast of the Holy Family Open House at the Rectory, staff Christmas parties, potluck suppers, pancake breakfasts. He always found a special reason to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Cross: ordination and profession anniversaries, new steeple and Prayer Garden blessings, paying off a debt, etc. etc. Often these "community" occasions were connected with the liturgy, his favorite way of celebrating.

And **gratitude**. This is without doubt one of the themes of Fr. Jerry's personal life and priestly ministry; gratitude to and for family, friends, parishioners, co-workers, volunteers and helpers of every sort. How often this theme was part of his homilies or spoken/written words. He felt and expressed gratitude for his priestly vocation and ministry in the parish and at Grant Hospital, for marriage preparation and the numerous groups he felt privileged to be a part of.

And with that same heart-felt gratitude, I say congratulations, Fr. Jerry, thank you for the privilege of ministering with and for you and may Our Good God bless you abundantly as you continue your life's pilgrimage into retirement.





# Reflections on Holy Cross and Fr. Jerry

By Sister Anne Keenan, O.P.

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Working in the parish rectory office does not include heavenly music, incense, candles and an atmosphere of perpetual calm! Door bell and telephone summons us quite regularly. Paper jamming in the printer; computer crashing; tons of shredding, record keeping and lots of meetings. These are some of the regular office happenings.

Shopping, cleaning, and taking out the garbage are the necessary household tasks which Fr. Jerry refers to as “the practical aspects of the priesthood” But despite this hustle- bustle which is found in any office there does exist among us the ability to laugh easily, be calm, and follow the lead of our pastor, Fr. Jerry.

So how does one describe the experience of ministering with Fr. Jerry? The times of joy, sadness, hard work, loss, peace, expectation, hope, sometimes all mixed together, are too numerous to recount, yet too precious to forget. However, I will try to relate some moments that stand out in my mind.

Thanksgiving Baskets. The annual Christmas Tree Trimming. Fr. Jerry is pretty good with putting on the lights. Open House for the Feast of the Holy Family which always means good food and great conversation.

Holy Thursday dinner with the priests. Easter Vigil and lighting the fire.

Welcoming new members through the RCIA process and the baptism of children. At these times Fr Jerry models for us a parish priest who is gentle, yet strong, caring and confident in his role of guiding his flock.

A priest friend once told me if he was sick or dying the one person he would want to be by his bedside would be Fr. Jerry. Little did I know that years later I would accompany Father as he visited the sick or dying and it became clear to me what my friend meant. The unique compassionate, caring manner, that is so much a part of Fr. Jerry, was evident as he talked and prayed with the person who was in need of care. Father’s compassion is truly a gift to anyone who, in that sacred moment, needs strength, comfort and healing. I have been privileged and humbled to be present at some of these sacred times to witness the peace that comes to the person being anointed as well as to family and friends who are present. My experience during such times is that Fr. Jerry certainly has the gift of being able to make “real”

the loving, compassionate presence of our merciful Savior.

I also recall the times of laughter especially when Jerry starts remembering his youth and some of the Dominican Sisters who were his teachers. He remembers them with great respect and can also tell some funny stories and quote some of their wise sayings. Being a Dominican myself and actually knowing some of the sisters allows me to imagine quite vividly the people and scenes he describes. One, not really so humorous, but rather a “sweet” memory involves his first grade teacher, Sister Mary Jo Fox, O.P., who welcomed him to class even though he was a month or so late. It seems that Jerry, as a 6 year old, had contracted, what turned out to be a mild case of polio, which prevented him from starting school in Sept. Some months later when he was well enough to begin school his mother brought this rather reluctant child to the door of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom. He recalls that Sister literally opened her arms and said “Welcome! We have been waiting for you.” That was enough to make him feel comfortable to walk into the classroom ready to learn.



From that time on Father has “walked in” to many places and lives ready to share his faith and wisdom as well as being open to learn from other situations and people.

Someone once asked Fr. Jerry if he was a monsignor. He replied that he was a simple priest and that is just what he desired. And doesn’t that capture our pastor and friend? A man wise enough to know that to BE priest is to be the shepherd. The one we need to guide and comfort us; laugh and cry with us. Thank you Fr. Jerry for all you have been and given to us and to me.

# The Practical Aspects of Running a Parish

By Mike Agriesti



This is what Fr. Jerry often stated when he quoted his mentor priests as we came upon some unexpected circumstances in my ten year association with him. When he saw the need to make a change, he carefully considered his options after consulting with the technical experts and his spiritual leadership, the Bishop. This drove the first of the many major capital expenditures in 2003 with new concrete sidewalks and ramp to the Cum Christo Center and repair Church fronts steps on the 5<sup>th</sup> street entrance.

Fr. Jerry had received multiple complaints from our parishioners about the water damage from our gutter system which we tried to resolve with multiple small repairs but we had little success. The diocesan building management brought in several firms to look at our gutter and downspout system. They uncovered that after 100 years of existence, the underlying brick facade was totally damaged and needed replacement before the copper gutter and downspout system could be replaced and the cost was over \$200,000.00. Fr. Jerry and I were shocked but it didn't deter him setting up an appointment with Bishop Campbell to present his plans to fix this issue and confirm the Bishop's commitment to the long-term upgrades that were necessary to keep our historical church operational for the current parishioners and for future generations. After the Bishop's blessing and our Finance Committee's concurrence, we moved forward on the gutter system, the clock tower masonry restoration and the church's inside plaster & painting of walls damaged by the water damage.

