

## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

By Photographer Fred Powers  
And Historian Arch Merrill

# Fairport Church Of the Assumption

THE FIRST Catholic Mass in the canal settlement of Fairport was said in 1849 by a missionary priest, the Rev. Michael Guilbride, in the home of Smith Brennan on the Towpath, now State Street.

From that humble beginning evolved the present 1,000-family parish of the Church of the Assumption.

In 1852 Fairport was designated a mission of St. Ann's parish, Palmyra.



Rev. Leonard

Four years later a frame house of worship was built on High Street. That structure today is a feed and farmers' supplies store.

**A. Kelly** In 1866 the Rev. Louis J. Miller, who left the Lutheran ministry to become a Catholic priest, was appointed the first resident pastor of a new independent Assumption parish.

He was succeeded in 1870 by the Rev. Patrick C. McGrath. Both the parish and the village were growing and in 1872 three lots on Sanford Street, now East Avenue, were acquired as the site for a new church.

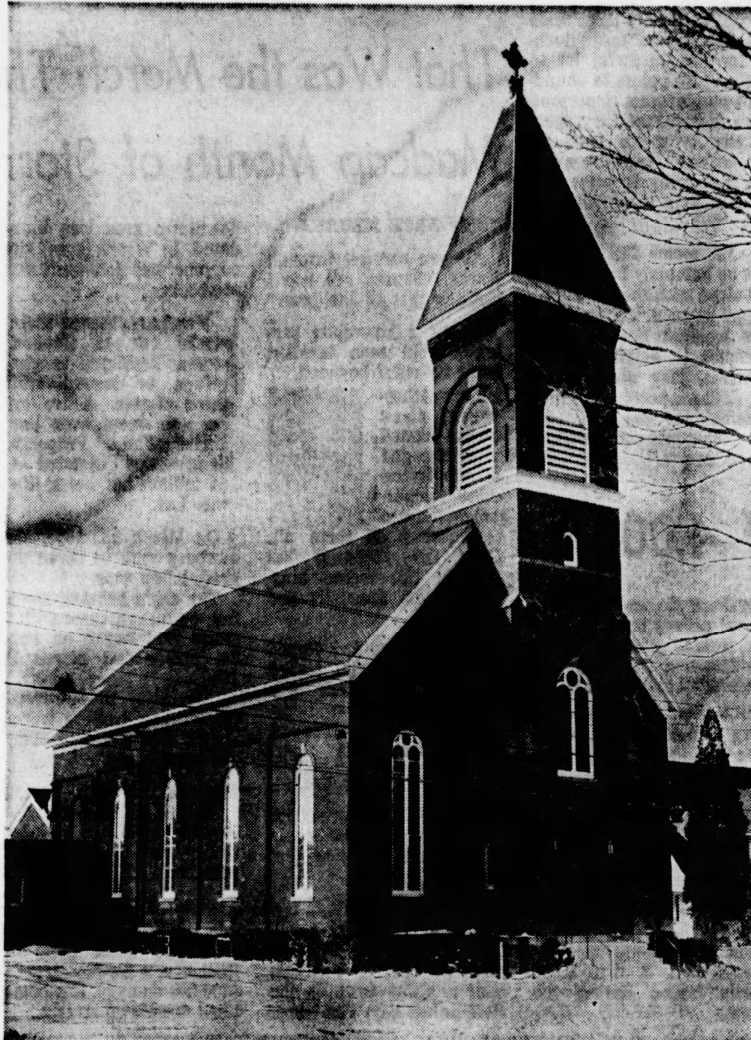
It was during the record 47-year pastorate (1878-1925) of the Rev. John L. Codyre that the present brick edifice of modified Gothic design was built at 20 East Ave. The cornerstone was laid on Oct. 1, 1882 and the \$15,000 church was dedicated on Oct. 24, 1883.

Father Codyre retired in 1925 and after living for a year in his native Ireland, he returned to Fairport and lived in the old rectory until his death on Christmas Day of 1935.

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**DURING THE** long tenure (1925-1954) of his successor, the Rev. James T. Wood, the interior of the church was twice redecorated, a new heating plant and pipe organ were installed and a new rectory built.

The present pastor, the Rev. Leonard A. Kelly, has served since July, 1954. He is a graduate of St. An-



drew's and St. Bernard Seminaries and of Niagara University.

He was successively an assistant pastor at Rochester's St. Augustine's Church, a teacher of mathematics at Aquinas Institute, an assistant at Old St. Mary's and chaplain and teacher of religion at Nazareth College.

In World War II he was a Navy chaplain for four years, serving as a lieutenant commander in Samoa and on the Gilbert and Marshall Islands.

Father Kelly came to Fairport after eight years as pastor of St. James Church, Trumansburg and Interlaken. The Rev. Paul Cloonan is assistant pastor.

A \$100,000 program in 1955 included a new base-

ment hall, new exits and parking lot.

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**THE ASSUMPTION** School for Religious Training, said to be unique in the nation, opened in September, 1956. All children of the parish attend the public schools but under a released time program they also attend the Assumption School on Baumer Place one hour each week. In eight years enrollment has grown from 250 to nearly 1,000.

The four-room school and convent cost \$150,000. Four Sister-teachers, Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, Baltimore, are assisted by lay volunteers.

The pioneering school was featured on nationwide television on Sunday, Feb. 25. In his talk during

the program Father Kelly said:

"We must avoid the danger of evaluating this program in terms of just one hour a week. We do not believe that sufficient work can be done in one hour of released time. However, this hour is time for direction and motivation.

"We build a School of Religion because we are deeply impressed with the total program of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and with the Apostolate of Sisters—Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart.

"From the beginning we believed what eight years of experience have proved, that this program is an investment in both personnel and financial resources which brings a maximum return."