**The History of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish**

**9. Parish Art**

Religious art serves an important purpose in our faith, to uplift our mind to the spiritual and to help us turn our thoughts to God.

Our **outdoor shrines** (1926-27) are one of our major artworks. Designed and mostly constructed by Fr. Ott and the parishioners, they were discussed in last month’s article.

Two of our most visible works of art are the statues of **Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima** (1948) and of the **Sacred Heart of Jesus** (approx. 1950). Both were created by Portuguese sculptor **Jose Ferreira Thedim**, an internationally-acclaimed artist. He is best known for creating the statue of Our Lady in the grotto at Fatima, and the two “Pilgrim Virgin” statues that have toured the world. Father Earl Kleis, our pastor 1945-54, had a special devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. When he visited Portugal, he met and befriended the sculptor, who offered him his working model for the Pilgrim Virgin statues. It is identical to the Pilgrim Virgin statues, but slightly larger. Before the statue was shipped from Portugal to Bowmansville, it was blessed at the Basilica in Fatima in May 1948, in the presence of 500,000 pilgrims celebrating the 31st anniversary of Our Lady’s appearance to the three children of Fatima.

The Sacred Heart statue was originally created for a religious congregation in Pennsylvania. Upon receiving it from Portugal, the congregation didn’t like it and refused to accept it. Rather than ship it back to Portugal, Thedim contacted Fr. Kleis to see if the parish was interested in buying it, which Fr. Kleis enthusiastically did.

The third statue in the sanctuary, that of **St. Joseph** (1959), was crafted by the D’Arcangelo Studio of Buffalo. Actual carpentry tools in the statue signify St. Joseph’s work.

Our **church windows** (1959), created by the Pike Stained Glass Company of Rochester, depict a variety of religious themes. In the sanctuary, the theme is the Eucharist: the **Last Supper** on the west side, and the Eucharistic symbol of the **pelican** on the east. There are ten windows in the main part of the church. The **Baptism of** **Chris**t is depicted near the baptismal font. Another window shows **St. Pius X** inviting children to receive the Eucharist; this was one of the first church windows in the Diocese to honor this saint, who had been canonized just five years earlier. Three windows show the missionary work of the church: **St. Francis Xavier** with oriental people, **St. Isaac Jogues** with Native Americans, and **St. Vincent de Paul** with white and black people. Two windows feature popular saints: **St. Anthony**, patron of those who lose or misplace things; and **St. Christopher**, patron of travelers. The three remaining windows honor **St. Cecilia**, patron of musicians and singers; the **Guardian Angel**; and the **Poor Souls in Purgatory**. The Poor Souls window was unique; at the time, there was no church window in the Diocese depicting the souls in Purgatory.

The **Stations of the Cross** (1959), carved from lindenwood, were created in Ortisei, Italy by the Mussner G. Vincenzo Studio. This studio still exists today, with a reputation for creating and carving exquisite statues, Stations of the Cross, and other works of religious art.

The large wooden **crucifix** (mid-1960s) near the baptismal font was created by the Woodcarving Studio of P. Bergmann in Oberammergau, Germany. Father Joseph Zeitz, our pastor 1963-68, was an avid collector of woodcarvings, and he arranged the acquisition of this crucifix. The Bergmann Studio closed in 1987.

The large picture of the **Merciful Jesus**, which hangs near the Fatima statue, was brought from Poland by Father Joe in 2014. It is a numbered reproduction, based a painting by Andrew Hyla. In 1943, Hyla came to the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Krakow, desiring to paint an image for their chapel in gratitude for saving his family during World War II. The Sisters requested an image of Merciful Jesus. Hyla worked from an image of a 1934 painting by Eugene Kazimirowski that had been supervised by Sister Faustina herself, and from notes in Sister Faustina’s diary, adding his own interpretations. This painting remains in a place of honor in the monastery’s chapel today.