

150  
1867-2017

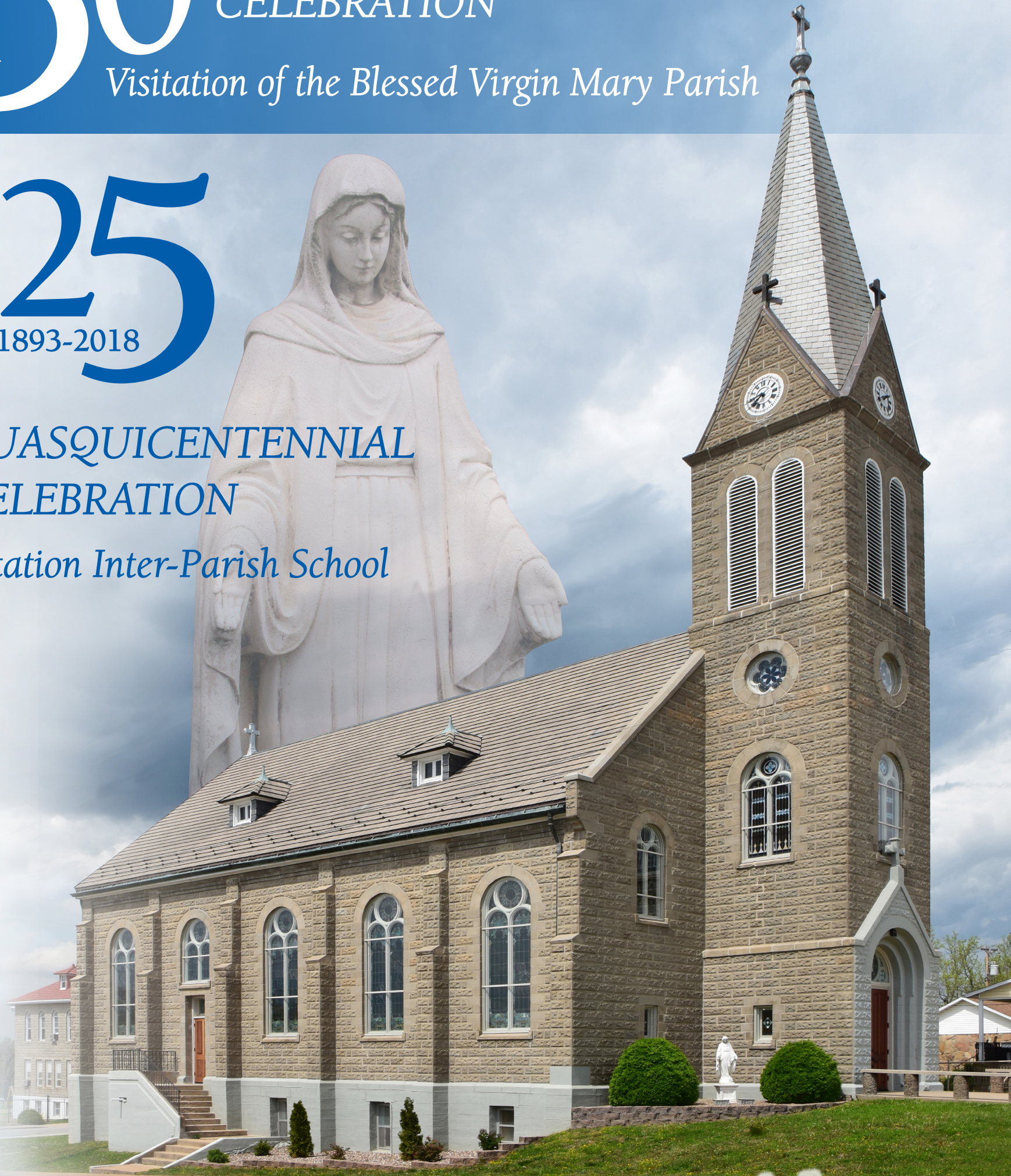
SESQUICENTENNIAL  
CELEBRATION

*Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish*

125  
1893-2018

QUASQUICENTENNIAL  
CELEBRATION

*Visitation Inter-Parish School*





## Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrates sesquicentennial on Saturday

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish in Vienna celebrated their sesquicentennial, or 150 year anniversary Saturday. An estimated 1,000 people were on hand for the food, museum displays, dance performances, tours, music and games during the celebration. Deacon John Schwartz, (back row, from left) Rev. Boniface Kasiita Nzabonimpa, Rev. John Schmitz, Rev. Hillary Andebo, Rev. Donald Antweiler and Rev. Matthew Flatley and V.G. Rev. Joseph Corel (front and center) celebrated the Catholic mass. Carly Backues (above right) sings a solo during the mass. Parishioners and guests (top right) exit the church after the 11 a.m. Mass.

ALL COLOR PHOTOS IN THIS EDITION BY JACOB WARDEN



**STUDENTS FROM** the Visitation Inter-Parish school (above) sign the words to a song during the sesquicentennial mass. Pastor of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Rev. Matthew Flatley (right) distributes the Eucharist during communion.



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**VISITATION CHOIR** members of all ages sang at both the 11:00 a.m. and the 5:00 p.m. Mass on Saturday. Organist Gloria Brunnert (above left) with her granddaughter, Sarah Backues, provided musical accompaniment. Allison Buschmann (above), Danielle Murphy, Amanda Wieberg Elizabeth Veasman and Morgan Lake sang in the choir as Owen Kloeppel played the guitar.

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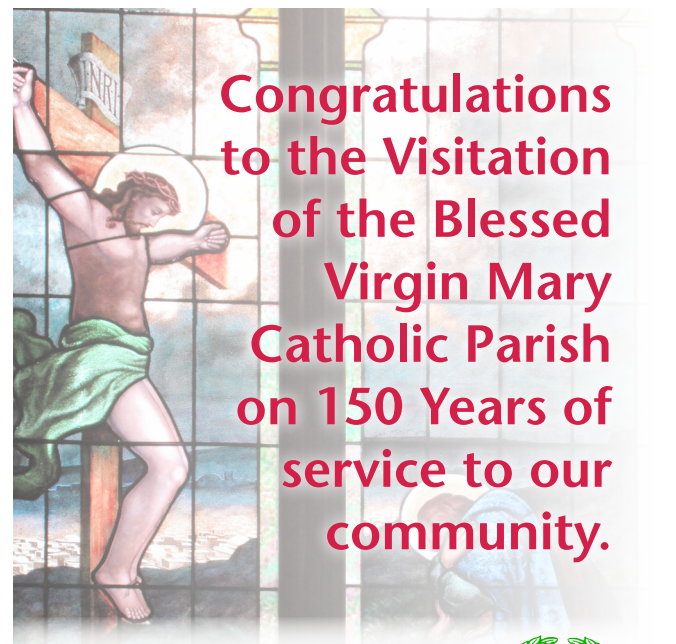
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**ON DISPLAY** is the dress worn by Helen Meronerl (Weidinger) when she arrived in Vienna off the orphan train.

