

# *The Friends of Old Saint Thomas at Ivy Mills*

## NEWSLETTER

Volume 25, No. 1

e-mail: [fost@friendsofoldstthomas.org](mailto:fost@friendsofoldstthomas.org)

Spring 2018

[www.friendsofoldstthomas.org](http://www.friendsofoldstthomas.org)

### **Reverend Patrick Kenney**

#### ***A Man of Abundant Faith and Fortitude***

Reverend Patrick Kenny was a beloved Irish priest who visited the Willcoxes and other Catholics at Ivy Mills often. Born and raised in Dublin, Ireland, Patrick Kenny (1773-1840) studied for the priesthood at St. Sulpice Seminary near Paris, France, since there were no Catholic seminaries in Ireland or England at the time. He did not belong to an order such as the Jesuits or Augustinians, but served directly under the only bishop in the U. S. Bishop John Carroll's newly founded diocese (1789) stretched along the English-settled Atlantic coast out to the formerly French outposts of Louisville, Vincennes and Detroit. In 1805 he assigned his newest recruit to our area because too few Jesuits were available to continue.

Intense summer heat on the day of his arrival in Wilmington almost caused the good cleric to go back on the same ship that brought him. A full passenger list for the return trip prevented that, he told the Willcoxes, so he stayed to become one of the most effective and favorite of all itinerant priests here. A man of uncommon mental and spiritual strength, like most travelling priests, he lived an arduous life in his adopted country, where the Catholic church was just beginning to emerge from its missionary status.

Since there was next to no financial help to be had from the new diocese, many of them made their own arrangements for income and sustenance. They depended heavily on Catholic individuals and families for both. In his diary, Kenny frequently refers to Mass-goers paying "subscriptions" for his services. He was a "farmer priest", who managed the 200-acre farm at White Clay Creek (later called Coffee Run) not far from Wilmington. Transferred to him from Jesuit ownership, it was an important source of income. In 1808 his diary notes "6 fat hogs to market brought", and that he received \$4.25 from Mrs. Willcox "for 30 lbs. of flax".

Rev. Kenny was assigned to several widely separated Catholic communities. Early on he served two churches, one at Coffee Run and one in Philadelphia (Holy Trinity at 6<sup>th</sup> & Pine), and five "stations" in Chester & Delaware Counties and northern Delaware, where Catholics met at private homes for Mass and the sacraments. Later, he celebrated Mass in a brick church building on the site of today's Cathedral of St. Peter in Wilmington. He is, in fact, considered the founder of Wilmington diocese.

To reach his congregations, he travelled in every way possible then: on foot, by horseback, via Dearborn (a 2-wheel horse-drawn carriage), by stage coach and by steamboat. His diary notes some of the difficulties: "walked from Chester to Wade's near Judge Willcox – nearly lost. Snow and hard frost." Other entries refer to excessive heat, rough roads and an ornery horse. One-way stage fare between West Chester and Philadelphia was \$1.50; by steamboat from Philadelphia to Wilmington, \$1.62 – large amounts at the time for one who never had much money.

A humble man of faith, in his diary two years running he wrote on Dec. 31 (once in Latin): "My soul returns thanks to the Almighty God for the prosperous & for what I may have thought unfavorable events this year." He was close to the Willcoxes. Joseph Willcox reported in his Kenny biography that though he had an impulsive temper, "It was disciplined and subdued with Christian fortitude....He was very companionable, and possessed an abundant store of humor and pleasantry." All that, despite unending money worries and difficult travels, hard work on the farm, cheating businessmen and unreliable workers, unpleasant challenges in his Philadelphia parish, and an ever-present painful leg condition. He was much loved and respected by his far-flung flock. The lengthy text of his gravemarker at Coffee Run concludes with "Revered and Respected".



### **Maintenance Updates**

#### ***Steeple, Cornice & Interior Projects***

The greatest thanks to all who have generously given to the Steeple Re-siding campaign. The total amount received is still growing, and we are hopeful of reaching \$130,000 soon. That amount (best bid received from a renowned firm from Lancaster County) includes restoring the cornice (the molding between roof and stonework). We cannot commit to the work, and thus secure a spot on the firm's schedule, until all funds are in hand. Please consider helping us reach our goal if you have not yet done so, by check or on the FOST website (above, left).

