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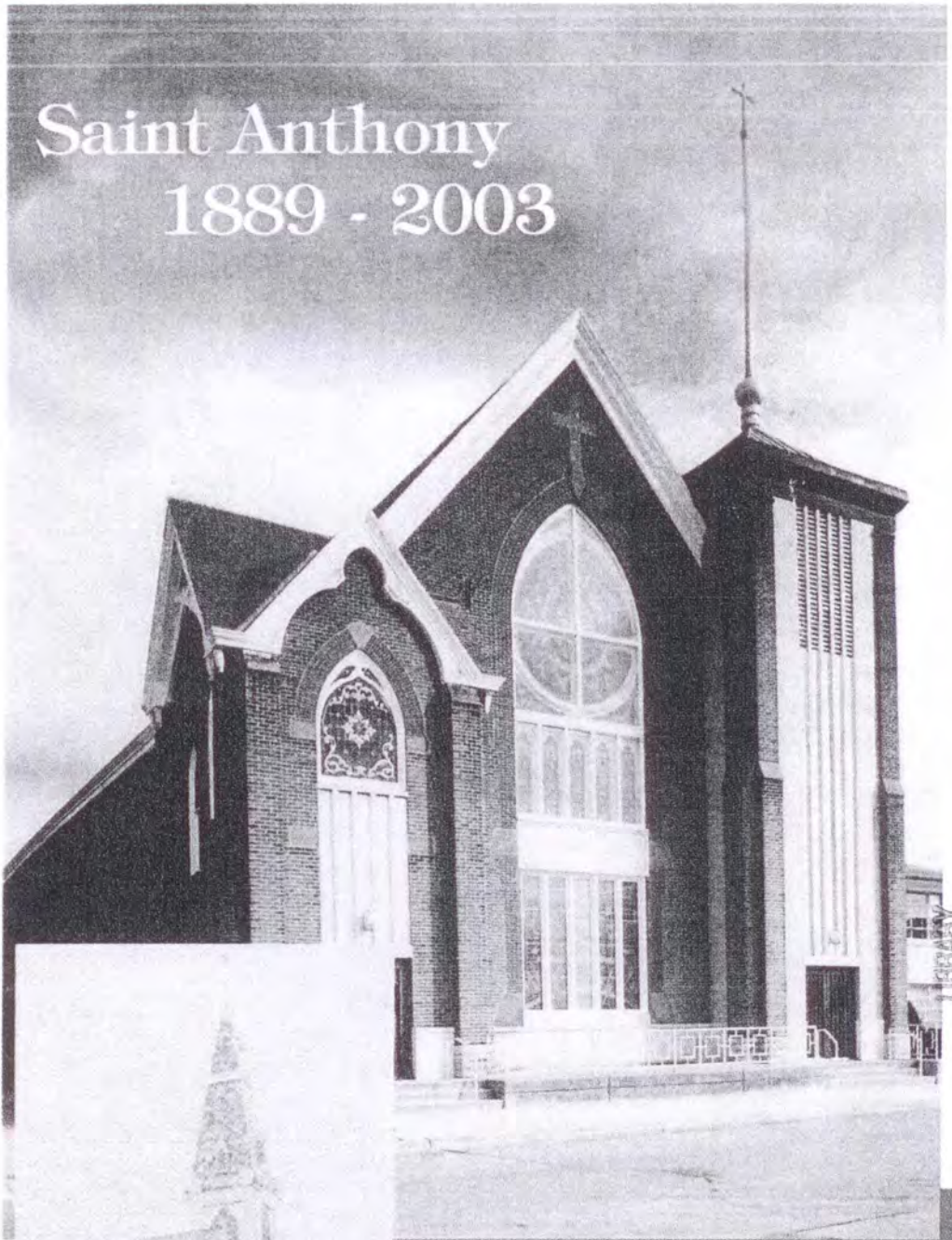
Saint Anthony
1889 – 2003

Final Mass

June 22, 2003

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Final Mass
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History of St. Anthony of Padua Church in Bellevue, Kentucky

St. Anthony of Padua Church was established in October of 1889. It was the second Catholic parish to form in Bellevue. The Church actually dates back to October 9, 1887 when a meeting was held at the home of Mr. John Kearns, Sr. to discuss the need for the establishment of an English speaking church in Bellevue. The first Catholic Church established in Bellevue, Sacred Heart, was a German speaking parish, which could not meet the religious needs of the English speaking Catholics of the community. Bishop Camillus Maes recognized this need and assigned Rev. William Ryan to the task of organizing a new parish in Bellevue, and thus, became the first pastor of St. Anthony. The cornerstone of the first St. Anthony Church was laid on August 11, 1889, and on October 27, 1889, the church, erected at a cost of about \$4,000.00 was dedicated by Bishop Maes. The first church building was completed in 1890.

