



CATHEDRAL of SAINT PETER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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MEET PARISHIONERS

Steve and Jozette Esposito

*Finding Home in Our Cathedral Community
After a Decades-Long Military Career*

With 33 years of military service in the United States Air Force and 15 assignments, Steve Esposito retired in early 2024. Steve was deployed twice, and the family lived all over the United States through the years, even spending time in Europe. Throughout his deployments, his wife, Jozette, and daughter, Madeline, went where he went. Steve entered the Air Force right out of high school and retired as a Colonel. Steve and Jozette plan to stay in Belleville and make their home at the Cathedral. Madeline is attending college in Tucson.

As we approach the Fourth of July, where we celebrate our independence, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to Steve and all veterans who have given so much. The couple has spent the longest



Steve and Jozette Esposito with their daughter, Madeline
stints, four-plus years, in Belleville and at Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma, where they also lived for four years. Jozette's favorite assignment, though, was Hawaii.

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STEWARDSHIP *and* PATRIOTISM:

CELEBRATING INDEPENDENCE DAY AS PART OF OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

Independence Day, celebrated on July 4, is a time when the United States comes together to commemorate its history, freedom, and the principles upon which the nation was founded. For Catholics, this presents an opportunity to reflect on how to be patriotic and practice Catholic stewardship for the good of the country.

Here are several ways to merge faith and patriotism on Independence Day:

- **Pray for the Nation:** Begin your day with prayers for the United States. Ask for guidance and wisdom for its leaders, unity among its people, and peace and prosperity for all. Prayer is a powerful way to combine faith and patriotism.
- **Be an Active Citizen:** Engage in civic activities that reflect your love for the country. This could involve voting, participating in local community events, or advocating for causes that promote justice, peace, and the common good.
- **Support Veterans and Service Members:** Show your gratitude to those who have served or continue to serve in the military. Consider donating to organizations that assist veterans and their families, or simply thank them for their service.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Care for the environment is an important aspect of stewardship. Protecting the nation's natural beauty, from its parks to its rivers, is a patriotic act that conserves the land for future generations.
- **Support Local Businesses:** Patronizing local businesses helps boost the economy and supports your fellow citizens. Shopping locally not only contributes to the well-being of your community but also to the country as a whole.

- **Promote Social Justice:** Advocate for social justice issues that align with Catholic teachings, such as caring for the poor and vulnerable, supporting immigrants and refugees, and working towards racial equality. Addressing these issues is a form of Catholic stewardship that positively impacts the nation.
- **Educate Yourself:** Study the history of the United States, its founding documents, and the principles upon which it was established. Understanding the country's heritage enables you to engage in discussions about patriotism from an informed perspective.
- **Foster Unity:** In a time when divisiveness can be prevalent, strive to bring people together. Encourage open and respectful dialogue, build bridges of understanding, and work towards unity in the spirit of solidarity.
- **Practice Gratitude:** Reflect on the blessings and freedoms you enjoy in the United States. Gratitude is a cornerstone of stewardship, reminding you to acknowledge and appreciate the gifts you've received.
- **Share Your Faith:** Living out your Catholic faith and values in your community and throughout the country is a patriotic act. Be an example of love, compassion, and selflessness as you interact with others.

Patriotism and Catholic stewardship need not be mutually exclusive. In fact, they can be beautifully intertwined as we strive to make the United States a more just, peaceful, and compassionate nation. By living our Catholic faith and embracing our role as a patriotic citizen, we contribute to the common good and the well-being of the nation while also celebrating the freedoms and principles that Independence Day represents.

A Letter from Our Cathedral Rector

During Summer Travels, Remember St. Christopher Is Along for the Ride

Dear Parishioners,

As we enter the month of July, we celebrate the feast day of St. Christopher on July 25. He is a revered figure in our faith, and his life offers us valuable lessons on how we can emulate his virtues and strengthen our connection with God.

St. Christopher is known as the patron saint of travelers, and his story has been a source of inspiration for countless individuals throughout history. His life was a testament to selflessness and devotion to Christ, which ultimately led to his recognition as a saint by the Catholic Church.

The most famous aspect of St. Christopher's life is his role as a ferryman who helped people cross a treacherous river. He would carry travelers, including a child who, unknown to him at first, was the Christ Child, on his shoulders. His selfless act of service, despite the physical hardship it caused him, reminds us of the importance of helping others on their journey. During the month of July, we can reflect on how we, too, can be "Christophers" to those in need, offering our assistance and support to fellow travelers on the path of life.

St. Christopher's life teaches us that our Christian faith should be an active and living faith. His simple yet profound act of service exemplifies the Gospel message of loving one's neighbor and carrying the burdens of others. As we celebrate his feast day this month, let us strive to emulate his selflessness by engaging in acts of kindness and charity, especially towards those who are less fortunate.

St. Christopher's name, which means "Christ-bearer," symbolizes his mission. During July, we can reflect on how we can become bearers of Christ's light in our daily lives. This may involve spreading the message of the Gospel through our words and actions, being a source of hope and inspiration for others, and carrying Christ's love in our hearts as we interact with our neighbors and loved ones.

