



Concept

Monthly Newsletter

Immaculate Conception Catholic Church

Meet The McPadden Family

Putting Family and Faith First

From helping out at the parish school to pitching in with numerous ministries and making parish events come to life, the McPaddens extraordinarily embrace the stewardship way of life.

“We have been really blessed in our own lives, so we feel it is important to give back,” Sharan McPadden says. “We believe it is essential to share your talents. Family and faith are what life is supposed to be all about — not material things. God needs to be the center of our lives. This is what will keep us all going!”

Over the years, Dan and Sharan McPadden and their three children have witnessed just how beneficial the stewardship lifestyle really can be.

“There are so many benefits to giving!” Sharan says. “When you help someone else, you are rewarded even more than the one you are helping. In the long run, it is so helpful to you as a person.”

Amazingly, Dan and Sharan’s love for stewardship runs deep, going back generations.

“Our parents brought us up this way, and we hope to raise our children this way as well,” Sharan says. “Our faith is extremely important to us. Being involved is just who we are.”



*The McPadden family –
(from left) Sharan, Dan, Kody, Quay, Jeremiah*

Dan and Sharan are currently active with the Pre-Cana Preparation Team, as well as our parish Rosary prayer group. Dan is involved with the Knights of Columbus, and he recently retired from serving on the Finance Council for many years.

continued on page 2

Immaculate Conception

CATHOLIC CHURCH

The McPadden Family *continued from front cover*

“It is all about giving our time, talent, and treasure,” Dan says.

Dan and Sharan’s children are all attending parochial schools — Kody is at Notre Dame Cathedral-Latin, and both Jeremiah and Quay attend Mater Dei Academy.

“The parish schools meet all of our expectations, and we have been very pleased with them,” Sharan says. “They provide such a nurturing environment. I have been a parishioner of Immaculate Conception my whole life, and we got married here in 1990. To me, it was a ‘no-brainer’ that our children would go through the parochial school system.”

Dan reiterates what Sharan feels as well.

“We are very happy with the schools,” Dan says. “They offer a good safe, learning environment.”

Dan and Sharan enjoy contributing to the schools and giving their time and talent to touch the lives of students. For years, Dan has coached basketball for the Catholic Youth Organization.

“He has coached for all of our kids, and it is definitely his favorite volunteer activity,” Sharan says.

Sharan has served as a room parent on and off over the years. She is also a team leader for the Junior High Dance Committee and is on the Parent Teacher

Union (PTU). Each year, she loves helping make the Oktoberfest and the Mt. Carmel Festival a success.

According to Sharan, being involved with the school helps her live out her calling to be a mother, and bring the Catholic faith to her children.

“It reinforces what we are teaching our children at home,” she says. “For example, right now my daughter is preparing to receive her First Communion through her classes at school, as well as at Immaculate Conception Parish Sunday School. She is receiving a very thorough faith formation. We are so grateful to have Sister Josephine as our Parish Catechetical Leader, as well. It is so great that my daughter can actually see a nun regularly! Before Sr. Josephine came, she didn’t know what one looked like.”

Kody is involved in the Youth Group at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish and has appreciated the opportunity to serve the homeless through it.

“He once hopped a fence to give a meal to a man living under a bridge,” Sharan says. “He has told me how receptive and appreciative the poor people are. It has been such a wonderful experience for him.”

This January, as Catholic Schools Week is upon us, let us remember the amazing gift of our Catholic school system, and keep it in our heartfelt prayers!

We have been really blessed in our own lives, so we feel it is important to give back. We believe it is essential to share your talents. Family and faith is what life is supposed to be all about — not material things. God needs to be the center of our lives.

This is what will keep us all going!

— Sharan McPadden

A Letter From Our Pastor

Forget the Resolutions...

Seize the Opportunities!

Dear Parishioners,

One of the most unforgettable years in our lifetimes is finally over and 2021 is here! With the new year, I recommend we forget the notion of making resolutions. This new year presents us with opportunities to practice faithful stewardship — that is, to view the start of 2021 as a time for opportunities instead of resolutions, and to choose to be the disciples we are called to be.