## Family donates pieces of local history to Visitation Parish

**BY ROXIE MURPHY**  
**ADVOCATE STAFF WRITER**  
rmurphy@wardpub.com

VIENNA—Visitation Parish parishioners celebrated their sesquicentennial event Saturday with bittersweet memorabilia brought in by descendants one of the church's founder, Father John Fugel.

Lisa Jones, event co-coordinator, said it was common for priests to adopt children, and Fugel was among them.

"Back then, the priest would adopt a daughter or a son, and here they adopted "Lena" or Helen Weidinger. She was raised here with the priest and his housekeeper in the rectory," Jones said.

Helen's story began in 1900 when Fugel requested a child from a Catholic Foundling Home in New York, a three-year-old named Margaret Ellen Meronerl, or Helen Meronerl (Weidinger). She was brought in on the orphan train, fostered by Fugel, whom she called Father, co-raised with Anna Westhoff, whom she called Auntie.

"Now her family has come back and they had some pictures of our church, some of the oldest ones, and our school, and they gave us her little orphan train outfit she wore on the train," Jones said.

Helen stayed in Vienna during her life, helping Fugel at the rectory, working at his newspaper, *The Home Adviser*, when she turned 16-years-old, and eventually marrying Jerry Weidinger. The couple had four children.

Her only living daughter, Veronica Weidinger, grandson Roger Schmitz and his wife Maureen Schmitz from Colorado attended the event and brought artifacts from the church's beginnings that their mother/grandmother had passed down.

"I was proud of my grandmother," Schmitz said. "She was a lovely woman, she treated me and my whole family—she wore her emotions on her sleeve."

The Weidinger/Schmitz family brought Helen's outfit that she wore on the orphan train, along with a photo album that belonged to his grandmother

with photos of the church being built, Fugel and Westhoff.

Weidinger remembers her mother wanted to be a normal kid, a normal person. She didn't do anything special and didn't feel like she was special. She hated to be called "Lena."

"She raised four kids, she kept a house and a husband and everybody said she had the best garden," Weidinger remembers.

Sylvester "Vessie" Buschmann, one of the oldest members of the parish, agreed.

"She was a good church goer," Vessie said about Helen, who was good friends with his mother. "She kept her household in order and raised three girls, one boy. They were just wonderful people and her husband ran *The Home Adviser* that was started by John Fugel. Jerry Weidinger took it over."

Jerry and Helen Weidinger ran the newspaper in Vienna for several years.

See **Family** on Page 6

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**Family • from page 5**

Schmitz said she was a modern day career woman.

“She also worked almost full-time, while raising a family, at the newspaper,” Schmitz said. “In my mind it is like she is a modern-day career woman.”

Items the family brought were displayed museum-style in the church basement by John Viessman and other volunteers, along with other photos and history of community members.

“A lot of this stuff has been hidden away in sheds and homes, because usually the church would discard things when they get new stuff,” Viessman said. “Photographs came out of family. We have had some really nice stuff come out of the construction of the school.”

The museum will stay up for a month.

Viessman said Helen always had the first tomato to ripen in town.

“She was quite an organic gardener,” he said. “I have heard stories about her and a lot of stories about Father Fugel from the old timers. He

left about 11 years before I was born.”

Little is known about Helen’s past, and Schmitz said he wishes he would have had the foresight to ask his grandma questions before her passing in 1985.

“She was put up for adoption immediately after she was born,” Schmitz said. “She never knew her mother.”

In their searching, the family did find that Helen was named Margaret Ellen Murray Merciser, born to Ellen Murray and Joseph Merciser Nov. 4, 1896. The family is unsure where the name Meronerl came from.

“We tracked her mother down until she was 56 years-old through the census back then, until she was between 50-60 years old, then she disappears,” Schmitz said. “We assumed she passed away.”

This information is contradictory to what the community believed, that Helen’s mother had died after her birth.

After locating Helen’s birth certificate that Fugel requested in May 1914, with



**PARISHIONERS AND** guests took time to visit with each other and the priests after the morning mass.

information about Helen’s parents, the family also noted the mother’s address, 415 E. 15th Street, New York City. The address is a block away from where Schmitz’s wife, Maureen Schmitz, grew up in New York City. Baptismal records were later located for Helen, Nov. 4, 1896, at

the church where Maureen’s parents were married.

The tag on Helen’s orphan train dress was from a department store also located in that area. The family hopes to someday discover more about their grandmother’s biological family, even though Fugel and Auntie Anna Westoff will

always be Helen’s parents.

Visitation Parish Church in Vienna holds a special place in the town’s history, and as those who attended the 150 Anniversary on Saturday discovered, it also memorialized the history of townspeople. The church even captured the life-history

of an orphan girl who had nothing to show otherwise.

“We were her legacy,” Helen’s family said.

The church gave a little more.

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# Visitation Parish contributes 150 years of history to Vienna and Maries County

The history of Visitation Parish in Vienna closely follows the history of Maries County. It was at about the same time the county was incorporated in 1855 that two Catholic stations were formed in Maries County. One in Vienna in 1859 and the second eight miles away at Viessman's Station in 1862. Viessman's Station later became known as Brinktown.

The following is a loose time line of the history of Visitation Parish:

**1859**—Father John Baptist Goeldlin worked hard to help the Catholic people of Vienna and Brinktown establish stations in each. He conducted baptisms and held Holy Mass with the first church in Vienna being a log cabin deeded to the Archbishop by Thomas Anderson.

**1867**—Vienna's first wood framed official Catholic Church, St. Mary's, was constructed



Visitation Church and rectory in 1885

on the present site on lots owned by John Felker. It was deeded to the Archbishop in 1872. There were 35 families recorded as official members the wood-frame construction church.

**1874**—A bell is purchased for St. Mary's and named St. Joseph.

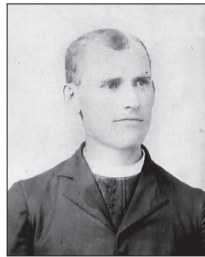
**1885**—A new church and parish rectory are built as more space is needed for the 90 families it serves. It was around this time the church name changed from St. Mary's to Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**1893**—Catholic education begins in Vienna under Father Henry Kuennen. An early teacher is Anton Dissen.

