



St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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When Faith and Service Travel **Joe and Sharon Dillett** **Bring God's Love to Many**

Joe and Sharon Dillett have been parishioners at St. John the Baptist for almost 50 years, after Joe's work brought them here from their native Wisconsin in 1969. Since then, they have actively served our parish — singing in the choir, teaching religious education classes, chairing the Pastoral Council, and more. Our own faith community has been blessed by the Dilletts' acts of service — but we are certainly not the only ones, for this couple regularly takes their commitment to love and serve on the road!

For the past seven years, Joe and Sharon have enjoyed being involved with 21st Century Heroes, a non-profit organization that provides therapeutic woodcarving workshops for wounded veterans. Several times a year, the couple travels to Wyoming to spend a week

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Sharon and Joe Dillett

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Joe and Sharon Dillett *continued from front cover*

with the vets. Joe serves as an instructor with the program and Sharon also lends a hand.

The Dilletts are thankful for the opportunity to help the veterans rediscover a sense of peace and purpose as they learn the skills of woodcarving.

“We get more out of it than they do,” Joe says. “They come home wounded from deployment and kind of feel worthless and miss the camaraderie, and they just hit bottom. But miracles happen in this program, and it seems to turn their lives around.

“We are just the instruments,” he adds. “The rewarding thing for us is that we just get pulled in as one of their own – we feel that bond with them, and they become our family members. Sharon and I have a lot of ‘grandkids’ out there!”

In addition to their travels with 21st Century Heroes, the Dilletts also make regular trips to Oklahoma to visit with a death row inmate. The couple first reached out to the prisoner after Joe’s sister – who had contacted the inmate as part of the work she does as a Sister of St. Francis – asked Joe and Sharon if they would be willing to begin corresponding with him. Three years later, the Dilletts continue to write letters to the inmate, speak with him about once a week, and even travel to Oklahoma to visit with him in person.

By developing a relationship with the inmate, Joe and Sharon hope to help him draw closer to Christ.

“He’s a Baptist and he has a good knowledge of the Bible,” says Joe. “So, we have a thing with him to encourage him to write his reflections. I told him that for every page he writes, I will buy a chicken for Food for the Poor for Haiti. His writing is very prayerful. The last thing he wrote was on the light of God in us, and I know it took a lot of prayerful time for him to write that.”

No matter how far away their travels may take them, the Dilletts feel blessed to be a part of such a vibrant parish here at home, and they are thankful that Fr. Butler has brought an even deeper spiritual awakening to St. John the Baptist. Joe is now feeling the Holy Spirit breathe new life into the Pastoral Council on which he has served since 1975, and he is starting up a new prison ministry. And after over 40 years in the choir, he and Sharon both continue to enjoy sharing the gift of music.

Feeling that they always receive much more than they give, the Dilletts have every intention to keep serving the Lord and His people for as long as they can!

“I’d say the almighty Father loves us and not only knows the number of hairs on our head, but also has a job for us to do each day,” Joe says. “The work of today prepares us for the work of tomorrow. And we look at it as fun – we really enjoy working with the people!”

“I’d say the almighty Father loves us and not only knows the number of hairs on our head, but also has a job for us to do each day. The work of today prepares us for the work of tomorrow. And we look at it as fun — we really enjoy working with the people!” – Joe Dillett

A Letter From Our Pastor

November is a Time for Thanksgiving

Dear Parishioners,

November brings us to thoughts of thanksgiving and Thanksgiving — it is both a time of year when we tend to think in terms of gratitude to God, and a time when we also formally celebrate our American holiday. My memories of Thanksgiving are filled with food, of course, but they are also filled with thoughts of family and a sense of togetherness and a sense of my faith.

But this is also a significant month in the Church from a number of perspectives. Nov. 1 is a Holy Day, the Solemnity of All Saints. I have several favorites that have become saint friends. It is important that we get to know and befriend the saints. There are so many we can relate to. Going on pilgrimage to Fatima and Lourdes this past July, I have some new friends who I've become close to in St. Jacinta, St. Francisco and St. Bernadette.

Also, most of us have people in our lives who have had a profound impact on us — people who have many saint-like qualities that they have shared with us. Perhaps they will be future saints. This month is a wonderful reminder to all the saints and saint-like people in our lives to their inspiring example. It is a good time for us to think of them, thank them, and thank God for making them a part of our lives.

