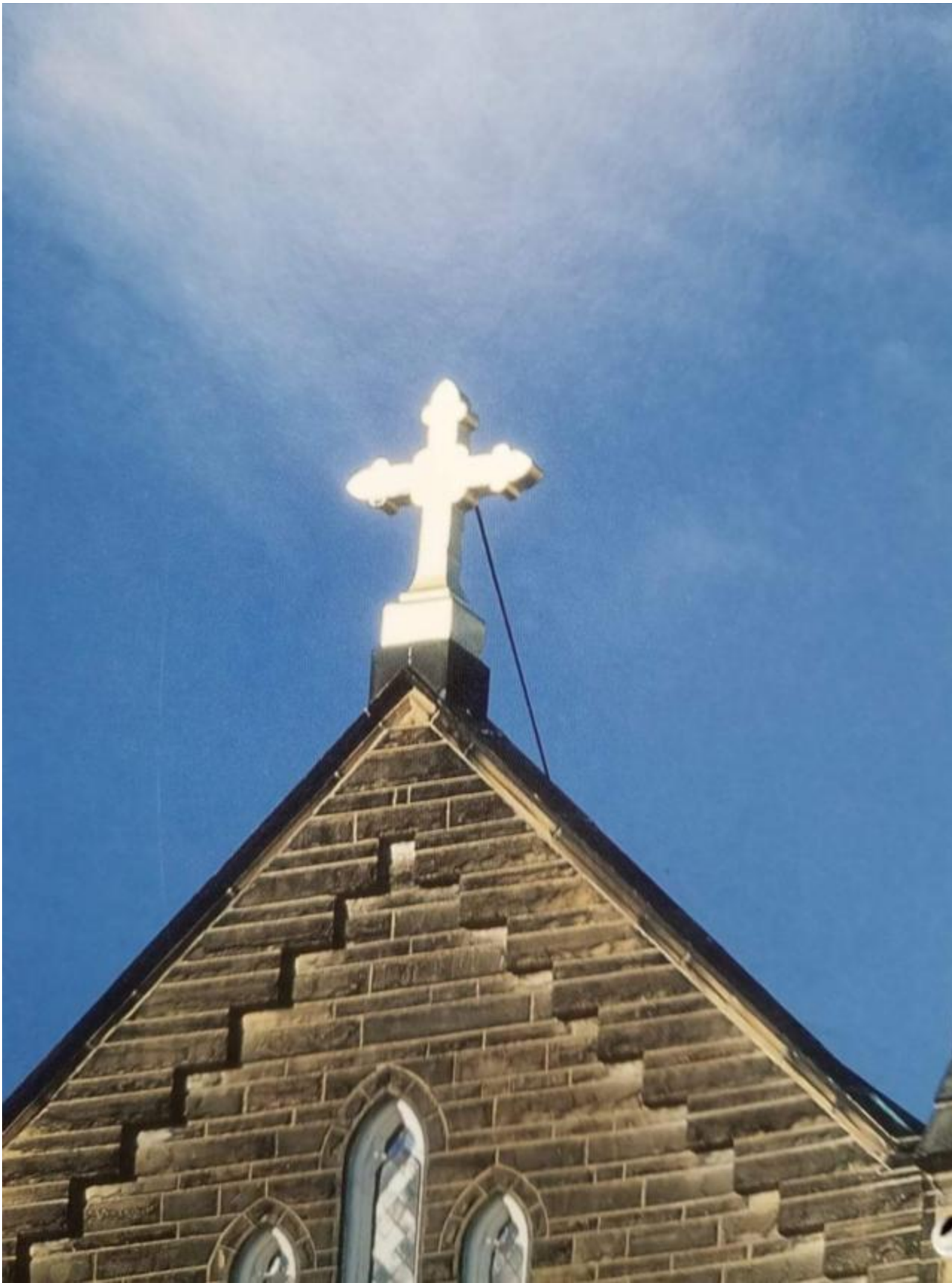




Lift High the Cross: St. Mary's Church hosting fundraiser to replace historic icon

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON – St. Mary's Catholic Church in Alton is working to restore a landmark lost from its church building and all of Alton last July.

During an especially severe Saturday night thunderstorm with excessive winds, the cross, which exceeds five feet in height and is made of copper covering a steel frame, the cross was knocked loose, eventually tumbling to the steps of the church's vestibule. Current St. Mary's Pastor Father Jeremy Paulin said it was discovered by Father John Wykes, and the first thought they had was gratitude no one was injured.

“We were just so thankful no one was hurt by it,” he said. “Something of that size falling from that height could seriously injure or even kill someone if they were struck by it.”

Since launching a campaign called “Lift High the Cross” to replace it following every Easter service at the church, Paulin said parishioners have raised as much as \$35,000 of the stated \$50,000 goal. A new cross is being fashioned by Alton Sheet Metal and Jensen Fabrication, which are both local establishments.



The remainder of the money is going to be used for church upkeep and rehabilitation. Paulin said a revamp of the church building's HVAC system and bathrooms will be a part of that work as well.

“We have people donating to us, saying the cross (which once stood strong in the center of the building) was a landmark to them,” he said. “They would see it while crossing the bridge, and it meant something like home to them. It meant they were back.”

Those who donate significantly to the campaign may even be rewarded by a piece of the iconic and historic cross. Jensen Fabrication is creating small replicas for donors from the old cross itself, Paulin said. That cross, which fell, is inside the entrance to the church to remind parishioners of the need for donations.

Father Paulin said he was not sure if any events would accompany the final push for donations, adding the donation campaign itself has proven to be fruitful. Anyone wanting to contribute to the campaign is asked to contact St. Mary's Catholic Church Parish Office at (618) 465-4284.

