

# THE STILLWATER CATHOLIC

SERVING ST. FRANCIS XAVIER AND ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST PARISHES

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 The Spirituality of Stewardship *Following in the Footsteps of the Saints*
- 3 We Are Blessed as a Church and a Nation
- 4 An Update on Our New Church Project
- 6 Feast of St. James: July 25 *Calling Us to Holiness*
- 7 Discovering the Joy of the Gospel: Meet Fr. Lawrence Nwachukwu

## The Beatification of Fr. Stanley Rother

*"Anyone Can Lead a Good Life and Become a Saint"*

The life of soon-to-be Blessed Stanley Francis Rother is a remarkable, yet relatable story. A quiet student from Holy Trinity Catholic School in Okarche, he followed his vocation to the priesthood and was martyred during the Civil War in Guatemala.

He was a neighbor to our neighbors. He was a classmate to many Catholic Oklahoma children. He may soon be canonized as the first American-born martyr.

"Whenever you hear of someone being beatified, he or she is someone far away from us," says Emalene Schwarz, a former classmate of Fr. Rother's. "But this personalizes it. This brings it home. Anyone can lead a good life and become a saint."

Fr. Rother was raised in a Catholic family on a farm outside of Okarche and was known to be hardworking and kind.

"He was a very quiet and gentle person," Emalene says. "I wasn't surprised that he entered the seminary. We'd visit whenever he'd come home, whenever our paths crossed."

Though he struggled academically in seminary, Fr. Rother studied diligently and was ordained on May 25, 1963. He served at four different parishes in Oklahoma for the first five years of his priesthood. Then, he requested to be sent as a missionary priest to the rural town of Santiago Atitlán in Guatemala.

Amongst the Tz'utujil people, Fr. Rother once again worked persistently at the task

*continued on back cover*



*Fr. Stanley Rother.*

JULY 2017

## The Spirituality of Stewardship *Following in the Footsteps of the Saints*

The word “stewardship” has long carried with it the association of a financial obligation to the Church. Many believe that stewardship means “giving my time and money to the Church in support of its work, lest it is unable to survive and thrive.”

Indeed, stewardship does often require sacrifice of some kind. But the reality is that stewardship is not simply a guilt-laden obligation, or a “bill.” Nor is stewardship in any way comparable to a tax payment or a charitable networking opportunity at work. Instead, stewardship is a spiritual way of life – an active response to Christ’s invitation to unreservedly “come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:19).

Stewardship is about how we respond to God’s call to discipleship, and there are many different ways we can respond to His call. We can, in turn, live the stewardship way of life simply by making small choices in our daily lives, under normal, everyday circumstances.

Nowhere in Christian history is there a more archetypal example of the variety of ways we can respond to God’s call, than in the lives of the saints. The saints represent a wide cross-section of individuals – old and young, rich and poor – living in different times in human history. Some were called to the religious life, focusing their lives on spirituality and material simplicity through prayer, and helping to form the tenets of faith. Others were individuals focused on charitable outreach, dedicating their whole lives to feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Still, others faced great adversity and challenges to their faith, and ultimately suffered death and martyrdom in loyalty to Christ and His Church.

However, the commonality that all of these individuals share is that they responded to God’s call to discipleship by utilizing the unique talents that God had given them. They did so in ways that were conducive to their individual personalities, and that actively influenced the circumstances presented to them in their respective days and times. Contemplative spirituality, charitable giving, great courage – all of these roads have led to canonization and, ultimately, eternal life with God in His glory. We are all called to do the same.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in its pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, “The challenge, then, is to understand our role – our vocation – and to respond generously to this call from God” (43). When thinking about the spirituality of stewardship, take some time to discern your talents, and how you can best respond to God’s call by naturally and effectively using the gifts He has given you. If you are a gregarious person, this might mean reaching out to a co-worker you don’t know very well, thus helping to create a hospitable work environment. If you are an individual who is often “on the go,” perhaps this means praying the Rosary while you are driving from place to place. If you have recently experienced a financial windfall or unexpected increase in income, this might mean sponsoring a little league team in your community by paying for their uniforms.

God has provided many roads to the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the saints, we see examples of the many roads that have been taken. Choosing the one that is best for us means that we can live stewardship as a spiritual practice and a way of life, and that we may answer His call to discipleship.