The choice is ours, as it always has been.

I know all too well that each New Year's Day on Jan. 1 we do more than just begin a new calendar year. We make all kinds of promises, articulate expectations, and express hopes, desires and dreams. I don't know who started that custom, but I do know I have spent years attempting with the best intentions to follow my own resolutions, only to become disappointed that most are forgotten all too soon. Therefore, it occurred to me that this year, I need a new and fresh approach to this. Perhaps we all need a new perspective. After all, isn't that what faithful stewards are best at?

The to-do list for 2021 should be seen as a list of opportunities to practice the discipleship intended by Jesus — not just at the beginning of each year, but each day throughout the year when presented with opportunities to be a Christian disciple. In doing so, we are practicing the stewardship way of life. Maybe this year, each of us will be open to embracing the connection between discipleship and stewardship.

Discipleship and stewardship are indeed closely linked, so much so that it clearly defines our Catholic spirituality and touches every aspect of the life of the Church. I hope that the same vision is clearly in your sight — the moment of discovery that stewardship is a way of life, a defining moment presenting opportunities to live what we believe, using our time, talents and treasure to reach others around us.

Therefore, as we close out one of the most eventful years in modern history, and are at the start of a new year filled with promise and hopefulness, I ask you to join me in celebrating the opportunities that will present themselves during 2021. We need to keep our eyes, ears and hearts open to them. They will be there when we least expect them. Our Lord's call to be faithful stewards of the gifts we have been given is already echoing in our hearts as we have concluded a season of giving in which God's gift to us, Jesus Christ, remains the perfect gift that keeps on giving to each of us. If we continue to receive our Lord with grateful hearts, we can respond in our own way of giving time, talent and treasure back as opportunities to become Christ for others.

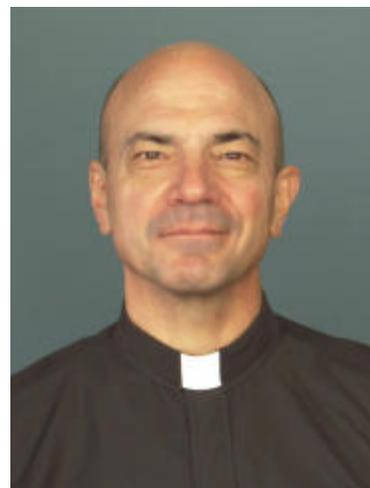
I know that 2021 will be a year of great interest in what will happen in the world around us, and new opportunities will abound. Wait for them. Look for them. Treasure them when they become known.

While resolutions always seem to be good ideas, opportunities are often what God has chosen for us to experience so that our lives may be more whole and fulfilling. Can you think of a better way to start a new year than to forget the resolutions, and instead seize the opportunities God has waiting for us?

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Michael Troha



Immaculate Conception

CATHOLIC CHURCH

PARISHIONERS FIND PEACE

“You Can Give

As a new year begins, it is natural to look back on the year that has just passed, and all the changes and challenges that came with it. This year, of course, there is much on which we may reflect, as 2020 brought an unprecedented global health crisis that changed almost everything about the way we live, work, and worship. While the confusion and uncertainty created by the pandemic are still with us as we enter 2021, we are blessed as Catholic Christians to know that our God is in control. The sense of peace that comes with this realization can be found every day in our Eucharistic Adoration chapel.

Dennis and Stacey Lann, coordinators of the chapel, have long held a devotion to spending time in front of the exposed Blessed Sacrament. When churches around the country closed last March, they found themselves longing for Eucharistic Adoration.

“It was definitely missing,” Dennis says of the two months the chapel remained closed. “A lot of us were watching the Masses from home and doing a family Rosary and individual prayer. I pretty much kept that overnight Holy Hour at the house. It was nice to get up and do that in the middle of the night when the kids weren’t bothering me — and you have to roll with the punches these days — but I realized what I was missing when the chapel was closed.”

