



THE

Stillwater

CATHOLIC

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THE WIEDER FAMILY

TRAVELING THE PATH OF STEWARDSHIP TOGETHER

When Mike Wieder was growing up, he experienced the love of Christ in his family in a profound way. Now as a husband, father and member of our parish community, he is truly grateful to be living out the stewardship vision, and walking in the footsteps of his parents.

“I was raised in a deeply religious Catholic family,” Mike says. “My mother was the business manager of our church, and we had two priests in our family. We didn’t just go to Mass on Sunday, but we were involved with our faith as much as we could be. That was how I was raised, and that is how I am trying to raise my family now.”

Mike enjoys being an integral part of our parish family in many ways. He cantors and



The Wieders during a trip to the Tulsa Zoo

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THE WIEDERS *continued from front cover*

sings in the choir, he is a Eucharistic Minister, and he also proofs our parish stewardship newsletters. What's more, Mike serves on the Parish Pastoral Council for the formation of our new parish church.

Mike is one of the St. Francis Xavier Ambassadors, a group whose members are providing tours and other information to those who visit our new church. The Ambassadors will also work to evangelize non-practicing Catholics, and encourage them to come home.

Keeping the Catholic faith at the center of life is also deeply important to his wife, Lori, and their two beautiful children — Luke, 16, and Emily, 14. Lori works as the Director of Communications at our parish, covering the areas of social media and serving as webmaster, which she has done for a number of years. She is also the Wedding Coordinator, an usher and a lector. Lori has served on the Parish Pastoral Council in the past, as well.

“We are part of the St. Francis Xavier family, and an important aspect of belonging to a family means you help your family out when something needs to be done,” Lori says.

Luke and Emily, who are both challenged significantly by autism, are a meaningful and active part of our parish family.

“My son is non-verbal, so he uses sign language and communicates through an app on his iPad,” Lori says. “He loves music, as does Emily. He gets all excited during Mass, and likes to clap along with the music. Emily is a very good singer and knows all of the words of Mass. They both love to go to church! They are great kids. They have learned from an early age that our church is God's house, and since we are thankful to be in God's house, we behave well in it.”

Over the years, the Wieder family has felt the love of Christ shining out from our faith community in exceptional, extraordinary ways.

“Our parish is very accepting of people with different abilities,” Lori says. “That is one thing that is so special about our parish — it is so welcoming



*Lori and Mike Wieder with their children,
Luke and Emily*

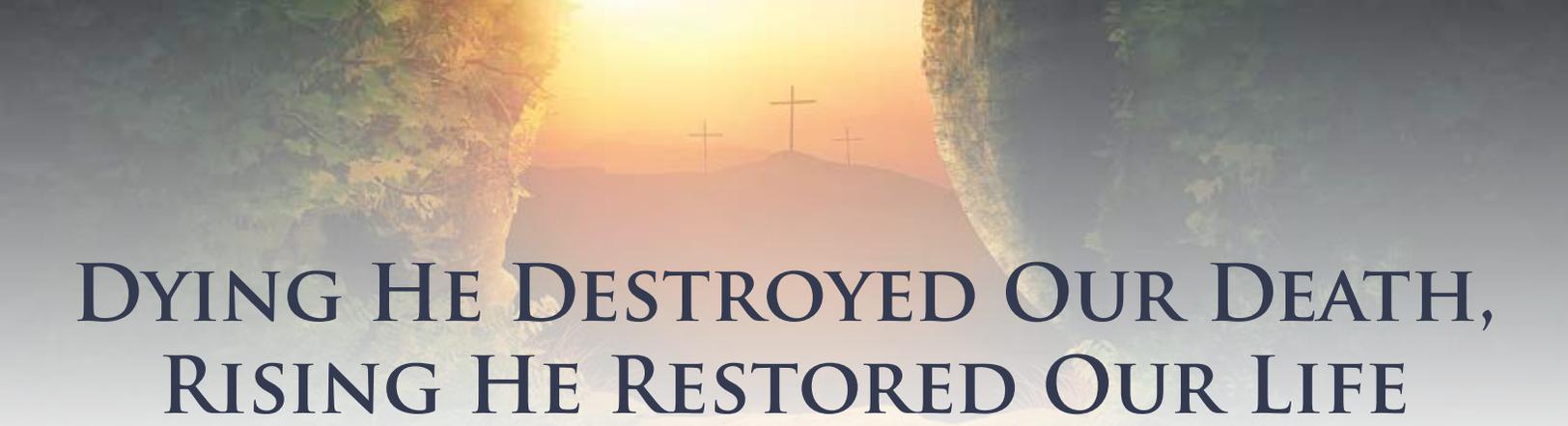
of all kinds of people. The parishioners make our children feel at home, and provide them with a lot of emotional and spiritual support.”