## We Are Blessed as a Church and a Nation

Dear Parishioners,

The month of July may seem like a bit of an “in-between” month. Of course, it sits in the middle of summer. During this last month of June, we shared in a number of solemnities and celebrations – these served to remind us of the incredible gifts we have received as Catholics, from the Holy Trinity to the Body and Blood of Christ.

Now, a look at the calendar shows us that all of the Sundays this month are in Ordinary Time. We know that Ordinary Time is anything but “ordinary,” even though it might seem that way – especially after a month of celebrations.

However, one thing happens this month that is certainly unique to us as Americans – Independence Day. We are Catholics, but we also are Americans, and we should be proud to be both – grateful for the gift of faith, and equally grateful for the gift of liberty we receive as American citizens.

Yet, to be Catholic and American should not mean choosing one over the other. These allegiances should be complementary. Our Catholic faith states that we need to work together as fellow citizens for the common good of everyone in this great country. Through the Constitution, our Founding Fathers guaranteed us of religious rights to contribute to our common life together.

Freedom is a special inheritance we have received, fought for by many at a great price, and it is a heritage that must be guarded – we are truly stewards of the gifts of freedom.

In 1886, just over 140 years ago, Bishop James Gibbons of Baltimore was made the second American Cardinal. He attributed the progress of the Church in America to the “civil liberty we enjoy in our enlightened republic.” He continued to say that “in the genial atmosphere of liberty, the Church blossoms like a rose.”

July is not just a time for us to celebrate – it is also a time for us to blossom. It is not a time to cease praying or working to build the Kingdom of Christ. Rather, it is a time to work even more diligently to express our appreciation for our many gifts, and to share them with others. We are blessed – by the gifts of our faith and the gifts of freedom – and we must always remember to thank God for that.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Kenneth Harder and Fr. Kerry Wakulich  
Pastors



## An Update on Our D

While Nabholz construction has lost several more working days due to frequent rains during May and June, by adding double shifts, Nabholz hopes to avoid moving back our substantial completion/occupancy date of Oct. 10, 2017. Of course, more significant rain could change this plan.

Paving half of the north side drive and parking, all of the east side drive, a section of the south drive, and all of the south parking lots is underway as of this writing (second week in June). Much of the curbing has been installed (Photo 1), and asphalt and concrete paving is scheduled to be completed before the end of June.

Masonry work is almost all completed on the east, north, and west sides of the building complex (Photo 2), and the final and most complicated phase on the south side is underway. Completion of all masonry work is on the critical path to substantial completion, and is the work most adversely affected by rainy weather.

Millwork (built-in cabinetry) is well underway in the administration wing (Photos 3 and 4), as well as in the Teen Lounge.

Interior sheetrock installation in the nave continues with good progress (Photo 5). Acoustic installation has been completed in the offices of the pastor, director of formation and operation, business and office manager, and deacons, and the main restrooms. The main geothermal HVAC circulating pumps have been operating for several weeks, along with a few indoor HVAC heat exchanger/fan units in the education wing. This operation is needed to remove excess air moisture from the area prior to installation of tile carpeting and to allow millwork and other finishing to stabilize.

We continue to seek additional pledges from parishioners to purchase liturgical items outside our construction budget. Total cost for these items is approximately \$422,000. Thanks to the generosity of contributors, to date, we have \$262,200 pledged, and \$66,202 actually collected. Currently, we have a contract for approximately \$235,000 with Stuflessler, LLC, a firm in northern Italy specializing in custom liturgical carvings, for what we are calling Phase 1, consisting of: oak reredos with crucifix and corpus in color, two angels, and



*Photo 1 – May 23, 2017, curb and guttering along east drive from McElroy entrance, looking north, by Mark Pruitt*



*Photo 2, May 23, 2017, finished masonry work on area bordered by education wing (left), kitchen (center), and parish hall (right), looking south, by Mark Pruitt*

# New Church Project

statues in color of Sts. Peter, James, John, and Paul; altar of reservation for tabernacle, and altar of sacrifice with carving in color on the front of da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. These items are scheduled for delivery in September 2017, in time for installation before the Nov. 19 scheduled church dedication.

