

The Friends of Old Saint Thomas *at Ivy Mills*

Volume 21, No.1

Spring/Summer 2014

e-mail: fost@fost.us

NEWSLETTER

www.fost.us

Paper or E-Mail?

Your Choice

For the last year or so FOST has e-mailed the Newsletter to all member e-mail addresses we have. But some members have told us paper copies work better for them, and we are happy to oblige.

If e-mail alone is good for you, do nothing. If you prefer a paper copy sent by U.S. mail, please e-mail or call (fost@fost.us, 610 459-8392), to let us know.

Ivy Mills, Saint Thomas Parish Artifacts Come Home

“The past is never dead. It isn’t even past.” So wrote William Faulkner in 1951. Said differently, the idea is that obvious or not, remembered or not, the effects of the past never go away. So it is with Ivy Mills and our Catholic heritage. Much has changed in the years since Saint Thomas, Pennsylvania’s first Catholic parish, began in 1729, but the legacy of faith continues to influence, to inform and to inspire.

Legacies are passed on in many different ways. One way is by seeing the actual artifacts used by our forebears of long ago. In the Fall, FOST plans to display several objects used at Ivy Mills’ Saint Mary’s Chapel and at old Saint Thomas Church.

They include a chalice and paten made in 1698, brought here by Thomas Willcox in the early 18th century, and used by the Jesuit missionaries who regularly visited Ivy Mills beginning in the 1720s and by visiting priests through the 18th and 19th centuries. Also displayed will be the parish’s original Roman Missal and the stand that supports it that stood on the altar during Masses in the old church. Published in 1846, the Missal bears the handwritten inscription “Ex Libris Ecclesiae S^t Thomas Apostoli, Ivy Mills”. The collection includes the portable altar and matching tabernacle used at Ivy Mills and probably in the old church as well.

All but the tabernacle were given to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia at various times, since they are fundamental to all Pennsylvania Catholic history. Now, the Archdiocesan Archives has arranged a long-

term loan of the objects, along with a few others, to Saint Thomas Parish at Ivy Mills. Look for the display in the Social Hall sometime in the Fall of 2014.

World Meeting of Families

Saint Thomas Family Photo Exhibit Planned

The 8th World Meeting of Families will be held in Philadelphia, September 22 to September 27, 2015. Saint John Paul II called for the first such meeting in 1994 to strengthen the family, which he described as “the first and vital cell of society”. Twenty years later the family is under assault as never before, so that the need for strengthening families has never been greater.

Scheduled every three years, the upcoming Meeting will be first time it has been held in the United States. Archbishop Chaput remarked that “the more we encourage and support the integrity of families, the healthier society becomes.” The mission of the Meeting is “to show the joy of authentic family life to the world.” Moreover, he said, “This is a moment of grace not just for Catholics, but for the whole Philadelphia region and people of good will across the wider community.”

From its very first family in 1729, to today’s 2800 families, Saint Thomas has seen countless families come and go for nearly three centuries. To prepare for this once-in-a-lifetime World Meeting in our backyard, FOST is planning an exhibit of family photographs of Saint Thomas families, past and present. Look around for family photos you would be willing to share, to be part of the exhibit, which will become part of FOST collections after the exhibit closes. Look for further announcements in coming months in the *Sunday Bulletin*, and on the FOST website www.fost.us.

Ivy Mills/Saint Thomas TOURS

☞ **Free** ☞

• **Ivy Mills – 109 Ivy Mills Road**

Tour the home, outbuildings and grounds

• **Saint Thomas Historic District - 430 Valleybrook Rd.**

Tour the 1852 church, 1874 rectory and grounds

Begin at either location

June 22, July 27, August 24, September 28, October 26
(4th Sundays) **1:00 pm to 3:45 pm**

**The Friends of Old St. Thomas would like to thank the following for their financial support from
April 16, 2013 through April 15, 2014**

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YOUR MEMBERSHIP and DONATIONS enable FOST to continue to maintain the 1852 church, the 1874 rectory, the surrounding grounds and outbuildings in the historic district, and to offer educational programming. Last year with the help of individual donors and the parish, FOST achieved a major goal, raising sufficient funds for installation of a new air conditioning/heating system in the church. The 1874 rectory is used for various ministry meetings and small social gatherings and is available for wedding parties using the 1852 church. The second floor contains FOST office space, files, and collections. Programs include tours for schools, public and private tours, and special events.

Your participation in the MEMORIAL and HONOR PROGRAMS honors or memorializes individuals or groups. For a donation of \$25 or more you can enroll the name of a living or deceased person in the *Old Saint Thomas Memorial Book*. All listed persons are included in monthly prayers. The book is part of our permanent archives, displayed on special occasions. Announcements are sent to recipients, and donors receive a receipt.

Note that an on-line option for membership and donations is available at www.fost.us.

**The Friends of Old Saint Thomas at Ivy Mills
PO Box 19, Chester Heights, PA 19017**

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Please make checks payable to FOST and mail to above address. Thank you.