Our Thanksgiving holiday falls on Nov. 23, and is a time for families and gratitude. Thanksgiving became official in the United States in 1863, and in his proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln made very clear Whom we needed to thank. "To these bounties, which



are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God," Lincoln said. In other words, we all need to thank Almighty God for our many blessings.

Finally, November also brings us to the end of one Church year and the beginning of a new one.

The Feast of Christ the King on Nov. 26 officially begins the final week of our liturgical year, with the new Church Year beginning the First Sunday of Advent, Dec. 3. So, we too give thanks for another year and the many blessings we have received. From the beginning of the month when we thank God for the example of the saints and the saintly people in our lives, to the end of the month when we thank God for everything we have and everything we are, November is a time to approach the Lord with a grateful heart. That is what stewardship truly is all about — about approaching God, about approaching each day, and about approaching all those with whom we come in contact, with hearts filled with gratitude and love.

In Christ,

Fr. Butler

Fr. Butler, Pastor

St. John the Baptist

Receiving Graces THROUGH THE



Becca Harms received the Sacrament of Confirmation this fall.

Different images come to mind when reflecting on the final Sacrament of Initiation. Maybe you remember the bishop giving you a “tap” on the cheek, as a reminder to be willing to suffer for Christ. Perhaps the scent of chrism, in the sign of a cross on your forehead is one you’ll never forget. Or maybe picking a sponsor or a Confirmation saint was a decision that you thought long and hard about. But regardless of what stands out in your mind, when you received the Sacrament of Confirmation, you were anointed with oil, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and fully initiated into the Catholic Church.

Two and a half years ago, parishioner Keith Mokry was among those receiving the sacrament. Now a senior at Marmion Academy, Keith recalls feeling drawn to take the step of becoming fully initiated into the Catholic faith.

“I had a very strong calling to be confirmed and to grow stronger in my faith,” he says, crediting a Biblical Studies class that he attended, as well as altar serving at Mass for a number of years.

As he prepared to receive the sacrament, Keith drew inspiration from the stories of the martyrs, knowing that he wanted to receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit that strengthened them.

“I can remember reading a story about the early Church, in which people were confirmed and sent off, into a very uncertain world, to spread the faith,” Keith says. “They had a profound strength in them, a profound desire to spread the message of love, of Jesus.

THE Sacrament of Confirmation

To see all these martyrs and learn about them, that definitely made the Sacrament of Confirmation that much more meaningful, because these people sacrificed their lives and they did it because of that grace and those beliefs.”

Becca Harms is a sophomore at Somonauk High School, and was confirmed at St. John the Baptist this fall.

“I have always been into the Catholic faith and I wanted to grow closer to God, and I felt like this was the best way to do it, along with going to church,” says Becca, who enjoyed the preparation process, especially choosing a Confirmation saint. “I feel like I’ve grown closer to God and I understand a lot more than I used to.

“When the bishop is putting the oils on your forehead, you know God is there with you and wants to help you,” she adds.

Several years after receiving the Sacrament, Keith has found that his life has changed in a number of ways, from deepening his prayer life, to growing in his understanding of the Catholic faith.

“I have a greater appreciation and understanding of Catholic doctrine and belief, and a greater stake in it,” he says. “Sometimes, it makes me stop and think, ‘Is this what a confirmed follower would do?’”

For both teens, continuing to be active in their parish community is an important “next step” in their journey. Keith serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at school, has been involved in

service projects, and taught Religious Education for several years. Recently confirmed, Becca has jumped into a YDisciple small group to further come to know and live for Christ.

Both believe that receiving their Confirmation has helped them to live their faith and share it with others.

“I hope that Confirmation helps me to bring in other people who don’t really understand the faith,” Becca says. “I hope it will give me the words to speak to them to try to pull them closer to God.”

“Standing up for your beliefs can be challenging – sometimes you want to just let it be, but when it comes to these things that are so important, you just can’t do that,” Keith says. “Some aspects of Catholic doctrine are

tough to live out. So definitely, Confirmation and the graces involved with that and the affirmation of one’s faith help you to trust in that, and help to strive to do those things.”

Becca and Keith both emphasize that Confirmation is not graduation from the Church. In fact, they’d tell you that it’s quite the opposite.

“It’s not the end,” Becca says. “It’s a new beginning of your life.”

“Anyone who receives the sacrament is going to receive graces,” Keith adds. “Sometimes, you have to be willing to let those graces flow through you and help you to be a better person.”

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— Keith Mokry

If you would like more information about receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation as a young person or an adult, please contact Director of Religious Education Carol Shelton at 815-498-2010 or carolshelton@stjbsom.org.

