

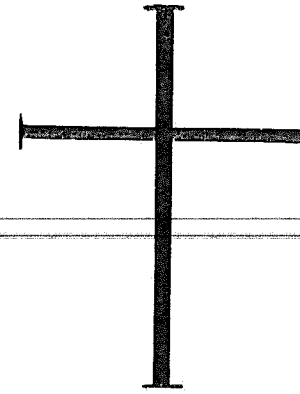


Aerial view of Holy Cross church, school (foreground), convent (gabled building), and auditorium (right). Rectory is behind church.

At one time the spiritual center of a community consisting mostly of German truck farmers, the parish buildings have a rural appearance. Cut off by the chocolate-colored Mississippi River, one of the

world's largest cemeteries, and by city limits, the parish is unable to expand. A one-street shopping district adds to its small-town atmosphere. In spite of these limitations, it has become internationally known as one of the great centers in the United States where the Liturgy of the Church is being revived.

IMPRIMATUR: Joseph E. Ritter, Archbishop of St. Louis
August 16, 1955



The Story of a Parish and its Pastor

In Words
And Pictures

by Adolph Schalk

The story of Holy Cross parish in St. Louis, Missouri, and of its pastor, the Right Reverend Monsignor Martin B. Hellriegel, has already been told many times. Writers have sung its praises in magazines, and visitors by the score have made it widely known in the United States and in foreign lands.

It is hoped that this booklet will make available to a wider audience a fairly complete, if not comprehensive, story of Holy Cross, which could be found previously only in scattered places. Some might like it as a useful memento of their visit to Holy Cross. For others, it might prove to serve as an introduction to this center of liturgical revival.

Perhaps we will be forgiven then, if we call attention primarily to those things which have given Holy Cross, the deserving distinction of a great pioneer parish in the United States. From it countless priests, religious, laypeople, Non-Catholics as well as Catholics, have drawn inspiration, hope and encouragement in the task of "restoring all things in Christ."

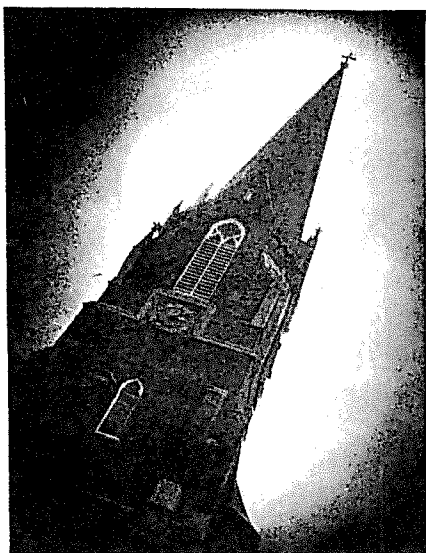
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The place is Holy Cross Church, St. Louis, Missouri. The time is Sunday—any Sunday—a few moments before 9:15 a. m. High Mass is about to begin.

Like a scene from a Grandma Moses landscape, the red brick, rural-looking, hilltop church, with its cross towering from a pointed steeple, is the only skyscraper for miles around. From this Northern edge of the city, formerly a German-speaking suburb called Baden, its big bells ring out over what forty years ago was country-side dotted with farm houses and now is covered with housing developments.

The parish is closed off for the most part from the rest of the city: to the south by one of the world's largest cemeteries, to the east by railroads and sprawling industries and by the chocolate-colored Mississippi, and by the city limits to the north and west. A one-street business district serves to contribute to the small-town atmosphere of this contained village-parish.

The steeple clock strikes. The organ begins to play. There is the clang of the bell from the sacristy, from which emerges the processional: cross-bearer, candle-bearers, the children's choir—boys wearing cassocks and long white surplices, girls dressed in blue robes and white caps—followed by the altar boys and the pastor, Monsignor Martin B. Hellriegel.