Two interior projects are underway at this writing: repairing the ceiling-covering droop in several spots and refurbishing the tabernacle interior. Specialists from the St. Jude Shop of Havertown expect to be finished by the second week in June. Funding is available for both projects.



## *Thank You*

### **to members and donors**

*April 16, 2017 - April 15, 2018*

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9:15 Mass Special Collections



# *The Friends of Old Saint Thomas at Ivy Mills*

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### Relics at St Thomas the Apostle Parish

What are relics? What does the Church say about them? Does St Thomas the Apostle parish have actual relics?

A relic is commonly defined as “something that has survived the passage of time”. For the Church, relics are much more: they are “physical objects that have a direct association with the saints, or with Christ”. The Church never declares relics as authentic, but approves items with “reasonable probability ...believed to be genuine”. They have been part of the Judeo-Christian tradition since the time of Moses. The Old Testament, for example, relates that Moses carried the bones of Joseph (who was sold into slavery by his brothers) during the exodus from Egypt. Later a miracle took place in the presence of the bones of the prophet Elisha, who was himself a “wonderworker”.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Catholic relics associated with saints are revered because they are directly associated with men and women who have been declared saints – persons who “had led a life of prayer and self-denial in giving witness to Christ” and are therefore recommended as “models and intercessors”. At least two medical miracles are usually required along with other evidence before a candidate for sainthood is canonized (declared a saint by the Pope). Often the connection is made via a first class relic. It is essential to understand that God brought about healing through the relics: there is no mysterious

power vested in relics themselves. Equally essential is the understanding that relics are venerated (approached with deep reverence), not worshipped. God alone is worshipped.

Catholic relics fall into three classes: *First Class* - fragments of bone or flesh; *Second Class* - items (or fragments thereof) owned by a saint, such as clothing or books; *Third Class* - items the saint touched, or items that have been touched to a first or second class relic. Relics associated directly with Christ, such as the Shroud of Turin and fragments of the True Cross are a separate Class.

The Church’s Code of Canon Law strictly prohibits their sale: “It is absolutely forbidden to sell sacred relics.”. They are to be exchanged only as gifts, preferably among religious institutions. Despite this prohibition, relics are bought and sold by the irreverent and have been almost from the start.

Relics at Saint Thomas the Apostle parish at Ivy Mills include two of St. Thomas himself, one in the 1852 Church and one in the new church. Another is of St. Catherine Labouré (d. 1876), who received instructions from the Blessed Mother to have the Miraculous Medal made. Still others, kept in the parish reliquary, are St. Francis of Assisi (d. 1226), Bishop St. John Neumann, CSsR (d. 1860), St. Thérèse Lisieux (d. 1897), St. Maria Goretti (d. 1902), Pope St. Pius X (d. 1914), Brother St. Andre Bessette, C.S.C. (d. 1937), and St. Padre Pio (d. 1968).

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## The 1852 Church

Steeple repair work has been completed! A new 4-foot stainless steel cross at the top has replaced the aluminum cross, which was beyond repair. Cornice work is also finished, except for the vestibule, which

will be painted when warmer temperatures return. The smaller stained glass windows in the vestibule are under restoration now, and will be re-installed soon. Painting and masonry repair will conclude the exterior work later in the Spring. **Great thanks** to all who have given so generously to enable the restoration and refurbishment of the 1852 Church. Commemorative plaques will follow later this year.

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## Help Wanted

**Gardening and Cleaning** are two on-going tasks, shared by very small teams of volunteers. If you could help with either, please consider doing so. Think about helping a few hours a month in and around the 1852 Church. Many persons who have worked at the old Church have been “surprised by

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joy”, so to speak, at the calming benefits that go along with the work. All who visit benefit directly from your efforts. Note that **Mulching Day is coming up soon. Extra help is especially needed then.** Please contact Bette Popiel if you can pitch in (610 358 4835; bettejpop@gmail.com).

**Archives:** FOST’s collections include hundreds of photos, documents, and publications that chronicle segments of the parish’s 290-year history. An experienced archivist could help FOST organize and preserve those collections. The artifact collection is much smaller but equally important in passing along the unique tale of St. Thomas at Ivy Mills. If you can help, please contact Marianne Squyres (610 459-8392; mdsquyres@squyres.com).

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## Monthly Meeting Date Change

Note that FOST meets now on the first Tuesday of each month, at 2 PM, in the 1874 Rectory.

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