

Take a video tour of Defiance St. John the Evangelist and learn more about its historic architecture at www.catholicchronicle.org; click "Multimedia" then "Videos"; or visit www.youtube.com/catholicchronicle.



Built in 1895, many features of Defiance St. John the Evangelist are original to the church, including the stained glass windows, high altar, steeple bells, Stations of the Cross and statues. Chronicle photo by Andrea Slivka

Defiance St. John preserves heritage of historic church

Defiance St. John the Evangelist hosts a regional celebration of the Diocese of Toledo's 100th anniversary Nov. 7 at 4:30 p.m. This evening prayer service is part of a series of seven "stational vespers" Bishop Leonard P. Blair is celebrating at historic churches around the diocese during the centenary year.

BY ANDREA SLIVKA
Chronicle Writer

DEFIANCE—As a member of one of the oldest parishes in the diocese, 24-year-old Brenda Delarber enjoys the opportunity to talk about the history of her church.

"I walk into church, and I think, you know, 'What have these walls seen throughout the years — in over 100 years worth of existence?'" she says of Defiance St. John the Evangelist, where she serves as parish historian.

Established in 1850, the parish has served Catholics in Defiance for more than 150 years.

What began in 1841 in Defiance with two Catholic families meeting together to share their faith is now a parish of about 1,200 families with 2,400 parishioners, says Miss Delarber, who has an undergraduate degree in history.

"A majority of the families that you see on the windows of the stained glass — the names on the windows of the church — many of those families generations down still do attend here. So there is a lot of rich heritage within all the families," she says.

In 1841, Fr. Amadeus Rappe celebrated the first Mass in Defiance in the home of Timothy Fitzpatrick. Fr. Rappe was born in France and also established Toledo St. Francis de Sales, according to "A Booklet of Memories," published by St. John for its centennial. Fr. Rappe later became the first bishop of the Cleveland Diocese when it was established in 1847, prior to the establishment of the Toledo Diocese.

A wooden log church was built in 1844 on land donated by one of

the founders of Defiance. A larger brick church was built in 1856.

A growing number of Catholics in Defiance led to the creation of a second church — St. Mary — in 1873. St. Mary served English-speaking townspeople while St. John served the German-speaking and members of the upper class, Miss Delarber says. German Masses at St. John discontinued after World War I.

Parishioners built the current baroque-style church in 1895 for \$24,000.

"If you look up at the ceiling, it's like it comes to a point," Miss Delarber explains. "That's kind of the point of the Baroque style churches — it's supposed to make your eyes go up toward heaven."

A marble high altar is another key piece of the church with a depiction of Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" carved in the bottom, Miss Delarber points out.

For more than 100 years, the sisters of St. Agnes played a large role in the parish, operating its school from 1870 to 1985. Forty-eight girls from St. John entered the Sisters of St. Agnes.

The school merged with St. Mary in 2009 to create Holy Cross Catholic School.

Through renovations, the parish has maintained the church's baroque architecture and several original features, including the stained glass windows, high altar, steeple bells, Stations of the Cross

and statues.

"It's really interesting to hear some of the stories of the older parishioners of how things used to be here and how things used to look," Miss Delarber says.

When the church was remodeled in 2000, the parish committee didn't consider modernizing the features but wanted to enhance its original baroque style and beauty, according to David Moninger, music director.

"What we wanted to do was highlight that more than anything," he says.

Gold leaf was added to cherubs, columns and a design on the dome above the altar. The gold leaf will last 100 years, whereas gold paint would dull, Mr. Moninger says.

Burgundy carpet and mauve paint from a remodeling in the 1980s was replaced with a cream tile flooring and antique white paint. Mr. Moninger says parishioners thought the original Stations of the Cross had been repainted because the brighter flooring and walls allowed the historic stations to stand out.

Lighting was also added at the top of columns along the walls to accent the Baroque ceiling.

"One of our main goals in the renovation was to brighten the space, and we feel we successfully accomplished that through the use of colors and lighting," he says.

Defiance music director reflects on 25 years of ministry

BY ANDREA SLIVKA
Chronicle Writer

DEFIANCE—What first seemed like a call to the priesthood has become instrumental in shaping David Moninger's career as music director at Defiance St. John the Evangelist.

Beginning in seventh grade, Mr. Moninger played organ for daily and weekend Masses at nearby St. Michael's Ridge St. Michael. After graduating high school, he felt a call to be a priest, but after two years in seminary, he "ultimately felt more called to music ministry in

the church than to priesthood," he says. This year, he celebrates 25 years as the St. John's music director.

Fr. Todd Dominique, pastor of St. John, says Mr. Moninger is an innovative music director who strives for excellence.

"Obviously, longevity brings a whole different level of competency in terms of being a liturgist — with everything he has done on an annual basis, it only gets better and better," Fr. Dominique says.

Mr. Moninger's style is to strive to engage parishioners in full and active participation in the liturgy, but at the same time, incorporate contemplative reflection, Fr. Dominique says.

Since he started playing for Mass in the '70s, Mr. Moninger says the quality of music has improved.

"I think that the text is better now and not as trite," Mr. Moninger says, quoting a song about a sunflower.

By his estimation, he has played music for about 6,000 Masses, 750 funerals and 750 weddings. He says he has been blessed to be in a faith community that sings, rejoices and cares for each other.

His approach to music ministry has been affected in recent months by the death of his 17-year-old son, Ted. Mr. Moninger marked his 25th anniversary at the beginning of June, and his son was killed in a car accident at the end of the month.

In his grief, he says the experience has made him more sensitive to the parishioners as their struggles, such as those suffering from the death of a loved one, an illness or divorce.

An expanded version of this story is available at www.catholicchronicle.org; click on "Around the Diocese" and then St. Maximilian Kolbe Deamery.

Centenary Cross Schedule


During the Oct. 7, 2009, opening liturgy for the centenary celebration of the Diocese of Toledo, Bishop Leonard P. Blair blessed a special cross that is to travel to every parish and religious institution in the 19-county diocese. The cross continues its journey in the St. Luke Deamery, located in western Lucas County, eastern Fulton County and part of Henry County. Its upcoming schedule follows. Visit the Centenary section of catholicchronicle.org to view a map pinpointing each stop on the cross' journey.

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419-885-3211 | Nov. 6-8
Maumee St. Joseph
419-893-4948 |
| Oct. 31-Nov. 2
Toledo Little Flower and St. Benedict Catholic School
419-537-6655 | Nov. 9-11
Sylvania Franciscan Academy
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| Nov. 3-5
Sylvania Sisters of St. Francis
419-885-3211 | Nov. 12-14
Providence St. Patrick
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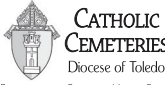
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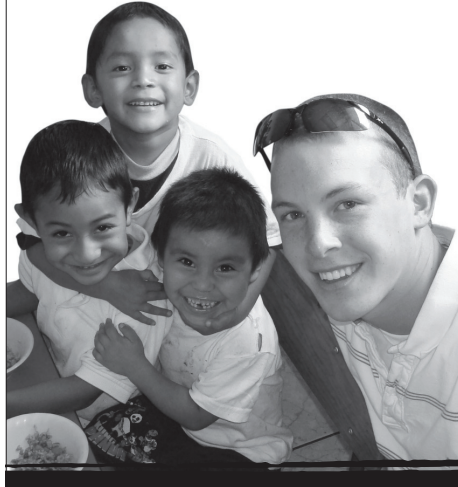
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