St. Christopher's story also teaches us the importance of perseverance in our faith journey. He faced many



challenges and dangers while carrying out his mission, but his unwavering commitment to helping others, even at the risk of his own life, serves as a powerful example. As we honor him this month, let us renew our commitment to following Christ faithfully, no matter the obstacles or trials we may encounter.

St. Christopher's feast day in July provides us with an opportunity to reflect on his life and the virtues he embodied. Let us strive to emulate his selflessness, become "Christophers" in our own right, and carry the love of Christ in our

hearts as we travel through life's journey.

May God bless you all and may the intercession of St. Christopher guide and protect you on your own spiritual journey.

Peace,

Fr Godfrey OSB

Very Rev. Godfrey Mullen, OSB
Cathedral Rector



Usher Ministry Offers Opportunities

Some may not realize how simple service can be. Here at St. Peter, the Usher Ministry supports the Masses from start to finish.

“I organize it,” Tim Richards says. “Fr. Godfrey asked that I do that. I put it together in the fall of 2022. I’ve been doing the 4 o’clock Saturday Mass for years. That’s why I was asked — I was pretty regular at that time.”

The ministry grew from there.

“The parish sent out a request for anyone interested in ushering,” Tim says. “We had a good reply. Twenty-four is our number now. We’re doing very well with it.”

The ushers take on a number of essential tasks surrounding the Mass.

“We hand out bulletins and serve as greeters,” Tim says. “We get there about a half hour before Mass. The big thing is the collection and putting it in a safe. We clean the pews after Mass, set the kneelers up, and clean up any bulletins people forgot.”

Ushers are called upon for more than just regular Masses.

“The big thing is special requests, especially when there’s a holiday,” Tim says. “Easter services are different than normal, the Vigil,



Our ushers take on a number of essential tasks surrounding the Mass.

the Passion. We make sure we have people available. A few ushers are retired, so that helps. I retired as a professor in 2022, so I have more opportunities to serve.”

Service in the parish is important in building stewardship.

“The ushers understand it’s an important service,” Tim says. “They realize it’s an opportunity to give back. Many are members of

the Knights of Columbus — I’m a member — and that particular aspect of the service enters into being an usher. We’re fortunate that we have a council in our parish.”

As those in the Usher Ministry expand their service, they’re building community and stewardship.

“Those now part of this ministry, I’m seeing them more involved in parish activity,” Tim

“I think it makes one more aware of the importance of serving the Church and gives the opportunity to assist. I used to be a server as a young man, and this gives me another way to serve.”

— TIM RICHARDS

to Share in Service and Community

says. “They become more aware of what goes on in the parish. When we have a specific service or holiday, the ushers are asked to participate, and the response is terrific. They say they’ll be there and they’re glad to serve.”

St. Peter as a whole has benefited from this ministry’s organization.

“We’re lucky to have this,” Tim says. “Many wouldn’t have been involved until this ministry. I think it makes one more aware of the importance of

serving the Church and gives the opportunity to assist. I used to be a server as a young man, and this gives me another way to serve. I see it as a very important part of my life as a Catholic.”

If anyone is considering the Usher Ministry, Tim can attest to its benefit.

“It’s been a joy for me to serve,” he says. “It’s nice when you get a new person. I would say to give it strong consideration and reach out and be a part of it. It’s a good part of serving the parish.”

Those interested in the Usher Ministry may call the parish office at 618-234-1166, or visit the parish website at www.cathedralbelle.org. You can also fill out the commitment card that comes out in the fall.

Steve and Jozette Esposito

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“That was my first assignment with Steve,” she says. “I loved it there — the whole atmosphere and everything.”

Madeline’s favorite was Altus Air Force Base because she had so many children her age there. Steve enjoyed England, although they were there at the beginning of the pandemic.

Steve was drawn to the military for several reasons. One was that it was a way to get help with a college degree, with his father having passed away his junior year of high school. He was also drawn to serve.

“It’s about something greater than yourself,” he says. “After you serve a while, you learn this is a family that cares about you.”

Jozette admits it wasn’t always easy moving around and finding a Catholic Church community. At Altus, they developed a close relationship with a priest who was in the military.

“It was hard when we left there because it was hard to find that again,” Jozette says.

It was always hard to leave friends behind. Sometimes, they would follow a family, or a family would follow them,

so it was always nice to see familiar faces.

“It’s never ‘goodbye,’” Jozette says. “It’s always ‘see you later.’ You always seem to run into each other again. It’s a family.”

For the most part, though, Jozette enjoyed the military lifestyle.

“I enjoyed that we had the opportunity to move around and meet so many new people,” she says.

Steve and Jozette love Fr. Godfrey and the Cathedral. They have a great appreciation for the structure of the Cathedral building.

“It’s a family here,” Jozette says. “I love the feeling of the parish and school.”

Jozette had previously been teaching at Notre Dame Academy and loved it there. She got incredibly close to Sister Tess Markus.

With all the years of moving to various bases, Steve and Jozette are thankful to be settled here and to have a chance to get more acclimated with the Cathedral.

