

MESSENGER

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Bishop Foys dedicates Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Park Hills

Laura Keener
Editor

An overflowing crowd of about 270 priests, women religious and lay faithful witnessed, Feb. 11, Bishop Roger Foys anoint the bells and dedicate Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Park Hills. Last June, Bishop Foys erected Our Lady of Lourdes quasi-parish for persons attached to the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite and appointed Missionary of John the Baptist Fathers Shannon Collins, pastor, and Sean Kopczynski, parochial vicar.

The community purchased a former Christian church located at 1101 Amsterdam Road, Park Hills, which, since last July, has been undergoing restoration and renovation to create a sacred space suitable for the celebration of the extraordinary Roman Rite. The church basement, which will now be renovated to a gathering space, was quickly transformed into a temporary church, while renovations were completed to the main church.

"Welcome home to those of you who are parishioners here," said Bishop Foys as he began his homily. "How wonderful to be able to dedicate this sacred space on the feast day of the church — Our Lady of Lourdes; what a gift that is to this community and our Diocese of Covington."

Bishop Foys went on to explain the purpose of setting aside sacred space and dedicating it to the Lord.

"This is a place dedicated to the Lord and to the sacred rites. It is a place where we live out our life, not just our Christian Catholic life but also our physical life. It is a place where parents bring their children to be baptized and to receive their first confession and first holy Communion. This is the place the bishop comes to administer the sacrament of confirmation; a place where couples come to have their wedding covenant solemnized by the priest. It is the place where people come when they are sick to receive healing. This is the place where we bring in the human remains of our loved ones for their journey home. Think about that, we are carried in at our baptism and we are carried in at our death. This is the place set

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Keener photo



(left) The Our Lady of Lourdes Church dedication began with Bishop Roger Foys praying in the sanctuary. (top left) Bishop Foys anoints three bells that will be refurbished and installed in the church bell tower. (top right) Parishioners pray as Bishop Foys arrives. (top right) Missionary of St. John the Baptist Fathers Sean Kopczynski and Jeffrey Jambon. (top, far right) Father Shannon Collins, pastor. (right) Bishop Foys and participants process around the church for the church blessing.

Our Lady of Lourdes quasi-Parish

Dedication

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apart and dedicated to the Lord, a place that touches every significant event of our lives.”

Bishop Foys closed his homily by giving thanks to God and to the Missionaries of St. John the Baptist.

“My gratitude to almighty God for bringing Father Shannon and Father Sean to our diocese; my gratitude to them for the gift of their faith. We welcome once again the Missionaries of St. John the Baptist and we put them under the loving care of Mary. ... We pray that God will always bless them and bless the work that they do because the work that they do is the work of the Lord.”

Father Collins was the celebrant for the Mass, assisted by Father Kopczynski. In his remarks before the homily, Father Collins offered his gratitude to Bishop Foys and to everyone who has worked and prayed to make Our Lady of Lourdes quasi-Parish a reality.

“In addition to being grateful to the good Lord and especially to his Blessed Mother under the title of Our Lady of Lourdes for this wonderful dedication day and for this sacred structure, the Missionaries of St. John the Baptist and their parishioners are most grateful to his Excellency Bishop Foys,” said Father Collins. “We also thank our many benefactors and talented craftsmen and artists, without whom this church building and renovation project would not have been realized.”

In an interview after the dedication Father Collins detailed the work of the renovation, which is substantial. Much of the church’s furniture and art are reclaimed from former parishes — many of which predate its new home.

The church’s stained-glass windows, installed in 1938 by the Reardon Stained Glass Company, Middletown, are original to the church. Their jeweled light fills the sacred space. The church’s pews and kneelers were reclaimed from a former parish in Louisville, Ky.

The centerpiece, a life-sized statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, which stands in the sanctuary above the tabernacle, is reclaimed from Covington’s own St. Aloysius Church. According to a 1952 *Messenger* report, in 1889 Father Joseph Blenke, former pastor of St. Aloysius Church, built a grotto to Our Lady of Lourdes in thanksgiving for her restoring his health. In 1902 Pope Leo XIII

proclaimed the grotto a national shrine and one of the few grottos of Lourdes in the world bearing the same indulgences as the grotto in France.

The sanctuary’s tester, a flat, horizontal canopy, is painted blue with 144 small and 12 larger machine-carved stars.

“The big stars represent the 12 Apostles and the 12 stars around our Mother’s crown, and the 144 little tiny stars represent the number of heavenly lights — 144,000 — mentioned in Scripture,” said Father Collins.

In the center of the tester is a carved dove — the symbol of the Holy Spirit.

“I love the dove,” said Father Collins. “It’s perfect symbolism because you have the Holy Spirit above, then our Blessed Mother and, through her, Christ in the tabernacle below.”

The new quasi-parish’s stations of the cross are also historic, over 120 years old Father Collins assumes, and are from a parish in St. Clairsville, Ohio, in the Diocese of Steubenville.

The church’s baptistery is gated, and is the work of Bellarmine Ornamental Ironworks, Illinois, which also crafted the Communion rail (in the Extraordinary Rite, Communion is still received at a Communion rail). “Baptism is the gateway to heaven and brings you into the life of Christ,” said Father Collins. “When those gates open after baptism the newly baptized come into the Church, so there’s a beautiful symbolism to have the gates.”

The Verdin bells, which Bishop Foys blessed and anointed, are from Holy Family Parish, Columbus, Ohio. Renovations on the bell tower of Our Lady of Lourdes Church are still in process. The bells will be refurbished and installed once the tower is ready.

Father Collins said he is very grateful to the many people from, literally, around the country and Canada who have financially contributed to the purchase and renovation of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, and to those who have supported the Missionaries of St. John the Baptist as they began their community, for the first five years as guests at St. Bernard Parish, Dayton.

“We owe all this to the people of St. Bernard and their pastors, Father Damien Hils and Father Martin Pitstick, for getting all of this started,” said Father Collins. “We are like the Israelites that the good Lord has brought into the Holy Land. Our Lord has given us a very special gift. Bishop Foys making us a quasi-parish was the best gift of all.”



(above top) Bishop Foys sprinkles the walls and the floor of the church. (above) Three musical groups provides music for the dedication and Mass, the Schola of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, the Cincinnati Latin Mass Schola and Holy Family Parish Choir, Dayton, Ohio. (below left) The crucifix was reclaimed from the diocesan archives; the corpus is new. (below right) Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker are among the guests.

