

Prior to 1970 Catholics at Fairfield Bay had to drive either to Clinton or Fox to attend Sunday Mass.

Starting the first Sunday after Easter 1970, Father Lawrence Maus came to the Bay for weekly services. During the spring and summer months, guests helped increase attendance to about thirty-five. The congregation met in the meeting room over the Wild Boar Restaurant, which later burned down; services were then moved to the marina. When the crowd was too large, we gathered under the trees in the Park.



Fr. Kettler breaks ground for St. Francis Church, July, 1975

Beginning in May 1972, we relocated to the Civic Center. Mass was celebrated at noon on Sundays and Holy Days by Father John Kettler.



Along with Father Kettler, parish Council Members, Ralph Canino, Kent Fetz, Herb Morehead and Leo Kaufman were instrumental in obtaining approval to build St. Francis of Assisi Church. The site, of approx. 2½ Acres, was donated by the Fairfield Communities Land Co. The Architect was Wm. Canino of Little Rock.



Rectory

The first Mass in the new church was held on Easter Sunday 1976, and celebrated by Father Kettler. Dedication, which had been delayed until after the tourist season, was held on September 26, 1976 officiated by Bishop Andrew J. McDonald.

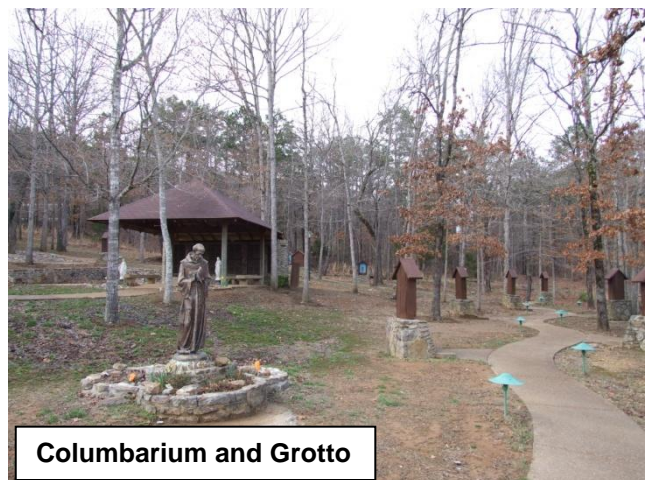
Fathers Earl J. Booth, Robert Deinert and John Kettler served St. Francis as a Mission of St. Mary's of St. Vincent, Arkansas. In 1980, Father Kettler left on sick leave. Father H. Paul Strassle, who became the first resident pastor of St. Francis, replaced him. In 1993, after nearly 10 years of service, Fr. Paul retired.

Dan Hennessy was ordained to the permanent Diaconate on Nov. 7, 1981, and became our first Deacon, retiring in March 1991.

Deacon Frank Zanoff, who currently serves our parish, was ordained to the Diaconate on May 31, 1998.

Father Francis D. Colavechio (Father "Cal") was assigned to our parish on June 1, 1993, followed by Father Thomas Keller on June 8, 2001. Father William Elser, assumed leadership of our parish family in June 2005, coming from Our Lady of Holy Souls Church in Little Rock.

In October 2008, Father "Bill" Elser was transferred to Our Lady of Fatima parish in Benton, Arkansas. He was replaced by Father Oliver Ochieze who led our parish until June 2018 when he transferred back to his home in Nigeria. Our present pastor, Fr. Luke Womack, came to us on June 13, 2018 from Christ the King Parish in Little Rock. He also pastors our sister parish of St. Jude in Clinton.



Columbarium and Grotto

Over the years we have added a rectory, the grotto, the parish hall, a columbarium, and in 2011 we updated and expanded the church to accommodate the large influx of visitors on holy days and during the summer months.