We thank the Esposito family and all military families for their service!



The Eucharistic Revival: *Calling All Catholics to Give Thanks*

In this third year of the Eucharistic Revival, envisioned by the Catholic Bishops of the United States, many different activities have been undertaken to assist Catholics in becoming more engaged in the celebration of the Eucharist each week, but also in living what we celebrate all week long. Faithful participation at Mass leads to a grateful life, which leads so often to a generous life of faith. Disciples are generous with God’s generosity to them.

How might we best live the Eucharist? We live the Eucharist best by celebrating it actively. As the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council said so clearly: “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism” (The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, para. 14).

Active participation is the engagement of the heart, mind, soul, and body in the work of liturgy. Active participation must pair interior and exterior expressions of faith. Interior prayer is great. Exterior prayer, like singing at Mass, is wonderful. Together, they make us the disciples we are called to be. Active participation is based on hearing the Word of God and then proclaiming the Word in our words and deeds.

The Church is not a haven for “passive spectators.” We do not come to Mass to be entertained. At our best, we do more than “put in time.” We come to hear the

Lord speaking to us, to taste and see the sweetness of the Lord, and then to proclaim the One we have known, the One who loves us, the One whom we love.

We must also consider the place the Eucharist has in our own lives: “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord’s supper” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, para. 10).

Everything from a quick personal prayer to the Easter Vigil, the work of the Young Adult group or the Parish’s School of Religion — it all must find the liturgy as the summit toward which it is directed and the font of power for it all. How does Sunday Mass take a central place in our lives? When we walk into church, do we find ourselves with a genuine need to praise God? When we step forward for Holy Communion, do we see the Body and Blood of Christ as the answer to all our greatest hungers?

Any apathy or passivity in our faith, any reluctance to listen with open hearts to God’s Word, any hesitation to see the depth of God’s love in the Mass — any of this must be expelled from our lives so that we might celebrate actively the greatest sacrifice, the deepest love, the most noble gift of all time. The Eucharistic Revival is most importantly about recognizing the living Christ and spreading His presence to the ends of the earth. Help me, Lord!

Funeral Luncheon Ministry

Supports Grieving Families in Their Hour of Sorrow

The loss of a loved one can make everyday life seem like a heavy burden, and routine tasks can become overwhelming. For the grieving family, having someone take care of small but significant details can often be a meaningful gesture of charity, especially when their emotional bandwidth is stretched to the max. The Funeral Luncheons Ministry does just that — by organizing a meal following a funeral at the Cathedral, the family of the deceased has one less thing to worry about during their difficult time.

“Planning a meal after a funeral helps to reduce some of the stress for a grieving family in their time of need,” says Janet Koch, leader of the luncheon committee.

This ministry has been active for over 25 years. Even though the leadership has changed hands over the years, the service to grieving families has remained a consistent source of comfort. Joe and Sharon Heinzl founded the group, and Shirley Deitz, one of the volunteers, then took over the group in 2000. Jane Riess assisted Shirley in making the calls to volunteers for help in providing food and serving the meal. When the funeral luncheons paused for two brief years due to COVID, Jane was the one to assist Janet in resurrecting the ministry.

When the ministry receives news of someone passing, the family is contacted to determine how many guests they expect for the funeral luncheon and what food they would like served. Making arrangements with Janet ensures that dietary restrictions and preferences are honored. The main food items are purchased by the committee, and side dishes are provided by committee members. A group of six to eight volunteers sets up the undercroft for the luncheon and serves the meal.

Janet explains that serving the family is a great sign of solidarity. It’s an active way to express condolences, as words are often inadequate to soothe someone in their grief.

“Serving the meal shows the family that they are not alone during their difficult time,” Janet says. “Many of



the committee members have previously gone through this and know how meaningful this can be.”

Janet explains that working together as a group with the common goal of making a difficult day a little easier for a parishioner is a simple act of charity that takes one thing off the grieving family’s emotional and mental load. Even the simple act of eating a meal can quickly become a burdensome task to muddle through, as meal planning and heading to the store can feel too overwhelming. Preparing food and serving it can be an invaluable gift.

This charity has also fostered a bond among the ministry volunteers. Janet says that many of the

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Funeral Luncheon Ministry *continued from page 7*

volunteers have developed friendships through this ministry.

“People are sharing the grief with the family,” she says.

The group is open to anyone who would like to participate. Even if you are not able to work the day of the funeral luncheon, offering to provide a dish is a big help. Serving the parish family with a warm meal is a simple but thoughtful way to comfort and support those who mourn.

“Serving the meal shows the family that they are not alone during their difficult time. Many of the committee members have previously gone through this and know how meaningful this can be.” — JANET KOCH

If you would like to volunteer to prepare meals or serve at funeral luncheons, contact Janet Koch at 618-233-7709 or kochja@att.net.

MASS TIMES

Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 p.m. | Sunday: 8:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

Weekdays: Monday - Friday 6:45 a.m.

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE (CONFESSIONS)

Monday-Friday: 7:15-7:30 a.m. | Thursday: 6:00-7:00 p.m. | Saturday: 3:00-3:45 p.m.