



WE ARE
Chosen

November / December 2021

WE ARE *chosen*

Our parish theme this year is, “We are *chosen*.” In the Christmas story several people answered the call of being *chosen*. Mary responded with a yes to being the mother of Jesus. Joseph said yes to the angel to take Mary into his home and foster Jesus as his own. The shepherds in the field answered the call and came to the manger to see the newborn king and give praise to God as the angels give shouts of joy. The Wise Men answer the call and come from the East bringing their gift to the newborn king. Listening to the angel they returned home another way to avoid Herod. Joseph once again responded to the call to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt to protect them from the wrath of Herod and remained there until his death. The *chosen* responded repeatedly to the call of God to bring Emmanuel, God is with us, into the world. The newness of life and the sign of hope that Jesus brings into the world brings peace and goodwill to all. That innocent scene in Bethlehem begins the salvation of the world. Mary’s yes to God’s call brings Jesus the incarnation dwelling among us. Christmas back then seemed so different than today. The modern trappings of the season seem to overwhelm us, and we might lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas.

Suddenly we are chosen to make sure we get the right tree for the house. This year that will be an expensive challenge! We must get all those decorations up and make sure all the presents are bought. All the cards must be sent, all the cookies baked, and the list goes on. If we sit down for a moment, we might want to reflect on what we are truly *chosen* for us in this season of Christmas. It must be more than the “material” side of Christmas. We need to look at Mary and Joseph and the rest of those in the story and see what it meant to them. We need to look hard at Emmanuel, God among us.

Jesus is the reason for the season. We are called to see Christ in the season. Not the child Jesus alone but the one who has come to save the world. He is the source of life for us all. We have been *chosen* to follow his lead. Everyone who came to the baby Jesus may not have known who Jesus would be, but they knew he was special, the Christ, the Son of God. The angels proclaimed to the shepherds; the wise men knew Jesus was a king. Even Herod feared he was a rival that had to be eliminated. Who do we see in the child Jesus? Can we see the King, the Christ, the Son of God? Can we find a way to celebrate that in the Christmas season rather than spending too much time on the material side of the season? Don’t get me wrong, the spirit of giving this time of year is truly awesome. But Jesus seems to get lost in the shuffle sometimes, and that should never happen. The old saying “Christ is the reason for the Season” is so very true. God calls us to recognize that in our preparation. It begins with the season of Advent. Perhaps we celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation, or we gather around the Advent wreath and pray while lighting the four candles. We could make going to Mass special during the season. Make time for the Lord and choose to invite the Lord into your life. Then when the season of Christmas comes upon you, embrace it with all the joy it brings. You are being called to make Jesus alive in the world today. Do not miss that opportunity. God is calling us to say yes to the Lord. Enjoy this beautiful season. Have a prayerful Advent and a Joyous Christmas!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fr. Don West'.

FR. DON WEST
PASTOR

BEACONS OF LIGHT INFORMATION

As of the October-released draft for Beacons of Light, St. John the Evangelist, West Chester has been paired with St. Michael of Sharonville. To see the full list of Parish Families, please use this link: www.catholicaoc.org/beacons-of-light/parish-families

Want to learn more? Check out FAQs about Beacons of Light here: www.catholicaoc.org/beacons-of-light

*Mary, Mother of the Church and our Mother,
Present our prayer of thanksgiving to your Son.
Beg from Him the graces we need to be faithful disciples
who follow Him with enthusiasm and joy.
May our witness to the love of God bear fruit
in our archdiocese, parishes, homes and hearts.
Teach us to be God’s joyful witnesses,
to radiate Christ in all we do,
so that all people might know, love and follow your Son
through this life and into the next. Amen.*

chosen TO SAY "YES"

Change can be intimidating. There is a world of unknowns released when we find ourselves in the middle of a new experience, a new routine or a new place.

My husband and I just bought our first home in September. We said "yes" to a beautiful home with the chance of dealing with issues that we would no longer have a landlord to fix. Over the next couple of weeks, we would find plumbing issues, electrical problems and very creaky floors in an older home. I was overwhelmed. I'm sure Daniel had no idea what to do with me when I escaped to the bathroom to cry it out every night for the first two weeks of living there.

But when we said "yes" to our first home, I should have known that God would not have let us fail. The issues with this house are slowly becoming resolved, and most of the problems were not as bad as we thought. A giant weight that fear had placed on my shoulders was lifted - and with that freedom, I looked around and saw the beautiful outcomes of our first home: a giant backyard that the dog and kids can run around for hours in. A home that fit our furniture and belongings perfectly (it was weird, like this home was meant for us). And opportunities for me to exercise my skills in organization and interior design. Past the rocky start, this new beginning was exactly what we needed for our family.

Our Parish Family with St. Michael of Sharonville will likely be the same. As we enter into this unknown territory, there will be times where we will be confused and overwhelmed.

We will have to learn about each other and learn from each other. Both our strengths and our weaknesses will be placed on the table as we form a new relationship with open communication, open hearts and open arms.