The congregation rises, housewives and workmen with names mostly like Schmandt, Kehlenbrink, Ernst, but also Clooney, Marino, Podorski—businessmen, teachers, gravediggers, CPAs, assembly-line workers, truck drivers, construction laborers, railroad men, truck farmers—all holding song cards in their hands. They sing the chorus of one of the hymns carefully chosen and translated from various hymnals by their pastor:

RIGHT: When the entire procession has left the sacristy singers and ministers pause at Our Lady's Altar and bow to her statue, asking her intercession that they may proceed worthily to the altar of her Son.



"O most Holy Trinity,
Undivided Unity,
Holy God, Mighty God,
God Immortal, be adored."

Most of the voices blend beautifully, some croak, a few are off-key. But the people sing, in keeping with the pastor's frequent admonition, "If you cannot sing like a canary, then sing like a woodpecker, but sing!"

The children are orderly but not regimented. There is a sense of expectation, as though a great event were about to transpire. For it is a great event, the ordinary Sunday High Mass, to the parishioners of Holy Cross.

The procession winds its way to the rear of the Church, then proceeds up the center aisle. "It is good to walk singing," the pastor has been heard to remark, "in the midst of your people, and to advance to the altar from their midst; you are their ministers, chosen from among men, and you bear their gifts to the altar."

The procession moves toward the altar. The eighteen boys from the schola cantorum (choir) occupy the choir stall inside the sanctuary near the altar rail, and the ten or twelve girls of the choir remain in the first pews. Holy Mass begins. The children's voices rise in pure tones of adoration, falling gracefully and naturally over the ears of the congregation. "The Lord is the strength of His people," they sing from the Introit of the 6th Sunday after Pentecost, "and the protector of the salvation of His anointed."



Few of those who hear these children sing for the first time can ever remember hearing anything like it before. "Angels in heaven may sing better," one writer was moved to comment, "but you cannot prove it by me."

Just about everyone in the entire congregation alternates with the schola for all the ordinary parts (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei) of the Mass. While the members of the schola use large books with musical notation (called 'Liber'), the booklets used by the congregation contain no notes or music of any kind. These people have learned to chant the Mass naturally. They are at home with the Mass, its music and its beauty.



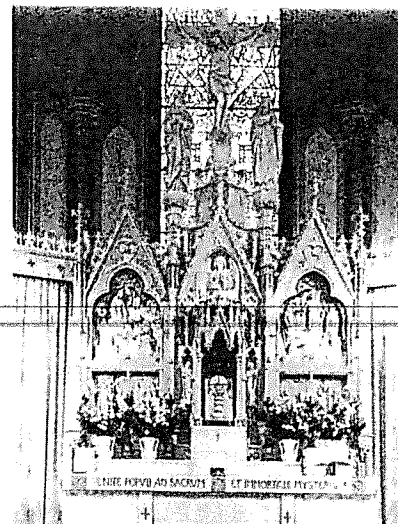
While the priest at the altar reads the epistle in Latin, one of the boys from the grade school reads it in English to the congregation, with much expression and understanding. For the 6th Sunday after Pentecost, he reads St. Paul's discourse on baptism.

When Monsignor Hellriegel comes to read the gospel to the people in English, he stands, without a pulpit, a big-shouldered, dominating figure of a man, bushy-browed and flashy-eyed, of large stature and dignity, and reads into a microphone with energy and clarity, not in a dull reading tone, as if the Gospel were something to be gotten over quickly. Occasionally he will introduce visitors to the congregation before giving the sermon. "We are honored to have with us this morning," he will say, "a group of students from St. Louis University . . ." or a professor from New York, or an abbot from Europe, or a member of the hierarchy from our own country or from abroad.

Holy Cross on Sunday is a stopping place for visitors the world over. Sophisticated people are often astounded that the simple,



comparatively inarticulate parishoners of Holy Cross can speak with such compelling force through the music of Gregorian chant.