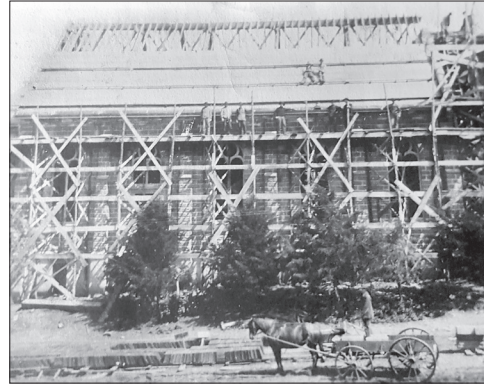
**1896**—Father John Fugel is brought to Vienna via railroad from St. Louis and livery wagon to Brinktown and then travelled to Vienna in a one-horse cart.

**1903**—Father Fugel publishes the first edition of his newspaper, the Home Adviser.

**1905-1909**—Father Fugel, Frank Schwartze, Frank Stratmann, JP Base, Jas. Owens, John Richter, Henry Koerber and Peter Redel travel to Jefferson City to inspect a block making machine. Block making begins soon after. In the new church the ceiling is arched and divided into



Fr. John Fugel



Visitation Church under construction in 1908.

six fields by artistically beaded beams ending in delicate plastic settings. The cornerstone is laid in 1907. The king-post of the church tower is placed in position and is mounted by a large golden cross and silver globe that was put in place at the apex of the steeple, bringing the steeple to 103'4" tall. "Amen" is scratched on the last brick laid. The town of Vienna watches the church take shape and all of the sand, rock, timber and more that is hauled in to build the large church (44'x100'). Over 10,000 blocks were used to build the church. The main walls are 19" thick and have a triple series of air chambers making the building heat, cold and moisture proof. The roof is the best grade of heavy Bangor, Pennsylvania slate. The guttering, spouting, flashing and ridging are of heavy cold-rolled

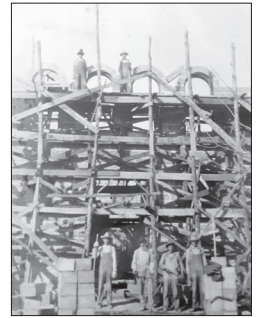
copper. A white trimmed in gold high altar from St. Augustine's Parish in St. Louis, where Fugel is from, is sent and arrives on a steamboat on the Gasconade River at Indian Ford. The church was dedicated on Sept. 8, 1909 by His Grace Archbishop Glennon. It cost \$50,000 and the church is debt free.

**1911**—The beautiful stained glass windows in the church were donated by parish members. They were made by Ford Bros Glass Company of Minneapolis at a cost of \$1,200. The ten large plus 17 smaller panels were shipped to Freeburg by rail and carefully transported by horse-drawn wagons to Vienna.

**1913**—The parish acquires a new organ following fundraising to pay for it. New pews were added in 1914.

**1922**—Built during WWI, the Visitation School building cornerstone was laid in July 1922 and the first classes began there in 1925.

**1928**—The interior of the church was frescoed by decorators and new Stations of



Visitation school under construction.

See **History** on Page 8

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History • from page 7

the Cross were added. In the mid 1930s the church nativity set was purchased.

**1936**—On Sunday, July 19, 1936, after 40 years of pastoral service in Vienna, Father Fugel suffered a stroke. He was taken to St. Mary's Hospital after having received the Last Rites of the Church. He died on July 23.

**1930s**—The old barn and hen house on the church square were torn down and in their place the current two car garage was constructed of native rock.

**1949**—Anthony Buschmann, his wife Christina and son Sylvester donated a new, large bell to the parish. It was named St. Anthony and came from a St. Louis foundry at a cost of about \$500.

**1953**—New convent building is constructed to house the nuns who teach. They are of the order of the Adorers of the Most Precious Blood, based in Ruma, Ill.

**1955**—Anthony, Christina and Sylvester Buschmann donated the Stations of the Cross that remain on display in the church today.



One of the oldest photos of a class from Visitation Inter-Parish School in 1895

**“Why such a large church? We Hope to Grow. Why such a massive and solid building? We hope to stay. Why such a magnificent building? It is for a magnificent God!”**

— Rev. John Fugel at the dedication of Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church  
September 8, 1909

**1956**—Pope Pius XII established the Diocese of Jefferson City; Visitation Parish was reassigned from the Archdiocese of St. Louis to the new central-Missouri diocese.

**1962**—On Dec. 19, 1962, the Vienna community and Visitation parishioners were shocked and deeply saddened at the unexpected death of Father Nardoni, at the young age of 54. He died in the parish rectory. He is buried in the parish cemetery.

**1967**—Visitation Parish celebrates its 100th anniversary on Oct. 8, 1967. Bill Stratman authored a souvenir book about the history of the parish.

**1984**—Copper coverings are applied to the four crosses on the church steeple, covering the originally constructed concrete that was cracking and crumbling with age.

**1991**—The original slate roofing of the church was replaced with concrete roofing tile. This was funded by a sizable donation from Anthony Redel, who served as the parish and school grounds keeper and janitor for 40 years, 1947-1987.

**1992**—Visitation celebrated its 125th year. Bishop Michael McAuliffe and native son Rev. Ambrose Stratman kicked off the event with Visitation's priest, Father Mark Smith, at a special celebratory Mass that morning. Donations received were used to purchase a new organ, as the old pipe organ was 80 years old and could no longer be repaired. A time capsule was buried to be opened for the sesquicentennial in 2017.

**2002**—The Visitation quilting and funeral luncheon groups purchased a statue of Mary for placement just outside the parish front entryway. A flower garden is added.

**2009**—The unsightly back porch of the church is removed. With the construction of the Knights of Columbus Hall it is no longer needed. The removal of the porch revealed a

surprise, a block noting the church was built under the direction of Father Fugel.

**2011-2016**—A significant church repair and restoration project was undertaken. It included power washing and tuck pointing the church exterior, complete restoration of the stained glass windows, and reduce parish debt for better flow.

**2017**—Enjoy the celebration! The parish will celebrate its 175th anniversary in 2042!



Helen Meronerl (Weidinger) and Visitation housekeeper Anna Westhoff in front of the newly constructed Visitation Church in 1907

1867-2017  
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## Visitation's historic bells still toll today

### Visitation's 150th marks beginning of daily Angelus bells

There are two historic bells located in the clock tower of Visitation Parish in Vienna. They are still used today.

