



on  
EAGLE'S  
wings

**WE ARE**

*Chosen*

May / June 2022

# SEEK THE SPIRIT

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As I sit at my desk beginning to write my article for Eagle Wings, I realize that this is my last article for the “wing thing” (my term of endearment). There is so much to write about and not enough time or space to cover everything. I am going to reflect on the feast of Pentecost - a feast that happened 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus. It is a time when a change was going to take place with the apostles. The Holy Spirit came to them in a most dramatic way. They were given the courage to leave the locked room where they hid for fear of the Jews doing to them what was done to Jesus. The Spirit came and instilled in their hearts the fire to go out and bring the Gospel to life. They were given a voice to reach all the people that were gathered in Jerusalem. Several thousand people were baptized and became a part of the moment. They became part of “the way” and later they would be called Christians. Pentecost is the birth of the Church. Jesus’ chosen ones had been called to bring all that they had learned into the church. We remember that formidable day that concludes the season of Easter. The apostles were Spirit-driven and guided to reveal the salvation of the people by the cross and resurrection of Jesus. He emptied himself so that we might live in the glory of God.

So, what does this feast mean to you and me? Do we realize that the Spirit is still dwelling among the church? Are we open to the Spirit and its directions that it gives us to continue to grow in the church? Someone once said the Spirit is alive in the church, but we might have to listen more closely to where it is leading us. The Spirit has not stopped but perhaps our leaders are not in tune to His voice. We must be still at times to really listen to what the Spirit has to say about the church the apostles started so long ago. I am afraid if we are waiting for the scene from the Acts of Apostles with the power and force that came to that locked room filled with apostles, we will be waiting a heck of a long time. The Spirit may be as loud as a gentle breeze or as quiet as a voice speaking in a whisper among all the distractions that bombard us daily. It is up to us to calm our busy lives and listen to the Spirit who will guide us to the Lord. We must slow down and be aware of that relationship we hunger for. Do not miss opportunities to let the Spirit into your daily lives.

Meister Eckhart once wrote: “And suddenly you know, it’s time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings.” I came upon this while reflecting on the beginning of the new parish families that are effective in July. It says what I hope will happen in the Families across the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. These will be challenging times for us all. But it is important to realize that the Spirit is in this somewhere; I just hope we are

good listeners. We need the Spirit more than ever in today’s church. Seek him where he may be found.

It is with sadness that I come to the end of my journey here with the St. John parish. I have never been more in love with the assignment that I was given to serve - first as parochial vicar and then as your pastor. I have been privileged to serve you for so many years. I grew in my role as pastor and gave all that I had to be a good homilist and a better shepherd. This became my family, and I am proud, yet humbled by the things we did as a family. No, I am not going to list my accomplishments, it is not my style. I believe I am leaving the parish better than when I began my journey. You can be the judge of that. Did I please everyone? Of course not. No one can! I may have not appeared to be smiling enough, but I have never been happier with an assignment in my 32 years of being a priest.

I now move on and that brings tears to me eyes. But I know the church will move on and grow in the new parish family setting. The Spirit will not let the church down if continues to listen to the Spirit. I absolutely love my St. John parish family and I will miss you deeply. I will continue to pray for you, and I hope I can count on your prayers for me. Be well and grow, and something I said to my staff I say to you: “Let’s be careful out there.” Most importantly, know that you have been chosen by God. The Eucharist is key. Become what you receive so you can continue to grow in being Christ for one another.



FR. DON WEST  
PASTOR

**PASTOR**  
**2011-2022**

**PAROCHIAL VICAR**  
**2008-2011**

# A RESURRECTION OF FAITH

My dad used to run a floral shop in Elmwood Place. People’s minds usually turn to whimsy when I tell them about that, but suffice it to say that the business was more stress than you would like to imagine. That stress left him at peace closing the business when I was in kindergarten. In the years since, the only place outside of our own home he still arranged flowers for was our parish. He would (and still does) make altar arrangements, paschal candle wreaths, and baptismal font decorations with potted flowers. The arranged flowers inevitably shrivel and die, but he takes home the potted flowers and gives them to my mom to plant around their condo. But there have been more than a few of those pots that have ended up with me. I don’t have a lot of space to plant flowers in my apartment patio garden, but they make an impact. Every April, I’m the only unit in my complex with hyacinths, and in May I’m the only one with Easter lilies. I look forward to them as they start popping up in late winter—both as a pretty thing to look at and as a reminder of my dad.