With the growth of the parish, a new church building was needed and on August 6, 1893, the cornerstone of the present St. Anthony Church was laid. On May 6, 1894, the new St. Anthony Church was dedicated by Bishop Maes. Along with the new church, in September of 1893, a parish school was built and opened its doors under the care of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. The school remained under the Sisters' care until July of 1981 when the order left and the educational program was taken over by the Sisters of Notre Dame.

Because of ill health, Fr. Ryan, retired to St. Elizabeth Hospital in 1895. The Rev. Thomas McGrady was then appointed as new pastor of St. Anthony. Fr. McGrady came to us from St. Edward parish in Cynthiana. He was widely known for his lectures, and nationally known as a leader in his thinking on social issues. His pastorate ended in April 1902.

The Rev. Francis Kehoe became the third pastor of St. Anthony and worked faithfully to build the parish both spiritually and physically. He served at St. Anthony for twenty-six years, during which time he liquidated the parish debt, purchased and remodeled a pastoral residence, secured a convent for the sisters, and enlarged the school. In 1928, Fr. Kehoe was transferred to Immaculate Conception parish in Newport.

The Rev. Thomas Coleman, from Pendleton County, became the next pastor of St. Anthony parish. Under his direction, a new school was built and dedicated on June 29, 1930 by Bishop Francis Howard. The present rectory and former convent were also erected during his stay as pastor. Fr. Coleman served the parish faithfully until 1956 when he passed away. Fr. John Modica served as administrator for about a year until a new pastor was announced.

In June of 1957, Fr. Joseph Collins came to St. Anthony also from St. Edward parish in Cynthiana. Major renovations to the church building took place. The tower, the candlesticks were replaced or rebuilt. The two houses across the street from the

church were demolished and the ground paved to make a parking lot for the parish, as well as a playground for the students. With the renovations completed, the church was again dedicated on January 14, 1962. Fr. Collins retired in 1970. Fr. Henry Haacke replaced him; however his stay with the parish was a short one.

In 1973, the Rev. Paul Krebs, who had been an assistant at St. Anthony's since 1962 was named as our next pastor. In 1979, the interior of the church was redecorated as you see it today. After 19 years of dedicated service to the parish and teaching at Newport Catholic High School, Fr. Krebs left St. Anthony in July 1981 to become the Chaplain at St. Elizabeth Hospital.

Msgr. John Elsaesser from St. Henry parish in Erlanger was assigned to replace Fr. Krebs as our pastor, but because of ill health, the Monsignor stepped down from his role in July of 1983. Fr. Douglas Fortner was assigned pastor in his stead. Many changes came to St. Anthony parish under Fr. Fortner's direction. Training lay lectors and adding Eucharistic Ministers were some of the changes made to the Liturgy. A new organ was acquired and air conditioning was installed in the church building. Under Fr. Fortner's guidance, Catholic elementary school education remained in Bellevue. Both St. Anthony and Sacred Heart schools were struggling financially in the mid 1980's. Father helped guide the merging of these two parish schools to form the new St. Michael School in June of 1987. In 1989, St. Anthony Church celebrated its 100th Anniversary as a parish in Bellevue. Fr. Fortner remained at St. Anthony's until June of 1990 when he became pastor at St. Pius X parish in Edgewood.

In July 1990, Fr John Kroger came to us from Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in Hebron to become our 10th pastor. When Fr. Kroger came to the parish in 1990 he told the people of St. Anthony that he was fully aware of the fact that St. Anthony had gotten along fine for more than a hundred years without him. The parishioners of St. Anthony did not see him make any dramatic changes. For thirteen years, Fr. Kroger kept the parish on an even keel, but the demographics that were already at work continued in the same direction. Many more parishioners arrived at the golden age of life. The number of school children declined as our young parishioners moved from the city to the suburbs. In 2001, Bishop Robert Muench asked that a task force be convened from the membership of St. Anthony, St. Bernard, and Sacred Heart parishes to discuss how and when one priest only would be serving the Catholic community of Bellevue and Dayton. After nearly two years of meetings, Fr. Mike Comer announced he could take care of two parishes, but not three. It was then decided from the meetings, that a single parish in Bellevue would be formed from the merger of St. Anthony and Sacred Heart parishes. The newly found parish would be named the parish of Divine Mercy and the members would worship in the Sacred Heart Church building. The final Mass for St. Anthony parish takes place on Sunday June 22, 2003 at 11:00 am. With the closing of St. Anthony parish, Fr. Kroger is retiring. He will continue to live in our community, and has offered to help out in the Diocese when needed. It is with much sadness that we bid farewell to St. Anthony Parish. We must look forward with high anticipation for our new parish of Divine Mercy.