The first bell, dating back to 1874, was named St. Joseph and was purchased by the parish. The second bell, larger than the first, was donated in 1949 by Anthony Buschmann and his wife Christina and son Sylvester. It was named St. Anthony in honor of its donor and came from the same St. Louis foundry as the first bell, the Stuckstede Bell Foundry. The St. Anthony bell cost about \$500.

In May 2016 lightning struck the church steeple and knocked off and damaged a number of slates on the steeple and damaged the organ beyond repair. During the steeple inspection, it was noticed the two bells, which together weighed over 1,000 pounds, needed some repairs. Both needed new clapper yoke insulators, the small bell needed a new clapper

spring, and of great concern, both needed new supports as they were loose and leaning.

Today these bells ring, calling parish members to Mass, and during the high point of the Eucharistic Prayer. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of Visitation Parish, a new, electronic chime system has replaced an older one in the clock tower that was damaged. This system is computer-generated and can play any music selected. What is important is that from June 17 at noon, as parish members and guests are exiting the church from the 11 a.m. Mass, the chime system will ring for the first time in many years, the bells of the Angelus.

According to Wikipedia, the Angelus is an old devotion that was well established 700 years ago, originating with the 11-century monastic custom of reciting three Hail Mary during the evening bell. The Angelus will be chimed at Visitation each day at 6 a.m.,

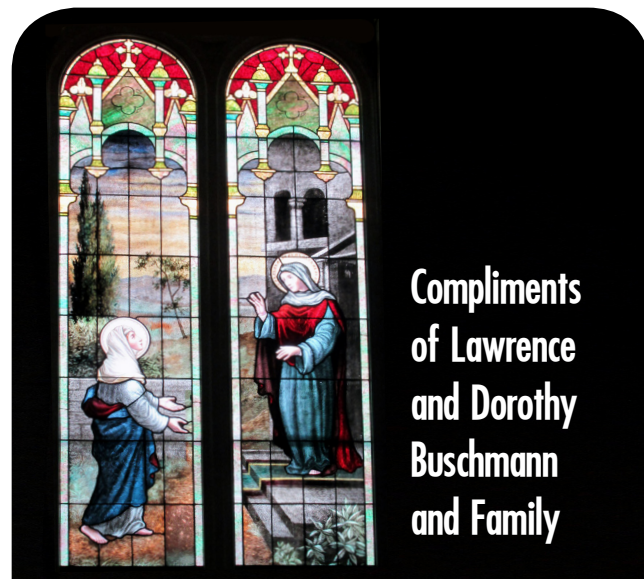
12 noon and at 6 p.m.

The Angelus is a memorial of the Incarnation and honors the mystery of the Incarnation when we worship our Lord as God, honors the reverence to St. Mary as blessed among women, and in honoring Mary, the instrument of the Incarnation, we honor Christ, who became Incarnate. The chimes will toll three bells, pause for prayer, toll three bells, pause for prayer, and toll the last three bells.



**THE VIEW** looking through the window slats of the Visitation bell tower.

**THE TWO** historic bells in Visitation's bell tower (left) with St. Joseph in front and St. Anthony in back.



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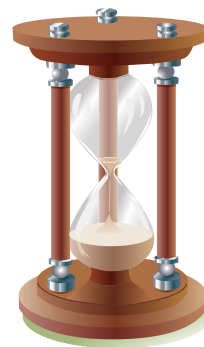


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for the successful celebration of your 150th Anniversary. Your presence is a blessing to our community.

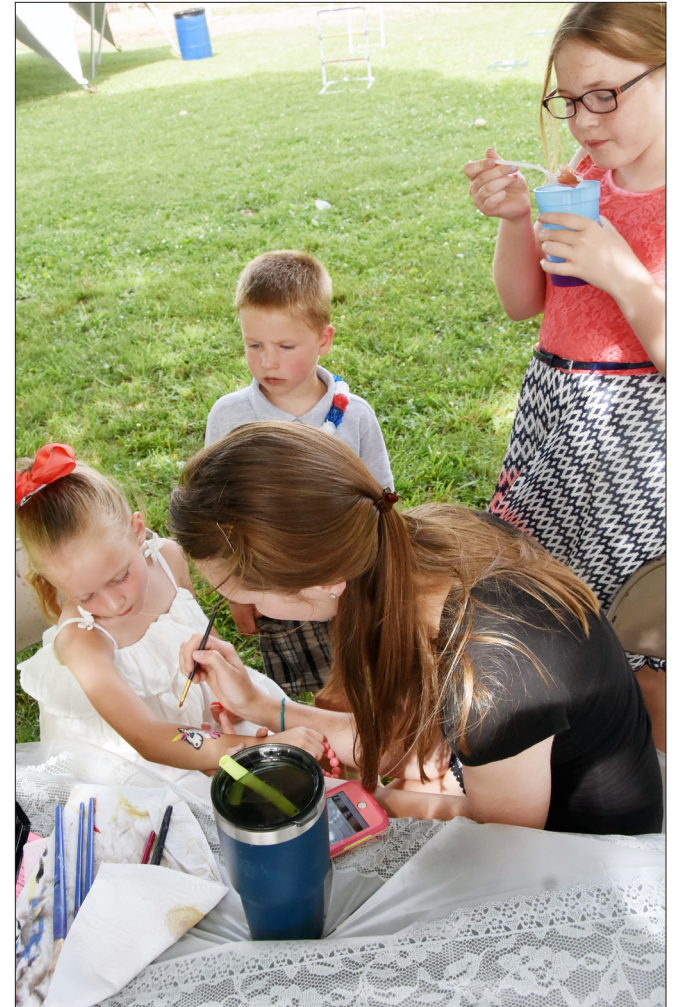


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**CLASSIC CAR** enthusiasts cruised into Vienna Saturday to help celebrate and share their restored vehicles with those who attended as the Visitation Church fills the background. Emerson Jeremy (right) enjoys a painted tattoo while her brother, Walker, waits his turn. Lauren Rowden watches on as she enjoys a snow cone.



# *Congratulations to*

Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish

# *On this occasion of your 150th Anniversary...*

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**Congratulations**

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Visitation Parish on your  
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Thank you for all you  
have done for our  
community.

