

Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics



As we come into the final months of the year and the holiday seasons that draw us closer to the ones we love, it is the perfect time to visit the [Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics](#) in west, central Ohio.

Looking at the quiet farm land of Mercer County gives no evidence of the harsh forest and swamp that the early German settlers found on their arrival in the mid-1830s. Many were Catholic and understood the need for help from God to survive. Their deep faith urged them to build churches where they met despite the fact that they had no clerical minister to serve them. These churches, which now dot the landscape some three miles apart and make up the Land of the Cross-Tipped Churches State Scenic Byway, were built in such close proximity because of the difficult travel.

Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati became aware of the needs of these humble German-speaking people, and while in Europe, searched for a German-speaking missionary who would be willing to come to America to serve these noble folk. Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner, a Swiss priest and Precious Blood Missionary, encountered Bishop Purcell and came to Ohio in 1843.

Fr. Brunner and his Mother, Maria Anna Brunner, established the Sisters of the Precious Blood in 1834 in Switzerland. In 1844, six Sisters of the Precious Blood arrived in New Riegel, Ohio and began their nightly vigils of prayer. In September 1846 eight sisters from that convent began perpetual adoration at Maria Stein in the original motherhouse convent. Sisters have prayed and ministered at Maria Stein without interruption since their arrival.

Today the main attraction is the relic chapel which was dedicated in 1892. The chapel has more than 1,000 relics including those from all four Gospel writers and all but one of the apostles. Honoring the Saints with their relics was a common way of expressing devotion to the Saints. Fr. Brunner was an ardent collector of relics. He brought a few with him on his first voyage to America. In 1845 he was presented with a gift of 600 relics. In 1875 a collection of 175 relics was brought to Maria Stein and placed in the care of the Sisters. Relics of

more recent Saints have been added including Saint Teresa of Calcutta and Pope John XXIII. The shrine is home to the second-largest collection of holy relics in the United States.

In the old convent building there is a gift shop located on the first floor. It carries many articles of devotion, statues, and décor. On the second floor pilgrims are treated to a museum with a history of the Sisters and early rural life in Mercer County. The outside patio is adorned with pictures of the area churches that dot the country side hanging on the walls. A statue garden of various saints provides a quiet place for reflection and prayer.

The Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics provides faith nourishment and spiritual renewal through prayer, pilgrimage and inspiration from the lives of the saints. People from around the world visit the Shrine to explore and enjoy this environment rich in holiness and history. For the many that come and enter the quiet of the chapels, peace returns and energies are renewed. It is where the cares, problems and worries of daily life can be placed in God's hands. For many, healing of mind and spirit are sought and obtained. This tranquil country setting allows the heart and soul to find relief from the turbulence of today's fast paced world.

During this season there are special events planned at the Shrine. For those extra thoughtful Christmas Gifts don't miss the Pilgrim Gift Shop Christmas open house. It will take place Thursday, November 9th through Sunday, November 12th in 2017.

A special "Saints and Cinema" series is scheduled on Tuesday evenings in November. Enjoy a movie each week with free popcorn and drinks, followed by a light discussion. The movie begins at 6:30 each Tuesday, this program is free and open to the public.

Help your child experience the magic of Christmas with a special visit and program by St. Nicolas at the Shrine on December 2nd. St. Nicolas will give a talk about his life and the traditions surrounding his name beginning at 2pm. Children will leave their shoes outside the chapel doors, only to find them filled with goodies after the presentation. The afternoon will also include some crafts and activities and of course photo ops with St. Nicholas. The cost is \$5 per child and reservations must be made by November 29th by calling 419-925-4532.

And not to be missed, during the entire month of December, stop by the shrine to see the beautiful collection of Nativity Sets and classic Advent Calendars on display. A wonderful opportunity to spend time with family and friends and bask in the glow of holiday peace.

The Shrine is open Monday – Thursday: 9:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Friday & Saturday: 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

And on Sunday: 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Closed on Major Holidays. For more information, or to contact the Shrine visit www.mariastein-shrine.org, or call 419-925-4532.