St. John the Baptist

Stewardship

Becoming Fishers of Men

Whether you hold a high-profile position, such as parish council president, or have more of a behind-the-scenes role as a coordinator of a parish ministry, God has called you – as a parish leader – to help build His Church.

This challenge is just as important as the call of any other Catholic leader, including the earliest disciples.

When Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee, He urged a group of fishermen, “Come follow me.” Jesus promised if they laid down their nets and followed Him, He would make them fishers of men. These men were among His original disciples, and they knew Christ’s call was so important that they left their secular occupation to follow Him.

Just as He did with the fishermen, Jesus calls each of us today. He is not necessarily asking us to leave our secular careers, but He *is* asking us to put Him first in our lives and to share His message of love with others.

God truly wants us to serve Him and to build His Church through the secular occupations we have chosen. It is through the Church that new disciples are born, and it is in the Church that disciples continue to mature. Forming disciples of Christ is the most important work that can be done on earth, and each of us has been called to play an active role in this work.

So, how do we go about building the Church? Where do we find the plans?

Some people mistakenly think that building the Church – in particular, building our own parish or diocese – is no different than building a successful busi-

ness. Indeed, the purpose of building the Church is to change hearts – a goal that only God can accomplish.

Secular society has not prepared us for this work. However, the Holy Spirit – sometimes referred to as the “Architect of the Church” – has the plan. In order to implement this plan, we must become good listeners. We must open ourselves to the workings of the Holy Spirit as He transforms us and guides us to carry out God’s work and to serve as His instruments on earth, building the Church together with Him.

This is where spiritual exercises, such as retreats, come into play. A retreat offers the individual an opportunity to spend time alone with the Lord, allowing God to draw the person deeper into the mystery of who He is, who we are and what He is doing in our lives. Stewardship retreats can offer parish leaders the opportunity each year to spend time with the Lord as He directs them in the ways of discipleship. As leaders, we must take time to meditate on the Scriptures and allow Jesus to open up His Word to us. Then, as we grow deeper in our understanding of what God wants of us, we can exclaim, just as the first disciples did on the road to Emmaus, “Our hearts are burning within us” (Lk 24:32).

God has placed an extremely important call on the lives of all parish leaders, no matter how big or small the role. It is vital to understand how we, as parish leaders, can best answer His call. What, in particular, is the Lord calling each one of us to do? He most likely is not asking us to drop our nets, but to pick them up and become “fishers of men.” We must discern how we can most effectively cast our nets for Him.



Funeral Choir Offers Comfort and Unity in Times of Grief

When the members of our Funeral Choir raise their voices in song during a funeral Mass, they are doing much more than providing music throughout the liturgy.

“I’d say it’s a ministry of consolation,” says Mark Mackeben, Parish Director of Sacred Music. “Music itself goes part and parcel with the liturgy. Music is part of the liturgy, and the liturgy is completely sung, ideally. It is widely believed that people don’t speak in heaven — they all sing with the voices of angels.”

Our Funeral Choir is made up of 10 parishioners who volunteer to sing during funeral Masses, which traditionally are held in the morning. They are literally “on call” to be notified when they are needed.

“Very often, the bereaved don’t sing,” Mark says. “When you’re very overwhelmed with emo-