It became clear in early 2006 that the savings which were generously donated by the many past and present parishioners were not sufficient to complete the remainder of the renovation projects. So we contacted our diocesan development group for some direction

and help. This led to the "175th Anniversary Campaign" which was tied into the Bishop's Annual Appeal for 2007, 2008 & 2009. Fr. Jerry set an aggressive goal of \$ 350,000. based on his experience of his parishioners' generosity and his faith in their love of Holy Cross and their God. Being the "doubting Thomas", I expressed my doubts that this was possible for such a small parish. Well, I was wrong and we reached 96% of this goal and we were able to complete the installation of a new copper roof, complete tuck-pointing of the outside brick and re-glazing & frame replacement of the stain-glass windows on the north & south side of the church. Finally, the "new organ" opportunity came along and Fr. Jerry didn't hesitate to take advantage of a great deal and with the help of our parishioners made this miracle happen.

Fr. Jerry was very traditional about the Christmas Season. He always liked to purchase a freshly cut tree. He would drive his car over to St. Mary's in German Village and we would spend some time in the cold, damp weather trying to find that ideal tree. Once found, somehow we managed to tie it to the top of his vehicle and get back to the rectory. Unfortunately, the base of the tree was always bigger than the stand so it took some effort to make it fit. Then after "open-house" and the end of the Christmas season all the decorations were taken down and then we would drag the tree to the outside leaving piles of dried pine needles—what a mess! About five years ago, I caught Father at "weak moment" and convinced him and Sr. Pat to go out and purchase an artificial tree which they did. Every time I set up the tree I always remark how beautiful it looks!



All in all I have had a wonderful experience working with Fr. "St Luka" and I know he'll keep in touch with all of us.

# A Capsule History of Holy Cross Parish

By Raymond Kiersh

Summarized from Historical Notes by Msgr. Joseph Hakel

## Installment 3



pastor by the Reverend Fr. John Bernard Hemsteger in May of 1859.

At the time of his promotion, Fr. Borgess had drawn plans for construction of a new rectory. Fr. Hemsteger carried out these plans. Construction was begun in 1859 and the present day rectory was completed in 1861 at cost of \$8500.

Many changes to the neighborhood began taking place. In 1862 the Sisters of Notre Dame built a convent at 6<sup>th</sup> and Rich St. These sisters taught at Holy Cross School. Also in 1862 The Franciscan Sisters of the Poor established a convent and hospital on Rich St. across from the sacristy of Holy Cross. St. Francis Hospital, a 24 bed hospital, cared for the sick and wounded Union soldiers and Confederate prisoners from Camp Chase on the west side. Camp Chase was a military staging, training and prison camp located in the Hilltop area of Columbus. All that remains of the Camp Chase era is the Confederate cemetery on Sullivant Ave near St. Mary Magdalene Parish. In 1865 the hospital was moved to 6<sup>th</sup> and State St. where it operated until 1955. To help pay for the lease and improvements at the hospital Fr. Hemsteger in cooperation with Fr. Fitzgerald, pastor of St. Patrick, instituted a "Fair" to raise the money to keep St.

After ten years of dedicated service to Holy Cross Parish as pastor, Fr. Caspar Borgess was transferred on May 5, 1859 to the Cathedral in Cincinnati where he served as Chancellor of the Archdiocese. He was succeeded as

Francis Hospital in operation. St. Francis Hospital was closed in 1955 and the Sisters then moved to St Anthony Hospital near Nelson and Long St. where they continued their work. Their farewell Mass in 1955 was celebrated at Holy Cross.

During the civil war years, 1861-1865, Holy Cross had approximately 4000 parishioners and four Sunday Masses in a church that could hold about 400 worshippers. During that period the choir loft was enlarged to seat an additional 200 people, new doorways were added, the stairway to the choir loft was enclosed and the church interior was painted (more on this in a later installment). Also of note was the fact that there were over 400 children in the old

**"During the Civil War years, 1861-1865, Holy Cross had approximately 4000 parishioners..."**

— Raymond Kiersh

Holy Cross school. After the war plans were begun for a new school. The lot just east of the church was purchased for \$4000 and a parcel of land was donated to Holy Cross by the city to accommodate the new school and allowed

for enlarging the church.

The post - Civil War years saw continued growth and overcrowding in both Holy Cross and St. Patrick parishes. Land was purchased at the corner of Fifth and Broad St. for the building of St. Joseph Church. The Diocese of Columbus was created and on March 3, 1869, Bishop Sylvester Rosecrans was named the first bishop of Columbus. Fr. Hemsteger was appointed his Vicar General.

Ever mindful of the spiritual needs of the growing parish, Fr. Hemsteger established the Children of Mary and the St. Aloysius Societies in April, 1869. These Societies later became the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Altar Society which still exists today.

**NEXT:** A disaster interrupts continued growth.





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**Parish Staff**

Reverend Father Jerome D. Stuka, Pastor

Rev. Fr. Ramon Owera, in residence

Rev. Fr. Jose Manickathan, in residence

Sister Anne Keenan, OP, Pastoral Associate

Deborah L. Matthews, Coordinator of Religious Education

Kelly Doman, Music Director

**Liturgy Schedule**

Sunday: 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

11:30 a.m. Tuesday - Saturday

**Reconciliation**

Every Friday: 11:00 a.m.

Every Sunday: 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.