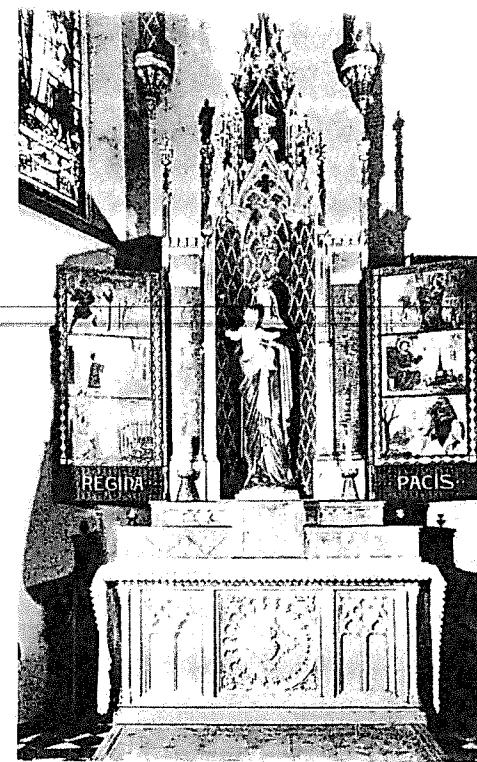
The church as a whole is not artistically distinctive. The main altar (above) is of the gingerbread variety of another age. The conservatism of the art work of the main body of the church serves to illustrate Monsignor Hellriegel's reluctance to tear out everything that is old for the sake of what is new. It is his belief that first the interior spirit of the Liturgy must be restored, with emphasis on the Mass, then, in years to come, external expression in art will follow as a consequence.

There are several places in the church, however, worth mentioning—The Lady Altar, St. Joseph's Altar, Baptismal Font and the St. Pius X Shrine.

The Lady Altar, which was designed by Gottfried Schiller of St. Louis is shown in the two photos (right). It is a double triptych, that is, its wings can be folded twice over the middle part. There are many single triptych altars, especially in Europe, but this double triptych may be the only one of its kind.

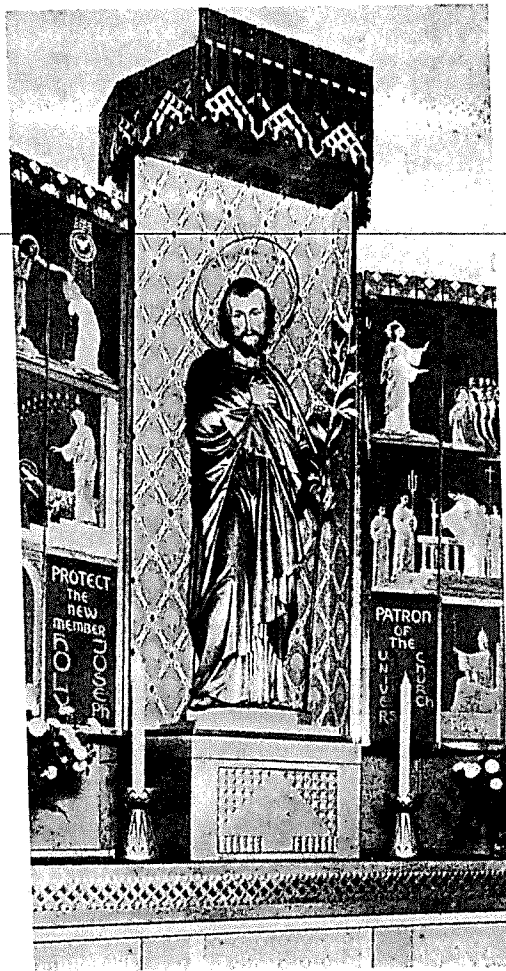
Completely opened you see in the center a beautifully woodcarved statue of Mother Mary with the Holy Child, made some eighty years ago by the St. Louis artist, the late Max Schneiderhahn. On the narrow panels between the statue and the folding wings are inscribed in golden letters the names of the men of the parish who served in the Armed Forces. On the opened wings of the triptych are painted in colors and in gold, the patron saints of the six pastors who have served the parish since its inception in 1864.

When two of the wings are folded (second photo), there is a new setting with a threefold theme: Mary's divine Motherhood in its beginning (Annunciation—left panel), its fulfillment (Mother of Perpetual Help with Child—middle), and its consummation (Crowning of Mary by the Most Holy Trinity—right).



