



Holy Cross Connections

EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

Holy Cross Church - Celebrating 176 years as a Parish

Fr. Jerry Stluka - Celebrating the 40 year Jubilee of his Ordination



The year 1969 was one for the record books.

Man walked on the moon. Hippies danced at Woodstock. Some of our finest fought and died in Viet Nam while the nation was torn asunder, and on December 19, 1969, at St. Peter's Basilica, in Rome, Jerome D. Stluka was ordained a priest.

What follows is an interview with our beloved Pastor as he sat with Jack Kustron and shared his calling and subsequent years of service to Our Lord and his Church...



CONNECTIONS: Let's start with some background. Where were you born and raised and tell us a little about your family and early life.

FR. JERRY: Well, I was born in University Hospital, and was baptized at Holy Name Church, when I was 4 years-old we moved up to Our Lady of Peace Parish, and went to Our Lady of Peace School. I then went to Bishop Waterson High School, and subsequently to St. Charles College, where the high school is now. The college was a seminary, back then and the high school went back and forth from being a prep school and a seminary.

CONNECTIONS: You've talked and written in our newsletter about being raised in a Catholic home; how would you describe that?

FR. JERRY: Well I don't think that we wore our religion on our sleeves. We were a pretty ordinary family, but the Faith was always central in our lives. I had two sisters: Rosalie and Mary Jane and one brother, Gene, and Mom and Dad.

On Sunday, the first thing we did was go to church. The second thing we did was eat breakfast. Going to church wasn't optional any more than eating or sleeping would be optional... and I loved going to church. I served since I was in 3rd or 4th grade and I loved to go to Mass. I would get up and frequently go to daily Mass and I always wanted to be a priest, I think at least since my First Communion.

CONNECTIONS: Back to your education. Did you have sisters as teachers?

FR. JERRY: Yes, all the way through - Dominicans - I would certainly want to attribute to them a significant influence in my vocation.

CONNECTIONS: Was there one sister in particular that stands out?



FR. JERRY: My first grade teacher. Sr. Mary Nicholas. She's healthy and still living. She went back to her baptismal name, which is Sr. Mary Jo Fox. She's a native of Lancaster, Ohio and I think that she had taught one year before she taught us. She was about nineteen or twenty years-old and was a remarkable woman. I was very impressed with her. She was my first image of what I think of as God.

I'll tell you a little story that I often tell about her: I was a few weeks late starting school because my older sister Mary Jane and I both had polio - that was 1950 when there was a polio epidemic every year- and we both had mild cases. We were both in Children's Hospital, she for a month and I was in for two weeks. It was probably the most influential two weeks in my life. I think that's a factor in my being a hospital Chaplain today, but anyway I was late getting to school because I was recuperating and I was scared. I thought, oh boy everyone else is going to be ahead of me and I'll be left behind and I went kicking and screaming - my poor mother had to drag me to school - and when we got there the kids were already in the classroom and I was just terrified and Sister Mary Nicholas came down the hallway, and I remember this very vividly, she came down

the hallway, swept me up in her arms in a wonderful white habit and she said "oh this is the Jerry we'd been waiting for."

I was never afraid of a teacher after that. Of course she doesn't remember that at all, but I think one of the joys of heaven will be to see all of the things that God has done through us that we never realized at the time.

CONNECTIONS: What about priests? Were there any that stand out?

FR, JERRY: Certainly, Fr. George Foley, who was the founding pastor at Our Lady of Peace. He was gruff, but was also very funny. But I think the biggest influence he had on me was the compassion that he had for the sick. I used to see him leaving the rectory and going to the hospital to visit the sick. Even though he was gruff, I had compassion for him. He had elephantitis, and his leg was huge, I knew that he was in pain, but it struck me even as a kid that that's why he visited people in the hospital. He knew what it was like.

Other priestly influences were Fr. Torer, who was the assistant pastor at our parish. He went off to the military and was a chaplain for many years. Another one certainly was Fr. Kenny Grimes. One that some from here would remember was Fr. Robert Reilly. He was a big high school influence. I had him for two classes and he was very involved in the Catholic Youth Council. He really took an interest in all of us getting involved in the Church.

CONNECTIONS: Was there an instance during this time where you decided that you wanted to enter the seminary?