— **Ray & June Schwartze**  
Maries County  
Presiding Commissioner

# Visitation parish members make possible restoration of 100-year-old stained glass windows

BY LAURA SCHIERMEIER  
ADVOCATE STAFF WRITER  
lschiermeier@wardpub.com

VIENNA — Visitation Parish is well known for the exceptionally beautiful stained glass windows that adorn the church. These windows, donated by parishioners in 1911, visually tell a story, in life-sized depictions, of the conception, life and death of Jesus Christ to include: The Annunciation, The Visitation, Jesus and Joseph in the Workshop, Jesus Calming the Sea, Peter Professes his Love to Christ, Christ Presents the Keys of the Kingdom, Agony in the Garden, the Chalice of Suffering, the Crucifixion, the Paschal Lamb, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Good Shepherd, the Institution of the Eucharist and the Last Judgment. Two windows in the choir loft depict St. Cecilia and a guardian angel with a child. Each of the windows are topped with a round medallion illustrating various tenets of the Catholic faith: a dove, the rosary and rose, a pelican feeding her young, In Hoc Signe Vincis (In this sign, we will conquer), the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a lyre, a trumpet, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a crown of thorns, the body and blood of Christ, the papal keys and tiara, and the paschal lamb. The large rose window above the altar contains an illustration of the

Holy Trinity, while the two side sanctuary windows are figures of angels in honor of Saints Anthony and Henry. Smaller windows in transepts, at the rear of the church, in the bell tower, and in the vestibule are geometric in design. Together, the 27 windows, both large and small, tell a glorious and symbolic story in a way words could never depart.

The Visitation church building was completed and dedicated in 1909, however, the windows had not yet been selected and installed. A sample window had been received from Ford Bros. Glass Co. in Minnesota, and families quickly vied for the opportunity to sponsor one in tribute to their family or as a memorial for departed loved ones. The large windows cost \$100 each with the entire project costing just over \$1,200.00. The following families sponsored the large windows: the Weidinger family, Father Fugel in memory of Henry and Helen Fugel, the Hagerty family in memory of Dennis and Catherine Hagerty, the family of Joseph and Christina Buschmann, the family of Anthony and Christina Otto, Frank Stratmann and son, Henry Wansing, Jr., the Buschmann family, Henry Volmert and family, Mary McNenamy, Teresa Feldkemper in memory of Anthony Feldkemper, Mr. and Mrs. John Richter, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Richter, Peter Redel, Henry Redel and a memorial in honor of Bartholomew Fitzpatrick.

Once the windows had been completed by the Ford Bros. Glass Co. in Minneapolis, they were transported by rail to the train depot in Freeburg, Missouri, then off-loaded onto wagons for the trip to Vienna. The windows were then carefully installed in the church in the first half of 1911. According to Ken Luebbering, one of the authors of "Gospels in Glass-Stained Glass Windows in Missouri Churches," the windows of Visitation parish are very rare. There are three types of stained glass windows: opalescent, painted, and traditional stained glass. While most stained glass windows consist of two of the three types of glass, Visitation's windows contain all three types. This lends to the unique and artistic beauty of the windows. The windows are now valued at approximately \$900 per square foot, or almost \$1 million.

In 2011, Visitation parish realized that major repairs were needed to the 100 year-old stained glass windows as many were leaking and, in some cases, even bowing. Re-leading the windows was to occur every 75 years, and the parish was well past that point. In addition, in the 1980s, the windows were covered with Lexon bullet-proof covers, which, at that time, was thought to provide protection for the windows. Over the years, unfortunately, the Lexon discolored and yellowed to the point that the windows were obscured from

external view.

Led by the parish pastor, Monsignor Marion Makarewicz, and later continued by Father Matt Flatley, along with parishioners Bob and Sheri Stomer, a committee was formed in late 2012 to lead the three-year restoration initiative and fundraising efforts for this capital campaign, which would also include repairs to the church exterior. After painstaking reviews by the committee, Kevin and Sandy O'Brien, owners of O'Brien Stained Glass Company, Inc. of Rollingstone, Minnesota, were selected to complete the restoration of the historical parish windows.

An opening reception for the fundraising campaign was held in November 2012, where the first contribution was received from Marcie Wansing-Ready, with a promise of more funds to follow. Over the course of the three year campaign, numerous and varied fundraisers were held to include Super Farmer Olympics, "Run for the Fund of It" 5K runs, quilt raffles, jackpot nights, chili and baked potato dinners, rummage and Tervis cup sales. A beautiful documentary was created by Visitation school graduate, Angie Weidinger-Schwartz, and can be viewed on YouTube at "Windows on the Past - Visitation Church." Families joined

See **Windows** on Page 14

**Congratulations to Visitation Parish on your 150th Birthday!**

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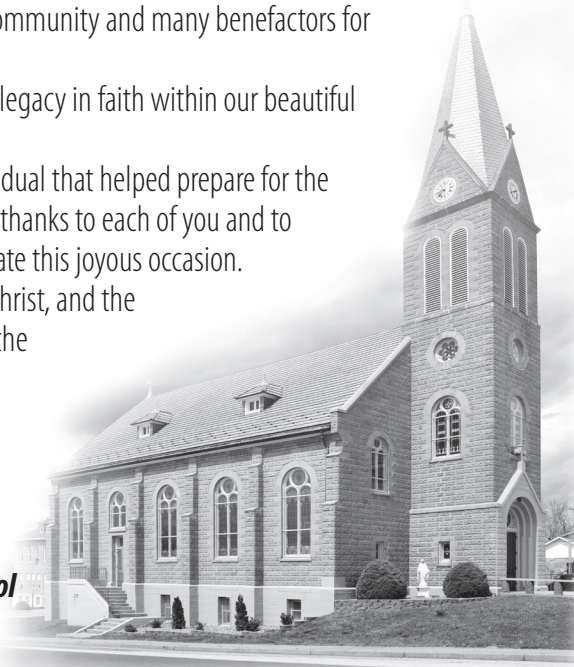
As Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church celebrates their 150th Anniversary, and as Visitation Inter-Parish School celebrates their 125th Anniversary, we wish to take a moment to extend our sincerest appreciation to our parishioners, community and many benefactors for your steady support over the years.

Together we have formed a solid legacy in faith within our beautiful community of Vienna.

While we can't name every individual that helped prepare for the event, we wish to extend a special thanks to each of you and to those of you who helped us celebrate this joyous occasion.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. — 2 Corinthians 13:14

**Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish and Visitation Inter-Parish School**



Windows • from page 13

together to fund and re-sponsor windows that had been endowed by their ancestors a century before. Parish and community members were incredibly supportive of the fund-raising efforts to preserve the church windows. There were many donations and memorials made toward the window restoration project. The parish was also fortunate to receive funding from the Schwartze Foundation toward the restoration efforts. In all, the cost to restore the windows was slightly over \$140,000.00.