In fact, when Mike was diagnosed with stage four brain and lung cancer nine years ago, the genuine “colors” of our parish family showed through.

“The parish supported our family in so many amazing ways,” Mike says. “They offered a 24-hour Rosary chain for me, and gave us meals and other things. In order to thank them, every year I cook one of the Lenten parish suppers for the community.”

In all, the Wieders give us a compelling witness of what it means to embrace the stewardship path as a family, and love it, each step of the way.

“We try to show our children that our faith isn't just a ‘once-a-week thing,’” Lori says. “We teach and catechize our children a little bit differently because they are different — mainly through modeling. Every Saturday, they know we go to Mass. Every night, we pray prayers together as a family, and talk about all of the things we are thankful for. When we do so, Luke and Emily often share that it is their faith and their parish that they are most grateful for.”



DYING HE DESTROYED OUR DEATH, RISING HE RESTORED OUR LIFE

“He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. On the third day He rose again from the dead” – Apostles’ Creed

As we have recently come to the end of our Lenten journey toward Easter, let us take a moment to meditate on three pivotal lines from the ancient creed, which comprise the central events of our redemption.

Far from being a mere myth or legend, in Jerusalem around the year 30 A.D., Jesus Christ – the Son of God made man – was tortured at the hands of the Romans. He was flogged, beaten, spit upon, and crowned with thorns. He was made to carry the cross through the crowded streets to Golgotha and, once there, He was crucified – He was nailed to a cross and died. Just as someday we will each be laid in our graves, Jesus was laid in His.

The most obvious question that confronts the observer of this horrific reality is “why?” Luckily, Christ made the impetus for His self-sacrifice quite clear: “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life” (Jn 3:14-15).

The reasons Christ died on the cross are twofold, one negative and one positive. The negative cause is sin. Only in witnessing the cost of redemption – the death of the Son of God – can we begin to comprehend the profound magnitude of sin: “You were bought with a price,” says St. Paul (1 Cor 6:20).

Conversely, Christ willingly accepted the cross because of love. St. John famously says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

Uniting these two causes, St. Paul says, “God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

In His limitless compassion, Christ entered into the fullness of human suffering – physical torment, emotional agony and utter isolation – so that He might share complete solidarity with mankind. Accordingly, His passion and death not only accomplished our redemption, but by the cross, He also showed us the way to true discipleship. For Christ taught His

disciples long before His crucifixion, “if anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23).

Christ’s is the final and perfect covenant between God and man, and it is a covenant of love, with Christ Himself as its high priest. Nevertheless, this covenant is not based on love as popular culture conceives of it, but love as Christ displayed it: “The way we came to know love was that He laid down His life for us” (1 John 3:16).

Joined with the passion, Christ’s resurrection is the key to the entire Gospel – for in rising from the dead, Jesus proved true His bold promises. He had prophesied to the apostles, “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again” (Jn 10:18). The resurrection vindicates this promise and validates His teaching and miracles.

Furthermore, Christ, “the firstborn from the dead,” opened the door to eternal life and to new creation (Col 1:18). Out of the darkness of despair, the scattered and frightened disciples saw the risen Christ and were renewed and transformed. Filled with faith in the crucified *and* resurrected Savior, they evangelized the known world.

St. Paul summarizes the centrality of the redemptive power of the Easter Triduum with his characteristic zeal: “If Christ has not been raised, then empty (too) is our preaching; empty, too, your faith. Then we are also false witnesses to God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:14-17).