*which was bestowed
at Baptism
is greater than that of
the Ruler of the Kingdom.
The latter I shall lose at
death,
the other will be my
Passport
to everlasting glory!*

—Saint Louis, King



*Inscription on St. Joseph
Altar reads:
I think more of the place
where I was baptized
than of the Cathedral of
Rheims
where I was
crowned
For the dignity
of a child of God*

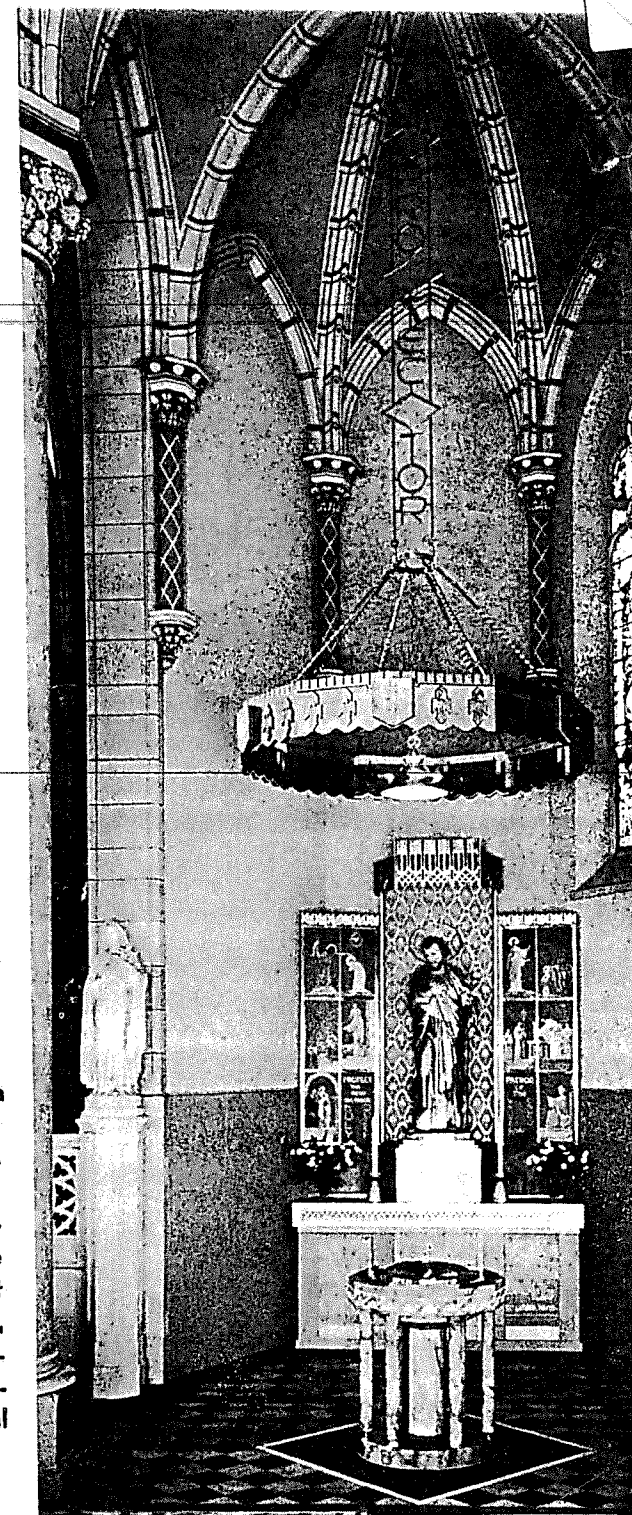
St. Joseph's Altar (left, top and bottom) has a similarly designed triptych. But it is also the setting (right) for the baptismal font. This is because as "Patron of the Universal Church," St. Joseph is also the patron of all who through the Sacrament of Baptism have become members of the Church.