Immediately following Easter of 2014, work finally began on the windows. The five large windows on the north side of church were removed and replaced with plywood sheeting. The process was impressive. Piece by piece, the window framing was removed, the large window panels cut in half, and the sections carefully and painstakingly removed. The round medallion windows were removed intact. Kevin O'Brien and his wife Sandy worked on this part of the project. As each piece of window was removed, it was reinforced with furring strips that were attached to the non-painted side of the windows with packing tape for stability during transport. Some of these windows were very challenging to remove due to the structural settling of the

church building over the past 100 years causing an extremely tight fit. The windows were then loaded into a trailer for the long trip to Rollingstone, Minnesota, where they would be cleaned, polished, repaired and resealed, waterproofed and re-leaded with a restoration grade lead containing an extra alloy.

While the first set of windows were under repair, capital campaign chair Sheri Stormer and her husband Bob traveled to Minnesota for a site visit at O'Brien Stained Glass, Inc. The purpose for the trip was two-fold: to personally inspect the work being done by the O'Brien's crew and to emphasize that the parish was vested in this effort and concerned about the integrity of the windows. Kevin O'Brien carefully explained the system as his staff worked. Before the windows were cleaned and disassembled, a photo was taken and a full-size rubbing was made of each window to assist with re-assembly. The windows were then soaked overnight in water to soften the lead and to remove 100 years of grime. The windows, after 100 years of service, were extremely dirty and the sediment clearly visible in the cleaning trays. In the next step, the old leading was removed and each piece was carefully cleaned of any residue.

Finally, each piece was polished and placed in individual trays to await re-assembly. The rubbing and colored photos of the windows were referenced throughout the process as each piece was put back in place and new leading applied. It was a time-consuming and very detailed process.

In mid-summer, the north windows were returned to Vienna and re-installed in the church. The differences were immediately apparent! The colors were much brighter and many of the long-forgotten background details were again evident since the windows had been cleaned and polished. The lower portion of the windows, which had formerly opened for ventilation, was incorporated as one piece into the windows. Mismatched glass was replaced and one small piece of previously repaired mismatched painted glass was custom painted; it was so well done that it was nearly impossible to identify which piece had been repainted. Msgr. Makarewicz noted that, "The windows can now speak to us in a way that they have not done for many, many years." Phase one of the project was complete!

In October 2014, the southern five large windows were removed and again replaced with large plywood sheets. On one of these

windows, "The Agony in the Garden," there was no sponsorship noted. Research involving queries to senior parish members did not yield any clues as to who may have originally sponsored this window. Ultimately it was agreed that re-sponsorship would be in honor of the Visitation Parish family. Mr. O'Brien located a craftsman who was able to duplicate the script used on the other windows so all the large windows would have identical script. These restored windows were returned and reinstalled by the end of that year. After the windows were installed, the 1/4 inch tempered glass went into place on the outside of the windows to protect them and to replace the discolored Plexiglas.

In January 2015, all the remaining windows around the altar, bell tower, and the choir loft were removed in stages. By early May, the last restored windows were completed and re-installed. A collective sigh of relief was made by everyone. Without mishap, the project was completed and paid for in full!

On May 23, 2015, on the Vigil for the Solemnity of Pentecost, Bishop John R. Gaydos and Msgr. Makarewicz led a community-wide celebration and Mass to rededicate the windows.

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## Recollections of Father Nardoni

Many recollections of Father Nardoni were made by parishioners, noting his devout Catholicism and for his true love of this community and those he served.

He was often a visitor in the homes of his parishioners and loved working on the local farms during hay season. Several members of the community, who were not Catholic, also recounted stories of him coming to visit with them and their families in times of hardship and loss. Many also remember how he loved to play cards with local gents, a common past time during this era, and how at the end of the evening any wagers won were scooped into his pockets for the church collection basket!

As the stories of Nardoni are told, they do not come without recollections of his housekeeper and cook, Ann Donatello, an Italian lady from Chicago, Illinois. Ann was well known for her extreme kindness to everyone, and is especially remembered for her Italian cooking skills. She often cooked large meals of spaghetti and meatballs for local citizens and priests, some of who come from as far as St. Louis just to eat her meal.

Several individuals who had helped serve at these large meals, often held in the church basement hall, recall that Ann had made "bibs" for the priests to prevent them from getting spaghetti sauce on their vestments. Bishop Marling was often a guest to the rectory and he had his own personalized "bib" to keep his alb and chasuble clean when eating. Donatello also sponsored events at the rectory for home economics groups, local flower clubs and other community organizations.



ATTENDANTS ENJOYED fried chicken dinners and a quilt show inside the Knights of Columbus Hall.



**THANK YOU** *Gracias*  
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for helping our *community*  
to **grow** in heart and in spirit  
for the past **150** years!



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**KELLY BARNHART** (above, in background), Dance Academy instructor, proudly looks on as Elizabeth Veasman and Eden Hall complete a happy trolls routine, Get Back Up Again. Clara Jones (top right), age 4, performs in the "Chapel of Love" tap dance. A young Grace Veasman (right) performs a tap routine, Zip A Dee Doo Dah, during the Dance Academy's performance. Jillian Fick (far right) performs a solo tap routine to "In the Mood." Kicking off the Dance Academy's performance with a cheer routine were Nora Garro and Maggie Veasman (middleright). The youngest group (below), aged 4-5, included Riley McKinnon, Emerson Jeremy, Clara Jones and Annastyn Newton performing The Chapel of Love routine.