I find peace and comfort in this entire Beacons of Light process from our Mother Mary. Mary said "yes" to God without doubt, without question. She had been *chosen* to be the mother of the Son of God with all that entailed - ridicule, public shame and a lack of understanding from those around her. But she said "yes" nonetheless, because there was no doubt that God would carry her through, and she was gifted with watching her son grow and bless the world through His words and deeds.

God does not give us anything we cannot handle. We have been *chosen* to be a Parish Family with St. Michael after many months of prayer and preparation. I have no doubt that this collaboration will bring about a change that will bring prosperity and richness to our area and all those we serve. Please continue to pray for our Parish Family and the priests of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati as we grow closer to sharing in the love of Christ together as one.



Sarah Chivers
SARAH CHIVERS
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION

UPCOMING DATES ON THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1: ALL SAINTS DAY

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2: ALL SOULS DAY

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21: SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE**

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28: FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5: SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8: SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE
CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12: THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19: FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25: THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD
(CHRISTMAS)**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26: FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF
JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH**

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 27: FEAST OF ST. JOHN,
APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST**

chosen TO HOPE

A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes - and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside, is not a bad picture of Advent.

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, God is in the Manger

As we begin the season of Advent, we recognize that the spirit of Advent calls us to deeper prayer, attentiveness to the needs of others, and to live our lives in a constant grateful awareness of the presence of God all around us. We have been *chosen* by God to be a joyful people of hope.

A glimmer of hope can be found in the story of a man seriously injured in an accident. Having lost his legs, an arm, and some fingers on the other arm, he found hope and meaning for himself by writing letters to prisoners. After a year of no response, he received a letter from the warden. The grateful warden asked him to write his letters on cardstock, because the prisoners passed his letters around. By the time his letters would make it to the last prisoner, they were tattered by the many lives it touched. Letters of hope and encouragement, they brought joyful words and sometimes challenges to the prisoners.

Often children write letters to Santa Claus, asking and hoping for toys and gifts. One year, a young girl decided not to write a letter to Santa, because if she told Santa all the things she wanted, she wouldn't know what Santa wanted to give *her*. Our relationship with God is very much the same. We can name all of our requests, but in the quiet of our prayer and reflection, we see that God always provides for us regardless of our lists of "needs."

We now know the Parish Family groupings that a year of Beacons of Light communications have been preparing us for. Change doesn't always feel good or right, but we have hope that God leads us through anything that comes our way. We see that we will expand our friendships and relation-

ships with another parish, recognizing that all relationships require effort and patience from everyone involved to develop the needed trust to move forward together. Advent is an ideal time to quietly reflect on how we can individually and communally continue to build the Kingdom of God by being others-centered and charitable in our words and actions.

When Pope St. John XXIII was asked why he called together the Second Vatican Council, he said, "to make the human sojourn a little less sad." There are few who would deny that

we can encounter troubled and sometimes flawed actions and words in our current lives. It is in our carefully *chosen* responses to those moments that we can find joy and hope.

As we seek to deepen our connection with God during Advent, we might just sense a universality with all creation, so much so that we find our lives forever changed with hope and joy. May we all find respite from our burdens and worries during this Advent season of hope. Let's bring compassion and harmony

to our families, our parish, our world. After all, we have been specially *chosen* by God for this wonderful life. May Advent bring you peace, joy, love, and hope... hope that we live out the same love and mercy of God in all that we do.



Mary Montour

MARY MONTOUR
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION

chosen TO LIVE LIKE THE SAINTS

Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you.

Over the past year or so, I've been trying to connect more with St. Joseph. Perhaps I'm a bit overdue to try that out... Beyond his being my namesake, we share love for making things out of wood. Lately, though, it's the peripheral details of his life that keep calling me toward him. Joseph is famously wordless in the gospels, and he disappears from the narrative without so much as a death notice once Jesus is grown. He is central but silent.

St. Joseph's silence rings to me as the greatest sign of his saintliness. I've been told more than once in my life that I revel in attention more than I should. It makes sense. Receiving affirmation is healthy, but I often talk about myself beyond the point of anyone else's interest. Rather than my words giving my listeners worthwhile information, they act as a statement to my own importance. I am worth hearing.

I am important. I am *chosen*. Joseph, as we know him, doesn't have that issue. Instead, he exists in the background, living his life for the sake of his family.

I wonder what Joseph must have felt like when the angel told him in his dream to flee to Egypt. His life had already been

in flux for months, if not years: a surprise pregnancy, a forced move to a new town where he knew no one and the birth of his child in a stable. Now another move! He must have been exhausted and confused that no matter where he went, he was only a short time away from having to upend his life again. Matthew's gospel doesn't tell us what Joseph felt though. Instead, "Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt" (MT 3:14). No protests, just action.