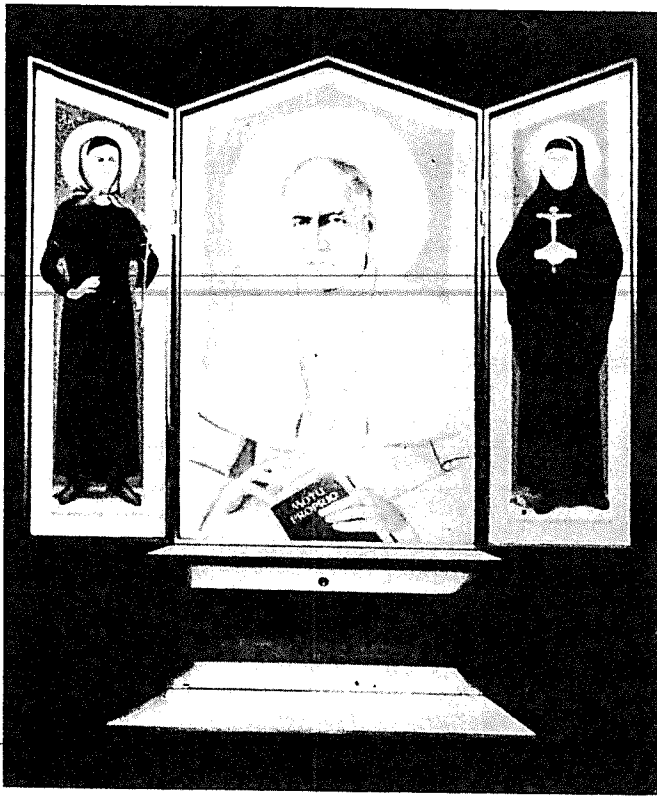
The altar and font were blessed by Bishop William Cobben of Finland in 1945. It was planned by the pastor and designed and executed by Gottfried Schiller.

Above the font is suspended the throne, with carvings of the symbols of the sacraments. Max Schneiderhahn, who carved the statue of Our Lady was also the creator of the Joseph statue.

Built into the base of the pedestal is the Olea Sancta ambry containing the holy oils used at Baptism.

The folding wings depict scenes from the life of Christ, the sacrament of Baptism, Pentecost, and one of Pius IX appointing St. Joseph "Patron of the Universal Church."





St. Pius X and St. Maria Goretti, both recently canonized saints, and Blessed Phillipine Duchesne are honored by a special shrine (left).



The two great seasons—Lent and Easter, Advent and Christmas—are perhaps the most beautifully and wonderfully and movingly expressed in the Liturgy of Holy Cross. Monsignor Hellriegel is shown (above) shortly after the Consecration of the Christmas Midnight Mass. It is his custom always at Christmas to give something to each of his parishioners.

"We can't expect progress in winning people to Christ," Monsignor has said, "if we don't show them first how God wants to be worshipped. The priest's first work is the public worship of God the Father through Christ His Son."

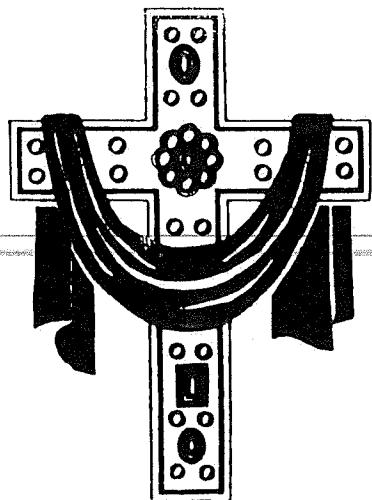
Monsignor Hellriegel's parish of Holy Cross is an example of the Liturgy brought to life. He regards the Mass as not only the beautiful and moving sacrifice that it is but as the actual center and source of parish life and unity. What Holy Cross is attempting is to restore the Liturgy of the Church to its rightful place. This term "liturgy" is difficult to define. The word itself means "work done by the people," in union with each other and with the priest. It is not so much the externals which surround the Church's services, though these are important also, but in the first place the continuation of the priestly mission of Our Lord.

