

FATHER SOLANUS CASEY WHO WAS FATHER SOLANUS?

A simple man. A simple priest. Not a man of letters, although he sometimes wrote like a poet.

Not a man of degrees, yet his thought reached to profound depths.

In his own time, he was far ahead of his time.

Like a prophet, he was a man with a message for our times.

Like a prophet, he lived a life concerned for God's people, suffering and laboring for the conversion of sinners. His message, always one of faith and trust in God, was to console and encourage. He brought about peace by a kindly insistence on our right relationship to and dependence on God and neighbor.

The Capuchin priest, Father Solanus Casey, was born on November 25, 1870, the sixth child in a family of ten boys and six girls, on a Wisconsin farm along the banks of the Mississippi. His Irish immigrant parents named him Bernard, after his father.

He began his studies at St. Francis Seminary High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1891, where he dedicated himself to his spiritual and academic formation. Called by God to the Capuchin Order in 1896, Bernard was given the new name Solanus. He soon became a model of religious observance, ever faithful to the holy vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. He was ordained to the holy Priesthood on July 24, 1904, and began his long priestly ministry in New York.

After many years of service, he retired to the St. Felix Friary in Huntington, Indiana in 1946. There he spent his time in prayer and in the ministry to the sick and troubled until his own infirmities caused him to leave for special medical care. Father Solanus died in Detroit at the age of 86 on July 31, 1957. He is buried at St. Bonaventure Monastery, Detroit, Michigan.

For more information on the life and ministry of Father Solanus Casey, please contact:

The Father Solanus Guild
1780 Mt. Elliott Ave.
Detroit, MI 48207
(313) 579-2100, ext. 140





RETREAT CENTER INFO

If you are looking for a place to immerse yourself in prayerful simplicity and remove all distractions, then St. Felix Catholic Center is where you want to hold your next retreat or day of recollection.

St. Felix offers an opportunity for groups to leave all behind, and enter into a true Franciscan experience.

St. Felix Catholic Center is the ideal place for conferences, confirmation retreats, school retreats and youth events.

St. Felix Catholic Center is very family friendly. We realize the need to gather and share experiences, pray and engage in fellowship. Therefore, we provide several areas throughout the Center where you may gather with your group and/or family members, as well as the beautiful outside grounds at St. Felix. We allow groups the freedom of coordinating and directing their own retreat experience.

St. Felix Catholic Center is not only located on the grounds of the Historic St. Felix Friary, but more importantly, it is a place where our Most Holy Eucharistic Lord Jesus Christ resides in the Tabernacle of our Chapel.



SERENE, BLESSED MOTHER GROTTO

As you arrive at St. Felix Catholic Center, you will immediately be drawn to the welcoming glance of Our Lady in her Grotto. The Grotto has been restored with original fieldstone.



Be sure to visit Our Lady and ask her to guide you during your stay at St. Felix. If you submit your visit to her motherly tenderness, you will be sure to be guided to her Son and open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.



*“St. Felix is one of Indiana’s
greatest hidden Catholic Treasures.”*

– Fr. David Mary, F.F.M.



BEDROOMS

There are 29 simple Franciscan Style bedrooms available, and all of them have been completely renovated. Each room offers a quiet place to retreat away from your group and enjoy a little rest or a place to be alone in prayer, without the distractions of modern technology.



ST. FELIX DE CANTALICE ORATORY (MAIN CHAPEL - SEATS 250 PEOPLE)

The Oratory at St. Felix Catholic Center has been a labor of love for the Foundation and staff who have enjoyed many blessings in their great efforts to restore it to its original beauty.



TESTIMONIALS

"We are all searching for peace, joy and security... in other words... union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While at St. Felix, one becomes aware that God is so near – closer than we are to ourselves."



The place is holy and one can easily enter prayer – from there, all other graces are ours!

I highly recommend using St. Felix Catholic Center for retreats and/or other Sacred events. Venerable Solanus Casey has given this beautiful place back to the Church. Come and marvel at God's Goodness so evident there!"