When churches were allowed to reopen in late spring, the adoration chapel followed suit. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and extra cleaning requirements, however, perpetual adoration had to be replaced with limited daytime hours. With just three people allowed in the chapel at one time, spending time with the Lord there was even an option for parishioners who were not yet comfortable attending a Mass.

Even amid these troubling times, whoever decides to come to sit with Christ present in the Eucharist is sure to experience the kind of peace that only He can bring.

“It seems like everything right now is very confusing, nothing is clear in the world,” Dennis says. “It has that feeling of a complete lack of control. A buddy of mine mentioned that the peace in the chapel is so needed right now. You just realize it’s all in God’s hands. And sometimes that is all there is because you can’t rely on anything right now — your job, your business — it could all fade away tomorrow. Just that peace in that hour of adoration makes it all understandable, and you can give it all to God.”

In addition to that sense of peace that surpasses all understanding — promised to us in Philippians 4:7 — the true presence of Christ is also an important source of unity.

“Another thing I’ve noticed in our faith and in the Eucharist is that it is unifying,” Dennis says. “The devil always wants to divide us, and Christ is always about uniting. It seems like all the problems we are having this year are dividing us. Maybe He is saying we need to unify, and the Eucharist is what unites us.”

Dennis would encourage anyone who has some free time during the day to commit to an hour of adoration in the chapel each week. Looking ahead in 2021, the parish hopes to renovate the chapel and then, hopefully, be able to reopen once more for 24-7 perpetual adoration once the health crisis has been resolved.

IN OUR ADORATION CHAPEL

it All to God”

As we all pause to reflect on the new year before us, let us all resolve to increase our spiritual growth in 2021 by taking advantage of the time we have to give to God in prayer. As Dennis points out, whether we commit to an hour in the adoration chapel or an hour of focused prayer at home, God will continue to work in us.

“My wife, Stacey, says that this [pandemic] is God giving us more time,” Dennis says. “Maybe this is the way God is telling us to come back, to our families and to Him, and to do the only thing that matters at all. We have to trust in Him more than ever, to say, ‘Jesus, I trust in you’, and then let go. That is the best prayer in chapel when you put your Bible and rosary down and just let God be in your presence and trust Him.”

If you would like more information about the latest Eucharistic Adoration schedule and guidelines, please contact Dennis Lann at 216-990-2121 or lanninsurance1@sbcglobal.net.



Parishioners can always find peace in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel at Immaculate Conception.

Immaculate Conception

CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Patron of Catholic Schools in America

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

As the first American-born canonized saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton's entrance into history was guided by Divine Providence. Born on Aug. 28, 1774, just months after the Boston Tea Party, Elizabeth's childhood witnessed pivotal events in the formation of our country — the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Revolution. At the time of the foundation of the new Republic, in a society predominately hostile toward Catholicism, a flower blossomed that would forever change the shape of education in the United States.

Elizabeth Seton was born into a wealthy Protestant family in New York City. Her life, although materially blessed, was not without suffering. Elizabeth's biological mother died when she was only 3, and her younger sister, Catherine Josephine, died at the age of 2. A spark of faith, however, was visible even in her early childhood. When questioned about her sadness concerning her sister's death, Elizabeth simply responded, "Kitty is gone up to heaven. I wish I could go there too."

Elizabeth grew into a beautiful woman, courted lavishly by handsome young men from prominent New York families. At the age of 19, she met a charming New York financier, William Seton, and the couple wed in 1794. They remained in high society until her father-in-law's passing, which left them to care for William's seven younger siblings, along with three children of their own. Consequently, the Seton finances crashed.

The couple traveled to Italy — it was here that William's health failed him, and he died in December 1803. Providentially, Elizabeth was left in the company of a strong Catholic family where she witnessed the practice of the faith. In a letter to her sister, Elizabeth



wrote, "My sister dear, how happy would we be, if we believed what these dear souls believe, that they possess God in the Sacrament, and that He remains in their churches..."

After an eight-month stay, Elizabeth returned to America, and she began to investigate Catholicism more deeply. She was besought by Protestant friends who hoped to dissuade her. At this time, Elizabeth prayed repeatedly, "If I am right, Thy grace impart, still in the right to stay. If I am wrong, oh teach my heart to find the better way."