# Congratulations Visitation Parish

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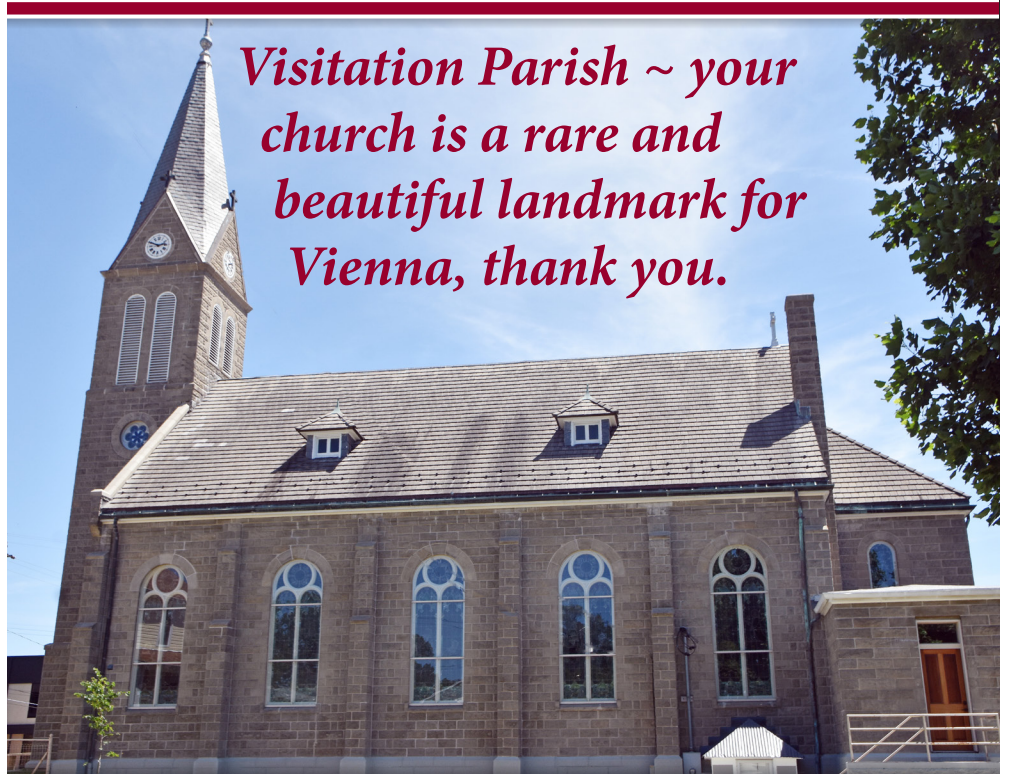
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**DANCE ACADEMY** dancers Clara Jones, Riley McKinnon, Emerson Jeremy, Addison Dittmeyer, Alexis Curtis, Grace Veasman, Macy Rowden, Elizabeth Veasman, Jillian Fick, Eden Hall, Nora Garro and Tori Schulte accept a final round of applause for their outstanding performances. The Dance Academy's is under the direction of dance instructor, Rob Kilmer, along with instructor Kelly Barnhart. Addison Dittmeyer (right) dances during her Hip Hop performance.



### Sesquicentennial committee

The people who said "yes" when the planning began for the Visitation Parish 150th Anniversary celebration formed a committee to plan and implement it. They met frequently, assigned tasks and set about getting them done. Among the many highlights of the June 17 celebration are a parish history book, a parish cookbook, and the beginning of the ringing of the three-times daily Angelus bells. Committee members established Lisa Jones as the leader. Members include Susan Brunnert, Alan Fick, Sylvester Buschmann, Fr. Matthew Flatley, Nina Stratman, LaVaughn Zimmer, Lawrence and Dorothy Buschmann, Teresa Finnern, Imelda Riley, Valerie Haller, John Viessman, Vic Stratman, Sarah Buschmann and Donna VanScoy.

# Congratulations

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**St. Alexander, Belle**



**St. Cecilia, Meta**



*And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. — Matthew 16:18*

## Sharing memories of Fr. Fugel

BY ROXIE MURPHY  
ADVOCATE STAFF  
WRITER

rmurphy@wardpub.com

VIENNA—Visitation Parish members celebrated the sesquicentennial of the church by sharing memories of the building's first priest, Father John Fugel.

Family of Father Fugel's foster daughter Helen Meronerl Weidinger, said he was a renaissance man, a man before his time. Many others agree.

John Viessman had heard several tales of the Fugel's exploits.

"One fellow told me his father was born in 1892," Viessman began. "He was here when they were building the church. Fugel had his collar on and his sleeves rolled up and was doing pick and shovel work. Someone walked by when he was working and said something disparaging about Catholics and the church. He just went out, whooped him in the street and came back."

It is also well-known that

Fugel had altercations with the Ku Klux Klan in Vienna and in one newspaper article, he famously challenged the Klan to a debate, offering the winner \$500.

"He also had quite an altercation with the Klu Klux Klan in 1924," Viessman said. "They apparently burned a cross somewhere on the Parish grounds. He was very anti-Klan in the newspaper he produced, *The Home Adviser*."

He also remembered a story about Helen and the dedication of the church.

"The orphan, Helen, when Governor (Joseph Wingate) Folk came for the dedication of the church, Fugel made her go up and down the steps in the rectory, practicing her curtsy for when the governor came. She told me that, probably in the early 70s," Viessman recalled.

Helen's grandson, Roger Schmitz, said his grandmother did not talk about Fugel much, but not because she was angry with him. She didn't want to draw attention to herself.



**PARISHIONER SYLVESTER** Buschmann shares information about Visitation parish history with one of the many visitors to the parish historical museum.

"She called him father," Schmitz said. "If she would have called him dad, it would have been World War III."

Well-known accounts also address other articles he wrote in his newspaper, such as rumors that the blocks used to construct the newspaper building were defective. He also pioneered a telephone line between Vienna and

Brinktown to promote communications with his satellite office.

Many agreed Fugel was a humanitarian and went out of his way to help others. Helen wasn't the only one from the orphan train that benefited from his kindness. Fugel made arrangements to accept the children in at the train station in Freeburg.



**NORB SCHWARTZE** scratches his head in amazement as he reads 25-year old letters that were unearthed from the 1992 time capsule. The letters shown here were from former Visitation Inter-Parish School children.

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**WHAT IS** believed to be the original tabernacle was on display (above). Visitors enjoyed the letters (left) unearthed from the 1992 time capsule.

## Father Fugel and the Ku Klux Klan

The history of Father Fugel cannot be completed without the retelling of the story of his run-ins with the Ku Klux Klan.

In the early 1920s the Ku Klux Klan began holding rallies in mid-Missouri area, particularly in Belle, and Fugel openly condemned their tenets in his editorials in the Home Adviser and in his teachings from the pulpit. On Sunday,

March 16, 1924, a rally was held at the Vienna courthouse. An advertisement for that gathering was found in another local paper which verifies the occurrence of that rally. The event was very vocally opposed by Fugel.

Several Vienna citizens claim that the Klan attempted to burn a cross on Visitation Church grounds. Fugel reportedly extinguished the cross and removed it

from the parish grounds after a physical scuffle with the group. In the weeks following, after verbal sparring with the Klan through various newsprint, Fugel challenged the Klan to a verbal debate about the principals and purpose of the order. He offered \$500 cash, from his own pocket, to "a real klansman" that was brave enough to publicly accept this challenge. That debate never happened.

## Congratulations

to Visitation Parish on the successful celebration of your Sesquicentennial on Saturday. You are a blessing to all of us.

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To everyone at the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Parish. Thanks for all you do for Vienna and the surrounding community.

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## Way to Go!