Assuming we can raise the remaining needed funding, a contract would be signed with Stuflesser for Phase 2 liturgical items, consisting of: statues in color of St. Mary with child, statue in color of St. Joseph, ambo, baptismal font, two shrines to contain Mary and Joseph statues, and 14 gothic frames for Stations of the Cross. Painting reproductions of Leonard Porter's art would be used for the stations themselves. These items would not arrive in time for the church dedication. Note that the costs above do not include numerous other items, such as statuary for six more shrines, president's and side chairs, ambry, candleholders, credence table, altar server chairs, and other incidental items. As a temporary measure, we plan to have some of these items come from the current St. Francis Xavier Church, along with the piano, organ, clarion, vestments, tabernacle, sanctuary light, and sacred vessels.

May God bless and aid us in successful completion of this project.



*Photo 5, June 7, 2017, progress on ceiling of nave, looking north, by Larry Hoberock*



*Photo 3, June 7, 2017, millwork in administration area workroom, looking south, by Larry Hoberock*



*Photo 4, June 7, 2017, millwork in reception area of administration wing, looking north, by Larry Hoberock*

## Feast of St. James: July 25 *Calling Us to Holiness*

The beauty of St. James the Great's character lies in his undivided heart – a heart that treasured its Lord from its very depths.

The Gospel story (Luke 5:1-11) recounts that, after laborious fishing efforts, James and his brother, John, had caught nothing. Jesus accompanied them and caught an astonishing bundle of fish. At the sight of this miraculous catch of fish, they began to understand that this man Jesus was not someone to merely pass by – that this man must be divine. He called them to “leave all and follow” Him.

From this moment forward, St. James had a relentless resolve to follow his newfound Messiah.

Christ made James one of the Twelve Apostles, giving him the mission to proclaim the Good News, and the authority to heal the sick and suffering.

Jesus also allowed him some special privileges.

For instance, when Jairus' daughter was raised, James, along with John and Peter, were the only ones Jesus allowed to accompany Him. When Christ sought God's presence in an intimate way through prayer from a mountaintop, He brought along with Him only James, John and Peter. There, they witnessed the glorious transfiguration of Jesus. He also chose these three to be at His side during His excruciating Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Clearly, he was one of Christ's most beloved followers.

This brave saint was also one of the first martyrs of the Church. King Herod Agrippa killed him with a sword in an early Church persecution. “Confidence in God arms us... with that supernatural courage which causes us to dread nothing in our struggle for the kingdom of God: that conquering intrepidity which has animated the martyrs,” wrote Dietrich von Hildebrand in *Transformation in Christ*. St. James certainly had this “conquering intrepidity.”

St. James is the patron saint of laborers, hat makers and rheumatoid sufferers.

Let us not allow such a saint to pass by unnoticed. Let us emulate his dedication to God in our daily lives. We are called to be as holy as we can be – just as holy as St. James – today, not tomorrow.

Alleluia, truly, He is coming soon!



# Discovering the Joy of the Gospel

## Meet Fr. Lawrence Nwachukwu

A lot of the time, God speaks to us through what seems to be the “ordinary.” This was certainly the case for Fr. Lawrence Nwachukwu, whose vocation was rooted in his life as a young Catholic.

“The knowledge [that I was being called to the priesthood] came gradually,” Fr. Lawrence says. “As a child, I used to mimic what the priest does at Mass. Sometimes, I would sing some parts of the Mass.

“After my first Holy Communion, I joined the altar servers to help me get closer to the altar and enjoy more of what the priest does at Mass,” he continues. “Looking back now, I think it was at this point that the strong desire to become a priest started.”

Fr. Lawrence, who recently began serving as the Associate Pastor at St. John’s, is originally from the eastern part of Nigeria. Born and raised in a Catholic family, young Lawrence started feeling the call to serve God and his people from a early age, and easily dismissed offers of a lucrative career in favor of joining the seminary.

“Certain events in my life made it clear that God wanted me to serve in His Vineyard,” Fr. Lawrence says. “Even while in the seminary, I got job offers – but the wonderful pay packages didn’t appeal to me. I just had inner peace being in the seminary and aspiring to serve God and humanity as a priest.”