In 1805, after much interior struggle, Elizabeth became Catholic. Abandoned entirely by her family and friends, she resolved her financial difficulties through teaching.

In 1807, Elizabeth was invited to establish a Catholic school for girls in Baltimore. The task was daunting, and Elizabeth labored intensely, explaining how "from half past five in the morning until nine at night, every moment is full — no space even to be troubled." After winters spent in continual hardship and sacrifice, the school flourished and, within years, Mother Seton planted the seed from which sprang the parochial school system — along with hospitals and orphanages.

Before her death in January 1821, she was the active mother of five — although two of her daughters died young — and the spiritual mother of a full-fledged religious congregation known as the Sisters of Charity. She was canonized in 1975, and her feast day is celebrated on Jan. 4.

Thanks to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Catholic parochial school system remains vibrant and active. And as we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we are thankful for the sacrifice of this loving wife, devoted mother, foundress and all-American saint.

New Year Provides Opportunities to Grow in Faith and Service

It's that time once again — as we're taking down and putting away our Christmas decorations, we hear the countless weight loss or gym commercials that tell us, "new year, new you" or "this is your year." But what if we took that advice — "this is your year" — and applied it to our faith? What if we committed to growing in faith and holiness in 2021? What if we took this year to find what is missing?

Fr. Michael Troha says this can be the year for all of us to truly become saints. One way to do this is sharing in the celebration of the Mass.

"Try coming to Mass on one weekday a week, in addition to your Sunday obligation," Fr. Troha says.

For so many of us, 2020 was a year marked with a lot of stress and uncertainty. But in 2021, we can commit to give these stresses to God and commit to more time with Him in the Adoration Chapel. The chapel is currently open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday to Saturday. With the social distancing guidelines, three people can be in the chapel at a time.

And, as we grow in holiness, we may also commit to growing in service and fellowship. With this in mind, there is also a host of ministries in which one can get involved at Immaculate Conception.

Many of our ministries — from the Knights of Columbus to men's and women's prayer groups, to

continued on back cover

As we followed COVID-19 precautions and guidelines, we were still able to share in a number of important celebrations throughout 2020.



The PSR Living Rosary took place in October 2020.



PSR Students meet with First Communion leaders.



Mary altars were put together at the first First Communion session in September 2020.



First Communion was celebrated privately in August 2020.

Immaculate Conception

CATHOLIC CHURCH

37940 EUCLID AVENUE WILLOUGHBY, OH 44094

440.942.4500 | WWW.IMMACULATE.NET

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CLEVELAND, OH
PERMIT 362

JANUARY 2021

Opportunities to Grow *continued from page 7*

the St. Vincent de Paul Society – have still been meeting and doing their important work. The Society of Mother Teresa members have been cooking and delivering meals to those in need throughout our area. The Parish School of Religion (PSR) and sacramental preparation groups are still active, with some of the students attending PSR online and others meeting in the classroom.

Another opportunity to grow in faith is through Deacon Paul Hlabse's Bible study on the Gospel of St. Mark. The Thursday classes will begin in January and continue for 14 weeks. Classes are in-person at St. Joseph Hall or online at FORMED.org.

Fr. Troha also recommends turning off the television and going for a walk outside. You can use this time for prayer or to just be silent. Even in the winter, a short walk is good for mental and physical health.

Despite the church closures earlier in 2020 and reduced attendance with the pandemic, Fr. Troha has been pleased to see that the weekly collection is up from 2019, and would like to see this continue.

"That says a lot about a parish," Fr. Troha says. "People are very generous with everything they do. Please continue to give of your treasure as you are able."

Fr. Troha also encourages parishioners to get involved in the Greeter Ministry when everyone feels comfortable returning to Mass. As he points out, it will be especially beautiful to welcome all those who have been away throughout the past year.

Let us all embrace 2021 and the opportunities it provides to grow deeper in our faith and charity. Have a blessed New Year!