With apologies to bunnies and eggs, a flower’s returning beauty every spring is the best symbol I know for Easter and the resurrection. What has died has come back new and is as alive as ever. There are many times when I feel my ministry could use a resurrection. It’s never easy getting teens to come to church events, but it’s been especially difficult since the pandemic began. Everyone, from high schoolers to retirees, has been limiting their activities outside their homes to the essentials. And unlike school sports or playing an instrument, I can’t promise that anyone will get a college scholarship for going to youth group.

But faith in the resurrection also means that we should have a belief in hope. Hope isn’t an irrational belief in things turning out alright, though. Hope, rather, is understanding that the seeds you plant will grow into something beautiful when winter ends. I’ve tried to notice how the small successes during my first year are feeding that growth. For instance, I recently put on a special youth group session on art and faith. I spoke about how art, design, and colors help us grow closer to God, even when we don’t notice it. Though the event was sparsely attended, I could tell that the teens present were engaging with what I had to say. When we were performing a mandala exercise later that afternoon, one girl who did not have a background in art looked at the image she had made and said, “I’m surprised I actually like what I made!” Talking about a subject I’m passionate about helped her make a breakthrough, even if it was small.

God has chosen a path for all of us that will often leave us feeling stuck and discouraged. But belief in hope through the resurrection strengthens us to grow our world into the Kingdom of Heaven. In time, my hope is that the St. John youth ministry program will thrive and grow into a ministry that people from outside our parish family will want to be involved with. And it will get there, God willing, and with the involvement of our parish.



*Joe Neidhard*  
JOE NEIDHARD  
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY

THANK YOU, FR. DON, FOR  
YOUR MANY YEARS OF  
SERVICE HERE AT ST. JOHN!



WE WILL  
MISS YOU  
GREATLY!



**AUGUST 5-6-7**

[www.stjohnwc.org/familyfestival](http://www.stjohnwc.org/familyfestival)

Make donations to our festival fund here:  
<https://stjohnwc.weshareonline.org/>

## **BASKET BONANZA**

Through May 14/15, there will be a Giving Tree in the Gathering Space for our 2022 Basket Bonanza. You can choose any item(s) from the giving tree to buy for our baskets. You can also purchase items from our online Amazon wishlist for the baskets here: <https://a.co/emjwGhi>.

Keep an eye out for our July/August 2022 issue of On Eagle's Wings for a full list of our many wonderful baskets this year!

## **GRAND RAFFLE**

Grand Raffle tickets will be mailed to all parishioner homes in late May! Our top three prizes will be drawn on August 5 (\$1,000), August 6 (\$2,000) and August 7 (\$10,000).

We also have our Early Bird Drawings on June 20 and July 18! Tickets received by noon on each of the early bird drawing dates will be included in these early bird drawings. The lucky winners of the early bird drawings will receive \$250 cash! Early bird drawings are done live online.



# ST. JOHN FAMILY FESTIVAL **BID & BUY**

**ITEM DROP-OFF**  
July 3, 14, 17, 24 from Noon-3pm  
in the Parish Center (Church Side)  
and July 31st in the Pavilion  
Or by appointment (contact Julie Brankamp)

**No Item Is Too Big Or Small. Variety Adds To  
The Excitement Of The Event!**

Vehicles, boats, campers, time shares, etc.  
significantly add to the success and bid off  
excitement. Get a write off on your taxes.

**Donated items accepted  
include but not limited to:**

**Small items such as  
decorations, small  
appliances, collectibles,  
toys, services, baskets (mid  
to large), and instruments**

**Large items such as  
furniture, appliances,  
outdoor items, etc.**

**NOT ACCEPTED:**

**clothing, bowling balls,  
exercise equipment,  
computers, car seats,  
drop side cribs,  
mattresses, organs,  
entertainment centers,  
and non-HD flat  
screen TV's**

**For more Information**  
**Julie Brankamp at 513-400-5504,**  
**Frances at 513-549-3469, or**  
**stjohnwcfestival@yahoo.com**

# A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

As of the third week of March, our current weekly giving YTD is \$1.064M versus a budget of \$1.035M (2.9% ahead of budget). Thank you to everyone who gives to our parish. Our income has been ahead of budget for most of this fiscal year to date (YTD). Including our 2021 Mini-Fest, Giving Sunday and YTD stock gifts, our total income by the end of March was \$1.37M versus a budget of \$1.19M. Any income over our budget will be utilized to make improvements in our buildings and grounds. We have a few projects in the works for the next three months, including roof repairs to the Center, Favret Hall and the Spirit House. We have some parking lot repairs, tree removals, equipment updates and purchases and a few other items as well. If you are interested in looking through our wish list items, please do. The wishlist is located in the finance tab on our parish website. In the 2020-21 fiscal year, 2/3 of our wishlist items were paid for by our amazing parishioners! This year we have given to many local and beloved agencies and charities including Reach Out Lakota, Pregnancy Center East, St. Leo, St. Vincent de Paul and the Church of the Good Shepherd in Camp-ton, KY in very meaningful ways. Our parishioners are some of the most giving in the entire Archdiocese.