I have not had to flee for my family's lives recently. I don't know Joseph and the Holy Family's experience as refugees, but I still hope I can gain something from Joseph's demeanor. My life's flux is that I began working at St. John this past summer. As the holidays approach while I'm balancing and organizing my first year as a parish minister, I want St. Joseph to be my example. The school year is in full swing, and I have a barrage of events to plan, volunteers to coordinate and lessons to create. But I hope I can be like Joseph who lived, not for his own glory, but God's through his silent service to others, for we are *chosen* to serve and care for one another.



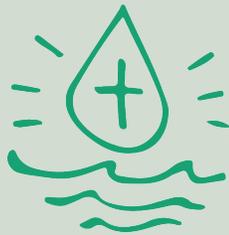
Image by Bernardo Ramonfaur



Joe Neidhard
JOE NEIDHARD
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY



CELEBRATING OUR *catholic faith*



BAPTISM

Taylor Scott Morrissey
Theodore Barrett Julian
Emilia Abigail Marie Mitchell
Nicholas Rowin Everett Mitchell
James Patrick Benedetti
Kennedy Pierce Burke
Benjamin Lee Uhlenhake
Nicholas Ryan Wilson
Lane Piovesan

Raeley Piovesan
Oakley Lynn Rybak
Ian Anh Khoa Schragal
Hannah Marie Frazer
Emma Elizabeth Kerns
Claire Louise Kroeger
Tristan Cunningham
Caleb Cunningham



MARRIAGE

Danielle Kochensparger & Stephen Haubrock

*Our Sympathies
Go Out To...*

Betty Carns
on the death of her brother

Kristin Moore
on the death of her husband Corey Moore
and to their children Carter, Colton and Camden
on the death of their father

Chris Tanaka
on the death of his wife Amy Tanaka
and their children Davis, John and Kate
on the death of their mother

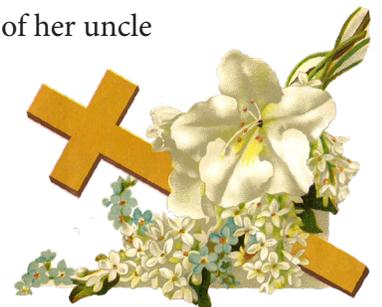
Becky Falato
on the death of her husband Rory Falato

Donna Wilson
on the death of her grandson

Jodi Krusling
on the death of her father

Mary Kuhlman
on the death of her mother

Tina Pratt
on the death of her uncle



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

November is the month to be thankful. We have so many things to be thankful for here at St. John. Our parishioners are amazing. Our volunteers are second to none. Our donors have carried us through nearly two years of a pandemic. Sometimes I sit at my desk and find it difficult to put into words how thankful I am to be part of this parish family. It is truly home to so many of us, whether we grew up here or not. Our parish family is now going to grow even more. As we are set to embrace the parishioners of St. Michael into our family, we have so much to look forward to. I know that the sharing of ideas, resources and love for our Catholic faith will be healthy for all of us. I am an optimist by nature and change doesn't frighten me. I am hopeful that all parishioners in our parish family will allow themselves to be open and optimistic for the future of this new family! We are *chosen* to all be beacons of light for one another.

We have had a wonderful 2021. We should all be proud of what we have accomplished this year. You have paid for many items on our parish wish list (2/3 of everything listed was paid for in special donations!). You've allowed us to have another year where we not only met our budget, but we were able to put nearly \$300,000 into our reserves in July. You have donated money and items for charitable organizations such as Reach Out Lakota, Campton Mission, St. Vincent de Paul, St Leo the Great, Pregnancy Center East, Little Sisters of the Poor, and the Medical Missionaries of Mary.

You celebrated a Mini-Fest with us by buying raffle and basket tickets, enjoying a day in the sun with burgers and dogs and games and helping us to earn nearly \$65,000 to help replace the lost festival income (for the second year!). You attend Mass in person or online. You pray for each other! We are blessed to have you as members of our family.

As I write this article, we have just closed September and the first quarter of our fiscal year. Our actual weekly income is \$344,906 versus the budget of \$342,250, so we are right at budget for now. Please keep your regular giving coming in. We depend on this income more than ever because of the loss of our festival income for the second year in a row. As always, the staff at St. John is working hard to keep our costs down. But, there are ways that you can help us to remain ahead of budget.

You can give with your envelopes, online or by sending checks into the parish office. You can check out our parish wishlist online at www.stjohnwc.org/parish-wish-list. You could donate stock or make a one-time gift to the parish. Remember to check our annual financial report to parishioners online as well: www.stjohnwc.org/finances. If you have questions about our finances, my phone, email and door are always open.

Have a blessed November and December. I pray for you every day. Keep your parish family in your prayers as well! As we head into the holiday season, I pray that everyone is able to enjoy Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas with their own families. And, for those who are entering the holidays without certain family members this year, please know that you are at the very top of my prayer list. Let us spend time cherishing those who are in our lives today and yesterday. Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to all!



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan".

JOAN SEIBENICK
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION



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