Now, after 18 years of serving God and the Church as a priest, Fr. Lawrence has been a seminary professor, vice rector, and has served in



*Fr. Lawrence Nwachukwu will be serving as the Associate Pastor at St. John’s.*

various pastoral roles all around the world – in the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Italy, and now, for the first time in the United States.

“All I can say is that I am happy I didn’t leave the seminary then,” he says. “Today, I am a happy priest.”

Fr. Lawrence looks forward to getting to know the Catholic community in Stillwater, serving in whatever ways he is needed.

“I look forward to an experience of the faith and the people here,” he says. “It is a warm and hospitable Catholic community.”

Fr. Lawrence, who enjoys having opportunities to preach God’s Word, has spent much of his priesthood teaching Patristics, Church

History, and Catechetics, and is glad to be involved in parish life.

“I look forward to the opportunity to regularly share the Word of God with the people of God in the parish,” he says. “I am determined to contribute in whatever way I can to bring alive the joy of the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Catholic community here in Stillwater. Pope Francis talks about the ‘joy of the Gospel’ – I hope to collaborate with the Catholic community here, so that together as a family, we shall find ways to rediscover this joy in the different spheres of our existence.”

Welcome, Fr. Lawrence! We’re glad to have you join our community!

# THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF STILLWATER

## St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church

PO Box 909 • Stillwater, OK 74076

Web: [www.stfrancisxavierstillwater.org](http://www.stfrancisxavierstillwater.org)

Phone: (405) 372-6886

## St. John University Parish and Catholic Student Center

201 N. Knoblock St. • Stillwater, OK 74075

Web: [www.catholicpokes.com](http://www.catholicpokes.com)

Phone: (405) 372-6408

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
MAILED FROM  
ZIP CODE 58040  
PERMIT NO. 3

### St. Francis Xavier

#### Sunday Mass

Saturday Vigil, 5 p.m.

Sunday, 8 a.m., 10 a.m., 1 p.m. (Español)

#### Daily Mass

Tuesday - Thursday, 8 a.m., Friday, 12:10 p.m.

#### Sacrament of Reconciliation

Wednesday, 5:45 - 7 p.m.

Saturday, 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

### St. John the Evangelist

#### Sunday Mass

Sunday, 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 5 p.m. during semester

#### Daily Mass

Mondays at 12:10 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 5:10 p.m.

Wednesday, 12:10 p.m. & 9 p.m. during semester

#### Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Change Service Requested

## The Beatification of Fr. Stanley Rother *continued from front cover*

in front of him. He acclimated to his new life and people, even learning the Tz'utujil language, in which he would one day preach. He also helped to translate the New Testament into Tz'utujil.

Fr. Rother had been serving in Santiago Atitlán for over 12 years when he reluctantly returned to Okarche as the Guatemalan Civil War escalated and the lives of American missionaries were in danger.

After a few restless months in Oklahoma, Fr. Rother returned to his people. The now famous words he wrote in a letter to Oklahoma Catholics over his last Christmas rang more pertinent than ever: "The shepherd cannot run at the first sign of danger. Pray for us."

In the rectory on July 28, 1981, three unidentified gunmen murdered the Okarche native. News of Fr. Rother's death spread, and when the sun rose the following morning, thousands stood in silent vigil in the church's plaza to mourn the loss of their beloved priest.

Though Fr. Rother's remains lie in Holy Trinity Cemetery in his hometown, the Tz'utujil people lobbied to keep his heart, and it laid for years behind the main altar at the church in Santiago Atitlán.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fr. Rother's death, when Rev. Thomas McSherry sought to relocate the organ, he found that the blood in the half-gallon jar with the heart had miraculously not congealed.

Since Fr. Rother's death, many have been diligent in the cause of his sainthood. This past December, Pope Francis declared that Fr. Rother had been murdered "in hatred of the faith," officially acknowledging his martyrdom. His beatification Mass will take place at the Cox Convention Center on Sept. 23.

"It is a wonderful thing for our parish and our state," Emalene says. "I think people will appreciate having known him."

The life of Fr. Stanley Rother reminds us, with poignant relevancy, that we are all called to be saints. His coming beatification offers us the opportunity to be a part of the history of the American Catholic Church.

*St. John's will charter three buses for those who would like to attend Fr. Rother's beatification. If you would like to make the trip, please call the parish office at 405-372-6408 to reserve a spot.*