I would like to give a huge “Thank You!” to everyone who helped us to get through nearly three years of pandemic limitations in our parish income and activities. We are SO ready to move full steam ahead on summer events at St. John. Most importantly, we will have a full St. John Family Festival on August 5-6-7. We are looking for volunteers to chair several booths, so if you can assist during the weekend, please do! Simply email me and I will explain what is involved. It’s not difficult at all and it would mean so much to us.

Are you interested in giving electronically? Did you know that you can set up electronic giving to our parish in under five minutes? It is super easy to do using your checking account or credit card. It is also safe and secure. Go to [www.stjohnwc.org](http://www.stjohnwc.org) and click on “Donate/Giving” and then “Sunday Collection”. Any questions? Feel free to call or email Brigid Loebig at [bloebig@stjohnwc.org](mailto:bloebig@stjohnwc.org) or 777-6433, ext. 119.

Happy Mother’s Day and Father’s Day to all of our moms, dads, grandparents and parent figures this spring! As always, I continue to pray for you; please continue to pray for me as well! Thank you for all that you do for our parish family. I am so proud to be a part of this community.



JOAN SEIBENICK  
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION



## MAY IS FOR *Mary*

May is the liturgical month of the Blessed Virgin Mary whose commemoration, according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, dates from the 17th century. That is when the custom of consecrating the month of May to the Blessed Virgin by special observances was first adopted. It is encouraged to say the rosary at home with the family especially in May. The rosary is a devotional prayer, meant to be prayed alone or with a small group. We do not generally sing songs to Mary during the liturgy because the Easter season usually encompasses the entire month

of May. We do usually sing the hymn “Be Joyful, Mary” because it has an easter text. On Mother’s Day a prelude Ave Maria or other Marian hymn will be sung, but not during Mass. So, celebrate Mary, say the rosary, honor Mothers in the month of May and praise the Risen Lord Jesus Christ during the Mass!



LYNN MEISBERGER  
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

# A NOTE FROM THE INCOMING PASTOR

Dear Members of St. John Parish,

I am truly honored to have been named Pastor of the new parish family that will include St. John! Following in the line of priests like Fr. Jim Meade, Fr. Ray Favret, Fr. Mark Burger and Fr. Don West is something I don't take lightly! It is an honor that I hop to live up to.

First, I want to offer my thanks to Fr. Don for his many years of service here at St. John. He has been a wonderful shepherd of the parish, and I know that you will miss him greatly.

Allow me to introduce myself. My family has been parishioners of St. John since 1981; I am a 1987 graduate of St. Gabriel School, and a 1991 graduate of Lakota High School. This new assignment for me is, in many ways, something of a homecoming; returning to two parishes which both hold special memories for me. I was ordained by Archbishop Pilarczyk in 2004 and celebrated my first Mass here at St. John, as some of you will remember.

Coming to St. Michael in 2018, I have very much enjoyed getting to know their parish community. Over these coming years, there will be many opportunities for all three of these parish communities to come together and get to know each other better. I look forward to bringing that to life.

I have been meeting with your staff along with the staff at St. Gabriel, making sure we are doing what we need to be doing to be ready for the change in pastors. I'm sure many of you are wondering about any changes which may be coming. For now, I do not see an immediate need to change the Sunday Mass times of any of the three parishes. At some point in the future, this may become necessary, but my hope is that any change would come from the desires of the parishes, and not just from me.

Finally, I am happy to say that Fr. Michael Hay has been assigned to our Family of parishes as Parochial Vicar (Associate Pastor). There are also retired priests who will be helping, especially on weekends, as well. I believe you are familiar with all of the retired priests as they have led Masses at St. John in the past. We are all looking forward to getting to know them through the celebration of the Eucharist.

I look forward to joining you in July and beginning the work we will do to further strengthen our communities and make us a true Beacon of Light in West Chester!



In Christ,  
Fr. Ed Burns

## CELEBRATING OUR

## *catholic faith*

### OUR SYMPATHIES GO OUT TO...

Carol Thomas on the death of her sister-in-law  
Dan Helsinger on the death of his wife Barbara Helsinger  
Sandy Kelly on the death of sister Barbara Helsinger  
The family of Joseph Ficorilli  
Kathy Staten on the death of her brother  
Margaret Bankemper on the death of her sister  
Tate Cooper on the death of his aunt

### CELEBRATING THEIR BAPTISM

Margo Mae McLean  
Hailey Fields  
Cash Harrison Havens  
Cole Donovan Havens



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