As Monsignor puts it: "People who see in the Liturgy merely the 'externals' confuse the hand-shake with friendship, the habit with the monk, the red print in the missal (which merely gives instructions for gestures, etc.) with the black print (which contains the words of the Holy Sacrifice)."

What Monsignor means is that the externals are the "shell" which surround the "kernel." In other words, by the Mass, the Sacraments, the sacramentals, and the divine office, the work of Christ is continued for the glory of God and our sanctification. That is what Pope Pius X meant when he stated on November 22, 1903 that the Liturgy "is the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit."

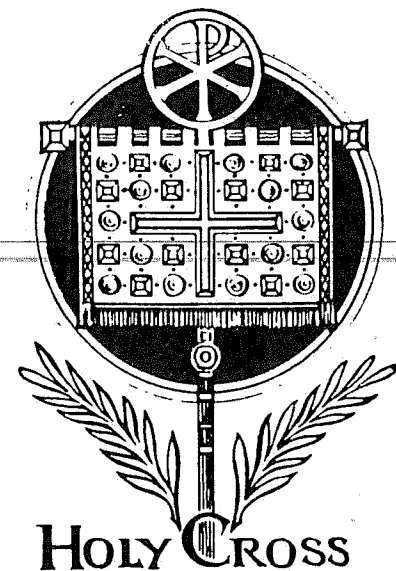


Outdoor Christmas crib (left) on front lawn of rectory was made by parishioners under the direction of assistant pastor Father E. F. Wulfers. Father Ralph Zimmer is also assistant pastor, and Prof. Irvin Arkin the Choirmaster. Mr. Ernest Beck conducts the Inquiry Forum held every Wednesday evening during the fall and winter months.



On the evenings of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, parishioners at Holy Cross sing in English, in a shortened version, the special Holy Week part of the Divine Office known as Tenebrae, which Monsignor describes as "The Church's Song of Mourning for Her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ." The three episodes of the Passion are the subject of the Tenebrae services, each in turn; Christ Betrayed, Christ Crucified, and Christ Buried. The drawing (left) is taken from the cover of the booklet.

The parish bulletin, distributed at every Sunday Mass, is interesting too, as the symbol (right) which appears on some of the bulletins, indicates. The one for the 6th Sunday after Pentecost reminds the congregation that "rest is necessary, but not from prayer." The schedule of Masses, typically, lists only one Requiem. It also invites parishioners to join in at 7:30 in the evening for Compline, the night prayer of the Church. And there is another striking notice headed "Divine Life in the Parish: Last Sunday was born out of water and the Holy Ghost Gary Francis Marklin. To the happy parents best wishes and to Gary a cordial welcome!"



An example of how the parishioners of Holy Cross try to live the Liturgy, is the Christmas novena. It is an excellent adaption of the monastic liturgy. Part of the novena is prayed like an office, recited between priest and people. The children sing the prophecies in English with their lovely melodies. They sing the O antiphon and the Magnificat in Latin. The booklets have a parallel translation. The congregation alternately sings the Magnificat, which is sung with great solemnity, as befits the perfect prayer of Mary. The novena is for nine days, up to Christmas eve, commemorative of the nine months Our Lord spent in the womb, and a perfect Advent preparation for His Coming.

The only "petition" of this novena is for Christ to come. Private benediction is held; the people are blessed with a beautiful veiled ciborium. The Monsignor tells the people that Christ is contained therein, these nine days, as He was for nine months in the Blessed Mother's womb, and on Christmas day He shall come forth and dwell among us.

A visiting priest describes the Christmas novena in his own words: "Monsignor graciously invited me to don cassock and surplice and join the procession to the sanctuary. This was the second night of the Christmas novena. At seven, confessions; the other two curates and the young organist appeared on the scene. Their cordiality was not only very evident, but their lively interest in the Liturgy filled our conversation. The organist commented on the quality of chant as sung prayer; their aim is not perfect chant as such, but perfect prayer."

(Below) Altar and sanctuary of Holy Cross Church on eve of All Saints. Reliquaries on steps contain relics of saints.

