

The Reverend John Francis Hoff
Sixth Rector of Christ Church, Georgetown

May “He who holds the stars in his right hand, and walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks,” ever bless you with his presence, as a congregation and as individuals! May temporal prosperity, so far as it may be good for you, attend you all; may you every one be gathered into the Redeemer’s fold in this life, and, after this mortal state has ended, may we all meet in mansions “made without hands, eternal in the heavens.”

These were the words of John Francis Hoff (1814–1881), the sixth Rector of Christ Church, in his “Farewell Disclosure” as he departed Washington in 1843 because of declining health.

They were quoted 174 years later on November 12, 2017, by Ian S. Markham, the Dean and President of Virginia Theological Seminary, as he concluded his homily at Christ Church on the occasion of its 200th anniversary.

Hoff was a native of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who studied at Yale and the University of Pennsylvania as well as Virginia and General Theological Seminaries. Years later he received an honorary Doctorate in Divinity from the College of William and Mary. He has been described as being a prolific writer “bearing on questions of doctrine and polity in his own church.”

His biographical memoranda indicate he was ordained an Episcopal Deacon in 1836 and married in 1839 to Juliana Johnson Ross of Fredericktown, Maryland, the year after he came to Christ Church. Following his recuperation and rest after leaving Washington in 1843, he returned to clerical duty at St. Mark’s parish in Fredericktown in 1844.

According to Glenn A. Metzdorf’s 1986 *A Short History of Christ Church, Georgetown*, “Hoff’s

pastoral qualities were unusually strong” and he seemed “to have genuinely nurtured the congregation, and they responded with great affection.” His photograph hangs in Keith Hall alongside the other rectors of Christ Church.