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Creating this special section has been both exciting and rewarding. We hope you enjoy it as much as we have.

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"St. Anthony" Bell, 1949



Ornate blocks, 1905



Cornerstone, 1907

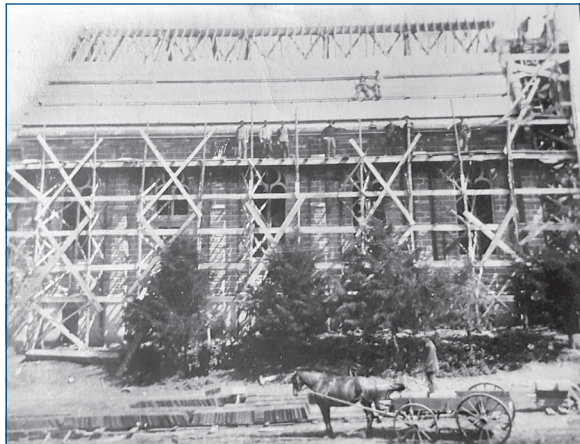
150 Years  
1867 - 2017

Sesquicentennial  
Celebration

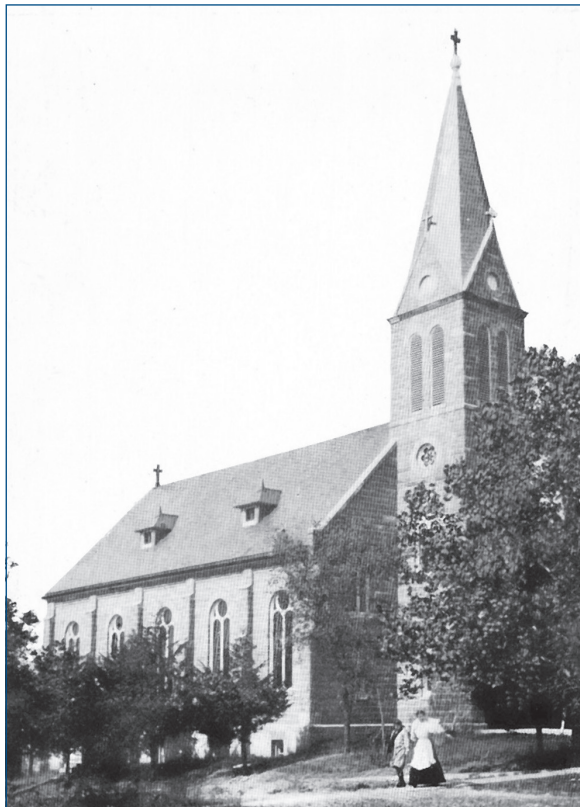
Visitation of the  
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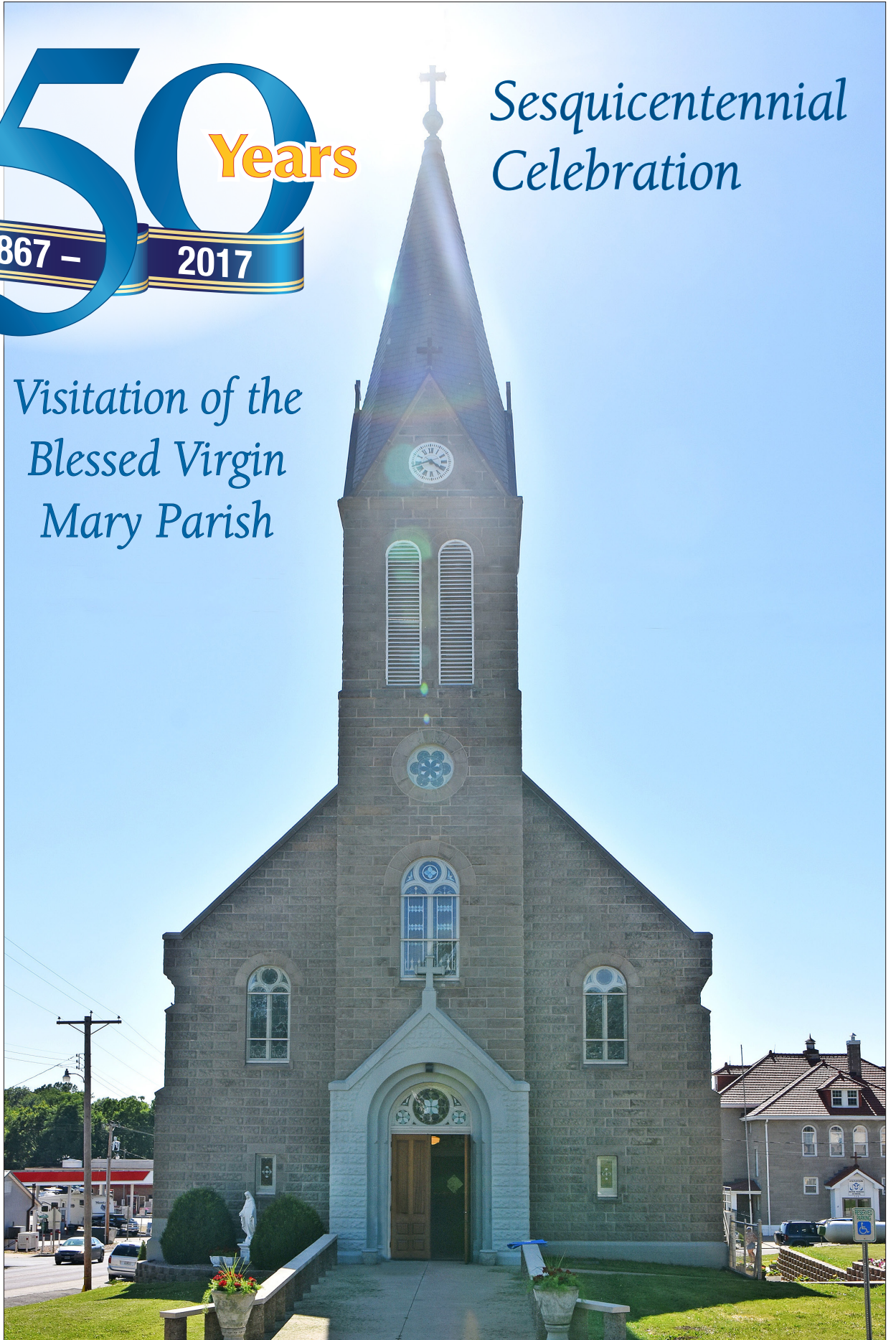
Vienna St. Mary's Catholic Church ~ 1885



During construction of current building



Current parish building ~ 1907



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