The Friends of Old Saint Thomas at Ivy Mills

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NEWSLETTER

www.friendsofoldstthomas.org

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Historical Notes

Catholic Families in English Colonial America

As noted in the Spring 2013 *Newsletter*, the role of the laity in the English colonies in America was central to the Catholic experience, including here at Ivy Mills. Because families are very much an essential part of Catholic life today, and in preparation for the upcoming World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia next September, a bit more on the topic seems in order.

Throughout the American colonial period, Catholic families did the best they could to remain steadfast in the faith, to educate their children properly, and to follow church directives on Lent and the many other seasonal days of fasting and prayer at the time. With no parishes and infrequent visits by missionary priests, they were on their own for great stretches of time. They remained true to their Catholic beliefs even in their isolation.

Writing about Maryland in the 17th and early 18th centuries, where despite a hostile government Catholics not only survived but eventually prospered, historian Jay Dolan described common practices brought from England to encourage piety among the faithful. A popular 17th century "manual of prayers" provided individuals and families with schedules of ***"morning and evening devotions for each day of the week, litanies and psalms, as well as devotions for Mass, confession, and Communion"***.

Later, equally popular books ***"fostered devotion to Jesus and the events of his life....***Neither militant nor triumphal, the author's spirit of devotion was, as one writer put it, 'subtly undenominational', the type that fostered

'peace with other Christians'. His instructions were 'practical and ethical rather than theoretical'...."

Such private piety, Dolan writes "was especially appropriate for Marylandwith few priests and a scarcity of pulpits, people could readily turn to their manuals of prayer." Further, mothers "occupied a special place in the Catholic community. Not only was the mother the principal instructor in religion, she was also the chief cook, who saw to it that fast days were observed."

The Pennsylvania situation was similar, but farther away from the priests' home base, so that access to Mass and sacraments was likely even less frequent. After 1790, other missionary priests replaced the Maryland Jesuits at Ivy Mills, but their visits were probably still sporadic. The Willcoxes were not the only colonial family to host missionary priests: several in Wilmington, Philadelphia, Conewago, and Bally (Goschenhoppen), among other places, did the same, and the Maryland Jesuits visited those areas too. Without such dedicated families, the Catholic presence in the English colonies would have been limited to a handful of missionary priests, and the history of subsequent Catholic immigrants here and elsewhere would necessarily have been quite different.

The Cuthbert Collection

History can become known only if evidence of the past is available, such as written or printed material, photographs, digital, audio and video files and so on. Researchers then mine those sources for facts that trace what happened, when, and who was involved.

FOST actively collects items that tell the St Thomas/Ivy Mills story. The Cuthbert Country Fair Collection is the latest addition. Long time parishioners and Fair volunteers Jim and Floss Cuthbert recently donated items pertaining to the Old Saint Thomas Country Fair, which ran annually (with occasional breaks) from 1898 to about 2000. Organized and staffed by thousands of dedicated parishioners, it was the parish's single greatest income-

producing activity for decades, and was a highlight of the year for all of western Delaware County, not just the parish. The first Fair in 1898 paid for the new stained glass windows, marble altars, new pews and other improvements.

Great thanks to the Cuthberts, whose thoughtful donation will allow us a more detailed account of the great Old Saint Thomas Fair for future generations to enjoy. If you or anyone you know has similar accumulations of parish memorabilia, please contact us!

EASY way to help FOST!
For Christmas shopping -
Use Amazon SMILE.
Start at the FOST website
www.friendsofoldstthomas.org
and click on the link to Amazon.
It's that easy!

Appreciation Breakfast

The success of our ministry is dependent on the work of volunteers. On October 26 in the 1874 rectory, volunteers enjoyed each other's company and an excellent breakfast menu. Father Groarke and Sister Nicoletta were our special guests. You can come, too! Become a FOST volunteer! Contact FOST via e-mail at **fost@friendsofoldstthomas.org** or call 610-358-4835.

1852 Church

- On July 4, Independence Day, FOST participated in the National Program "**Proclaim Liberty**" by ringing the 1860 church bell thirteen times at 2:00 pm.
- Father Francis celebrated Mass on the church steps on **Memorial Day** and again on November 8 to remember and pray for **All Souls**.
- The 9:45AM Sunday Masses have proved to be very popular. Note that seating capacity is 200 persons. Beginning January 4, 2015, this Mass will be at 9:15AM
- The priests' sacristy has been painted! And a new iron handrail was installed on the outside steps leading to it.
- Ceiling fans to aid in heating and cooling have been installed.

Membership & Honor & Memorial Program

For donations of \$10.00 or more, individuals and groups may enroll the name of living or deceased persons in the Old St. Thomas Honor/Memorial Book. The Friends will notify a designated recipient by mail.

Donations of \$1000 or more are recognized on the donor plaque in the old church. Donations may be cumulative.

Join or Donate by US Mail or on-line at

www.friendsofoldstthomas.org

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The Friends of Old Saint Thomas
PO Box 19, Chester Heights, PA 19017

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Thank you!