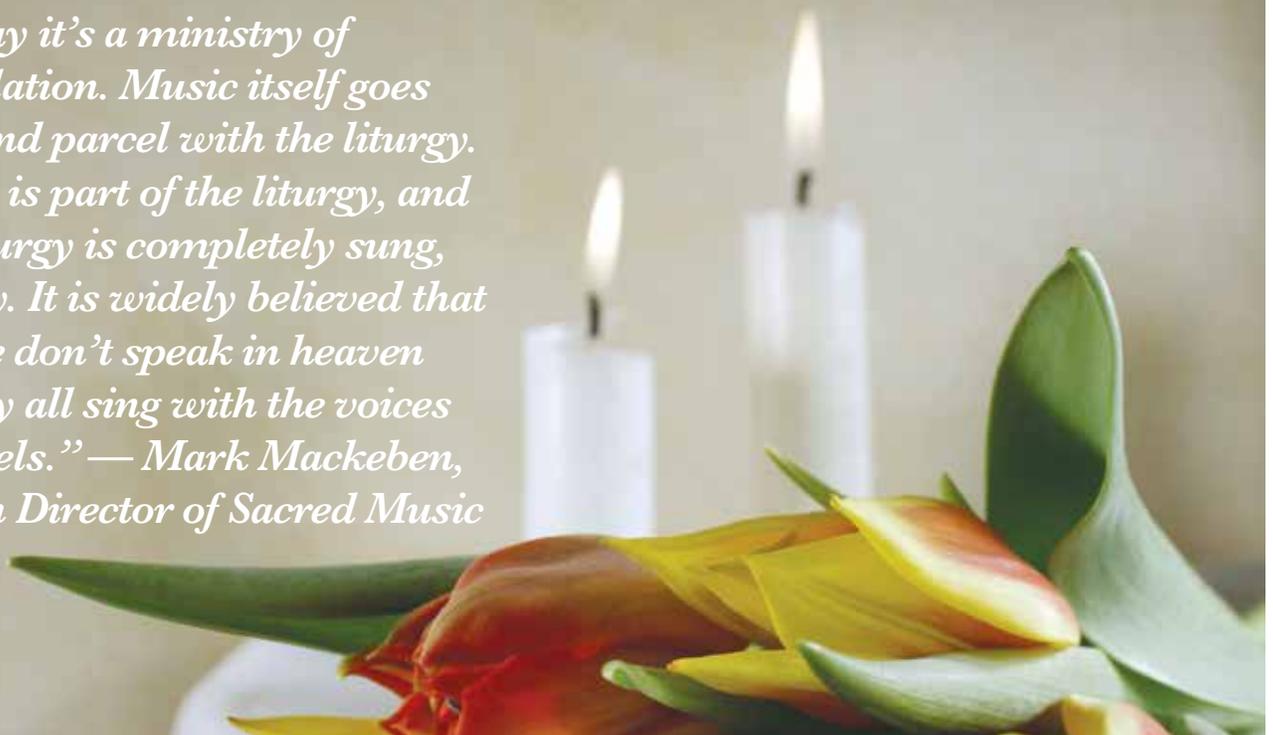
tion, it’s very hard to sing. Having the Funeral Choir takes the pressure off the families, and they can experience the Mass. There is something intimate about singing, and there is the statement by Richard J. Clark, music director and organist for St. Cecilia Church in Boston: ‘If you, the bereaved cannot give voice to your grief in this moment, we shall do it for you. To sing for another sends a message of love: We are with you. We pray with you, for you, and for the deceased whom we love.’”

While the Funeral Choir offers comfort to the grieving, the members themselves experience a sense of belonging and place of comfort. Mark recalls a recent event within the choir.

“We had a choir member whose husband died unexpectedly,” he says. “She came to sing two weeks later at a funeral. She’s always been in the

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Mass Times

Saturdays 5:00 PM
Sundays 8:00 and 10:30 AM
Weekdays:
Tuesdays 6:30 PM
M, W, Th, F 7:00 AM

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Tuesdays 5:00 PM
Saturdays 4:00 PM
or by appointment

Adoration

Tuesdays 5-6 PM and
First Fridays 7:30 AM-9:00 PM with
Benediction 9:00 PM

Funeral Choir *continued from page 7*

Funeral Choir, and I wondered if she'd take time off, but she had been coming to regular choir practices. She sang at the funeral Mass because it creates a nice community to belong to. The biggest thing about a funeral is that it reminds us we have something to look forward to – what is coming next. It's a reminder."

Besides offering comfort to those grieving during the funeral Mass, the Funeral Choir's singing offers something else.

"What I liken it to, and what the Church teaches is, when we sing, in the liturgy our voices are raised to glorify God, and our voices aren't ours, but join the voices of all the heavenly angels and saints," Mark says. "We are there to praise the one, true God. We're not just singing with ourselves, but with voices united. Then you can feel the Spirit moving at times when the music comes together really well."

Anyone interested in joining the Funeral Choir, or any parish choir, must be able to match pitch and carry a melody.

"You have to be able to do these two things," Mark says.

There are no regular rehearsals because the Funeral Choir mostly sings the same music at each Mass. There usually is a hymn that the family requests, and the choir is familiar with most. The Funeral Choir will meet about once a year to review the music.

"I tend to see this ministry as an extension of something you'd find in Biblical times," Mark says. "When Jesus was on His way when Lazarus had died, He encounters some mourners. In ancient times, you'd have professional mourners. We are like the professional mourners, and we participate in the liturgy and stand in for the family, as the family is more focused on their loved ones."

*If you are interested in meeting with Mark Mackeben about joining a choir,
please email him at sacredmusic@stjbsom.org.*