This Easter, let us respond to the glory of Christ’s resurrection by exclaiming, as St. Thomas the Apostle did, “My Lord and my God!” And may each of us be filled with faith in God of our salvation, hope in the rewards He has won for us, and love for Him who has deigned to bestow them on us.

DEDICATION OF NEW

St. Francis



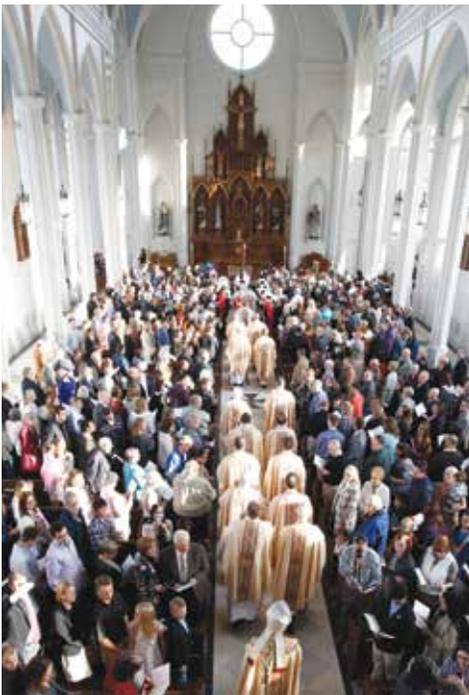
Exterior front of new facility.



Bishop David Konderla knocking with crosier on front door of church to ask for entrance.



Charles Nabholz, Chair Emeritus, Nabholz Construction Co., and Art Lohsen, Principal, Franck & Lohsen Architects, conveying keys and building plans in the narthex, to Bishop Konderla.



Processional from Narthex into Nave.



Bishop Konderla with Deacons Collum and Brashears blessing attendees and church with holy water.



Deacon Tom Haan passes to Bishop Konderla reliquary containing first class relics of St. Francis Xavier and Blessed Stanley Rother for installation under the altar.



Bishop Konderla anoints new altar with holy chrism oil.

At 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 11, 2018, the dedication and consecration of our new St. Francis Xavier Church began. The ceremony was led by Bishop David Konderla, with approximately 13 priests and deacons assisting, along with a cadre of St. Francis staff and volunteers. Bishop Emeritus James Slattery also participated. As expected, the nave quickly filled with parishioners and guests, with approximately 200 overflow attendees who were accommodated in the new parish hall with audio and video of

the ceremony provided in real time. Altogether, attendance was estimated at approximately 1,100 people. Feedback from attendees was quite positive, and many commented upon the fantastic music from our composite choirs and orchestra, the superb sound in the facility, and the beauty of both the church and the ceremony. As an addition to the dedication, Fr. Brian O'Brien was formally installed as the new pastor. With the formalities ending at approximately 11:45 a.m., attendees were treated to light

St. Francis Xavier CATHOLIC CHURCH



Father O'Brien anoints east wall of Nave with holy chrism oil.



Bishop Konderla incenses new altar.



Concelebrating priests with Bishop Konderla and Bishop Emeritus Slattery.



Bishop Konderla placing The Eucharist at entrance of tabernacle.



Installation of Father Brian O'Brien as new pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church - greeting deacons.



Father Ken Harder receiving standing ovation for work as previous pastor for 15 years.



Recessional led by Knights of Columbus.



Liturgical party with Knights of Columbus escort after recessional.

refreshments and tours conducted by our newly-formed Ambassador Ministry. Parking assistance, including golf cart transport, was provided by our Knights of Columbus and Nabholz Construction. Our St. Francis Xavier staff and a large cadre of volunteers provided logistical and liturgical support. Many attendees commented that the ceremony was moving and very well done. The accompanying photos were graciously provided by the editorial and photography staff of *The Eastern Oklahoma Catholic*, all taken on March

11, and perhaps they tell the story better than words.

While the new facility is now officially a church, and will be used as such, there remain a large number of “punch list” items that our architects and construction firm will be working on over the coming weeks and months. We ask for patience in getting all these items satisfactorily addressed. Again, may we all give thanks to God for helping us bring this fantastic new church to essential completion.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE CATHOLIC MASS

It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States, many of us wonder why we must go to Mass on Sunday.