FR. JERRY: Well, a very vivid memory that I have is when I tore up the application that I had all filled out

for Notre Dame. In those days if you didn't go to a college seminary and went to another university, it would take a couple of years longer. After you got your bachelor's degree you would have to go back and get a degree from the seminary. My parents were always supportive but never pressured me. I felt total freedom to make my own choice. My father and brother both were engineers - mathematicians - good people but doing something that I didn't want to do. I wanted to do something with people - I just always liked people.

CONNECTIONS: So after Waterson, and St. Charles College you ended up at the Pontifical North American College, in Rome?

FR. JERRY: Yes, I had a choice between Rome and Cincinnati. I think that my mother was more worried over that one than I was. She had a hard time saying goodbye for 4 years, but my parents came over twice while I was there - I never came home, but they came to Rome twice and never would have gone otherwise. I guess it was just 2 or 3 years after my ordination that she died.

CONNECTIONS: What kinds of challenges did you face during your seminary years? Did you have second thoughts about your vocation?



See *Fr. Jerry* on pg. 3 (insert)

CONNECTIONS: One more question – how do you feel not having your buddy Msgr. Corcoran here at the Rectory?

FR. JERRY: Well, it’s a lot different here. I miss him. He would be a tough act to follow, and you can quote me on that.

CONNECTIONS: We will be

wishing you a Happy 40 year Jubilee when we celebrate the Exaltation of The Holy Cross. What’s your hope for our parish?

FR. JERRY: My wish for the parish, I think, is continued growth in the Faith. Maybe a continued growth in the appreciation of the wonderful gifts that God has given us. And maybe more and more - of an attitude of gratitude.

I consider this celebration, not as one

honoring me, but one of honoring God. Thanking God for the abundant blessings – I feel like I’m a spoiled child of God – I have a lot to be grateful for. St. Paul over and over again says, “...in all things give thanks.” Give thanks not just for the times that are happy and pleasant, but also the times that are challenging. I mentioned those challenges, you know I had to grow through those – part of it is the growth in humility – maybe there are some things that I just can’t do that I’d like to do, but I have to trust God.

Parish Newsnotes by Sr. Pat Pieper

Deacon Dan Dury completed his summer assignment at St. Catharine parish on August 16 and has returned to St. Mary’s in Emmitsburg, MD for his last year of preparation for his ordination to the priesthood next May.

As you may have noticed, our blond cantor, **Lucien Smith**, now has dark hair. This change was needed for Lucien’s part in his production of “Talley’s Folly”, in which he played a Jewish survivor, later he played in “Cats”. As Lucien begins his 3rd year at Wright State majoring in music and theatre his first audition will be for that of a young Italian gentleman, so the color will stay.

Pat and Ann Sheridan met their daughter, **Katie** in Ireland, after her 6 weeks study program in Irish history and literature and together they toured a bit of the Emerald Isle.



WELCOME:

Newest members of Holy Cross:

- **Halen Avery**, daughter born July 15 to **Mercedes and Ray Buck**
- **Madison Leigh**, daughter born July 14 to **Mark and Courtney Bockrath**

New members of the Finance Committee – **Monica Miller** and **Jason Despetorich**

THANK YOU to Richard Lumpe, who rotates off the Committee.

Correction: Apologies to **VIKIE Meyer** for misspelling her name in the last issue.

Also, a belated **congratulations** to **Carol and Tom Plank** for 30 years of marriage!

Dates to Remember:

Sunday, Sept. 13 - Parish Feast Day & Celebration of Fr. Jerry’s 40th Year Jubilee - 10:00 a.m. Mass followed by reception

Sunday, Oct. 25 - Annual Spaghetti Dinner - following 11:00 a.m. Mass

Sunday, Nov. 1 - Memorial Masses for Deceased Parishioners - 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Sunday, Nov. 22 - Feast of Christ the King & Welcoming of RCIA Candidates at 11:00 a.m. Mass

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Parish Staff

Reverend Father Jerome D. Stluka, Pastor
Reverend Monsignor Lawrence J. Corcoran, P.A., Retired
Sister Patricia A. Pieper, SNDdeN, Pastoral Associate
Michael P. Agriesti, Administrative Assistant

Liturgy Schedule

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.
11:30 a.m. Tuesday - Saturday

Confessions

Every Friday: 11:00 a.m.
Every Sunday: 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

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