- "Deo gratias"

"St. Felix Catholic Center is a beautiful place to have a retreat. The silence, austerity, and simplicity is helpful to be alone with God in prayer. The beauty of the surrounding countryside and the beauty of the traditional Chapel lifts one's heart to God!"

- A Franciscan Sister Minor

"My retreat this advent at St. Felix was full of grace. More than I can know. I had the most grace filled Christmas this year largely due to the beautiful retreat leading up to Christmas. St. Felix was a great place for a retreat because there was much room for silence and solitude to pray. We had Holy Mass every day in the Church where the Friars of years past celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I cannot describe the graces of our retreat this Advent, just, I thank God for them."

- A Franciscan Sister Minor



THE HISTORY OF ST. FELIX - IN THE BEGINNING

Saint Felix Friary came into being in response to the great number of men who wanted to join the Saint Joseph Province of the Franciscan Capuchin Order. Saint Bonaventure Friary, located on a busy street in Detroit, Michigan, no longer seemed ideal for the prayer and study which made up the novitiate program. So, the province looked elsewhere.

Late in 1926, Bishop John Noll of the Fort Wayne - South Bend Diocese, had bought farmland at the edge of Huntington, Indiana and built a residence for the Victory Noll Sisters. Learning from Monsignor Frank Jansen (an alumnus of the Capuchin run Saint Lawrence College in Wisconsin) that the Capuchins were looking for a place to locate their novitiate, Bishop Noll (also an alumnus of Saint Lawrence College) wrote to Monsignor Jansen on September 22, 1926. "You may assure Father Benno (the Provincial Superior of the Capuchins) that my lifelong affection for the Capuchin Fathers disposes me very favorably toward his request, and I shall try to figure out where the best place would be to locate them." Bishop Noll offered them 30 acres of land on the corner of Hitzfield Street and Flaxmill Road in Huntington where the Friary now stands.



After practical, legal and church requirements were met, building began on February 27, 1928. The Spanish-Mission architecture was designed by Robert W. Stevens consisting of 183 rooms to house up to 80 people. Total cost of the new building was \$306,668.59.

On March 8, 1929, Father Clement Neubauer arrived with 14 Novices from Detroit. Huntington was a non-Catholic community and in those early days, there was a considerable tinge of bigotry. It was thought that it would be a good idea to hold an open house for the local citizens, even though the friars expected few visitors to show up. Two weeks before its dedication, on March 31st, Easter Sunday morning, the friary was open to the public. More than 10,000 people passed through St. Felix that afternoon, despite a heavy downpour of rain!

After the dedication of the building by Bishop Noll on April 2, 1929, the Chamber of Commerce of the City of Huntington presented a copy of a resolution dated March 28, 1929 welcoming the Capuchin friars and commending Bishop Noll for his part in bringing them to the city.

The first class of Novices planted an orchard of 170 apple trees and 300 decorative trees and shrubs. Then, class after class beautified the friary grounds with lawns, parks, gardens and stone fences.

Saint Felix continued to serve the Province of Saint Joseph as a Novitiate until the province divided in 1952. At that point, Saint Felix began its service as a



House of Philosophy, a four-year college for young Capuchin friars. The Novitiate was moved back to Detroit. The building then housed 50 Capuchin clerics preparing for priesthood, 8 Priests and 10 Brothers. This service continued until 1959, when the crowded friary became inadequate for the

increasing number of Capuchins wanting to become priests. A new college was built at Crown Point, Indiana, and Saint Felix again became the location of the Province's Novitiate program.

From 1946 to 1956, St. Felix was home to Venerable Father Solanus Casey. His presence made St. Felix a pilgrimage site during those years because of his reputation as a channel for healings and answered prayers.



By the 1970's, with vocations to the religious life dwindling, the up-keep of Saint Felix became too much for the Capuchins to handle. It was decided to move the Novitiate once again to Racine, Wisconsin. The last mass was celebrated on June 29, 1980.

UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH

The building and property were sold to the United Brethren Church. In August of 1980, the congregation walked from their former church on Grayston Ave to their new church at Saint Felix. It was dedicated in September of that year and called the Good Shepherd Church. Besides being used for the regular church services, the congregation at Good Shepherd continued the tradition of helping the poor and needy. They operated the Shepherd's Closet and the Shepherd's Pantry for the distribution of food and clothing. Retreats were held and once-a-month an evening of dinner and entertainment.

By the Spring of 2009, the congregation decided to move their church to another location in Huntington which then became known as The Well. August 16, 2009 was their final service in the building they had occupied for nearly 30 years. They had tended the property's heritage and left much of the building unchanged.

BACK TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



The property remained on the market for about a year with interest from religious groups as far away as Texas and California. It wasn't until Mr. John Tippmann from the Mary Cross Tippmann Foundation in Fort Wayne, Indiana read the book about Father Solanus Casey and then toured the facility that it found

a new owner. The property was purchased in the Fall of 2010 with Mr. Tippmann saying they didn't buy it as a piece of for-profit property, but to get it back into Catholic hands. The Tippmanns operate a property management company and are also in the construction business, so to buy and renovate the property to make it useful again went along perfectly with the mission of their organization.

Almost 500 new windows, major updates and improvements and countless man hours later, the building and grounds of the new Saint Felix Catholic Center were ready to find a purpose.

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF MARY

As with the Franciscan Capuchins so many years earlier, the Dominican Sisters had so many women interested in joining their order that they were running out of room at their Mother House in Michigan. A link to the new web page developed for Saint Felix was sent to them by an employee of the Mary Cross Tippmann Foundation. The very next day they called to see if they could come visit the facility.



They very quickly decided it would work as a temporary home while they built a new facility in Texas. On March 3, 2012, a lease was signed to rent more than half of the building to house part of their formation program.

On that same day, Bishop Kevin Rhoades, Bishop of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese, came to St. Felix to bless and re-dedicate the chapel as an Oratory in the Catholic Church.

By September of 2012, 29 Sisters moved into St. Felix. The Postulants, women

interested in joining the Dominican Order, spend one year in Huntington living the life of the Sisters. Their time was spent praying and studying to discern their future with the Order.

The Sisters moved out of St. Felix in May 2016 as they prepared to move to their new facility in Texas.

SAINT FELIX CATHOLIC CENTER

In October 2016, the Franciscan Brothers Minor moved into the West wing of the building, the East wing is used for retreats, meetings and family gatherings. The facility has the chapel and side chapel, 29 single bedrooms, lounge, 3 large meeting rooms, a full size kitchen and a kitchenette. The outside grounds include a Blessed Mother Grotto, basketball and volleyball courts, a baseball diamond, pavilion, fire pit and wooded trails.



We continue to thank Mr. John Tippmann and his family for saving the structure, making it useful again, and bringing it back into the hands of the Catholic Church.

The future remains open to many possibilities! Thanks be to God!

AERIAL VIDEO ON YOUTUBE

Take a virtual flight over and around the St. Felix grounds at <https://youtu.be/3vLnoUYj75M>



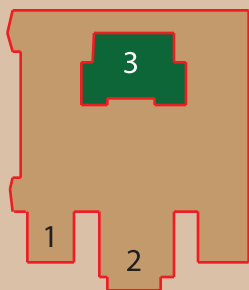


Tranquility Trails

- 1 - Office / Check-In
- 2 - Sanctuary
- 3 - Courtyard
- 4 - Volleyball Court
- 5 - Grotto

- 6 - Basketball Court
- 7 - Pavilion
- 8 - Vineyard
- 9 - Camp Fire Area
- 10 - Softball Field

Hitzfield Street



Retreat
Parking



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St. Joseph's Woods (Trails)

Flaxmill Road