However, if we really understood what the Mass is and how we participate in the celebration, we would instead be asking why we are, as sinful human beings, blessed with the opportunity to participate in the holy Mass. If we simply understood and recognized that God's infinite goodness allows us to do so, we would be eager to go to Mass on Sunday and every other day of the week.

It is true, however, that all Catholics are obliged to "Keep holy the Lord's Day" by sharing in the Mass. But why are we obliged?

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the center of our faith. It is "the summit toward which all activity of the Church is directed" and it is "the font from which all her power flows" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 10). It does not exhaust the activity of the Church, but is most certainly her greatest work.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is literally re-presented to the Father during Mass, and Christ allows us to join with Him in

offering that sacrifice. Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

Believe it or not, the sacrifice of Calvary is really, truly happening at our parish, every time the Mass is offered.

Our participation in Mass gives us the strength and the graces we need to live our lives as Christ's disciples. So, what does this mean for us?

This means we have a front row seat to the sacrifice of Calvary. Given such a gift, how can we not accept it?

We also have a chance to join in Jesus' sacrifice by offering our own prayers and petitions. As an example, what better gift could we give deceased loved ones than the offering of prayers for their souls in purgatory?

Most importantly, we have the opportunity to *receive* the Eucharist, followed by quiet time, when we offer sincere thanks and

allow God's graces to fill us. Think of all you are missing when you do not properly prepare yourself to receive the Holy Eucharist.

We ought to joyfully head to Church each Sunday, eager to give God glory in the greatest way we can! Attending and actively participating in Mass every Sunday is our obligation as Catholics. But we should not allow the fact that our attendance is "required" to stop us from going. Nor should we allow our laziness to overshadow the amazing privilege and the many blessings that lay before us in the Mass.

The pope and the bishops direct us to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy every Sunday because they know there is no better way to keep holy the Lord's day — giving God thanks for all He has done for us in the most powerful way possible. They know that, through the Mass, we gain the graces necessary to live our lives in this world.

Our ability to participate in the Mass is a wonderful gift, not a great burden. May Christ enlighten our minds and hearts to clearly see the wonders of the celebration, and give us great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate.

MEET CHARLIE FOWLER

A LIFE OF STEWARDSHIP THROUGH SERVICE

For longtime parishioner Charlie Fowler, service is truly a way of life. For 45 years, Charlie provided heartfelt service in the grocery store business, making customers feel more like family members. Here at St. Francis Xavier, he has spent those same years attending Mass each weekend and serving as a Knight of Columbus. Having seen Stillwater grow by leaps and bounds in recent years, Charlie is optimistic that the changes taking place in our parish will continue to draw people — especially the youth — deeper into their Catholic faith.

Charlie first came to Stillwater in 1971 along with his wife, Mary “JoAnn” Fowler, and their three children — Karen, Khristopher and Kevin. The availability of Catholic education was an important part of the family’s decision to come to this area.

“My wife and I raised our kids in the church,” Charlie says. “I grew up Catholic and in Catholic schools in Kansas, so that’s just the way it was. My wife was a convert, and she was a better Catholic than I was! There were other locations we were considering, but one of the big reasons we chose to move to

Stillwater was because they had a Catholic school.”

Upon their arrival at Stillwater, Charlie was made the manager of a supermarket, and eventually went on to buy Consumers IGA. As the owner of a local grocery store, he was well-known for providing personal service to each person he encountered, whether he was making thoughtful conversation with shoppers, or bringing a delivery of groceries to a sick or elderly customer. Consumers IGA closed in 2015, and Charlie is now working part-time at Food Pyramid, continuing to bring a smile — and more importantly, a personal connection — to the shopping experience there.

In all of his interactions with people, it is clear that Charlie takes to heart the importance of treating others with kindness and respect, a value that he traces back to his parents and the Catholic faith of his upbringing.

“When a family goes to church all together, it makes a difference growing up,” he says. “I think it starts at home. You grow up with wonderful parents and that’s all you know — and all you need to know — to be fair and honest and sincere, and then pass that along



Charlie Fowler

to your own family.”

As they raised their own children, Charlie and JoAnn made it a priority to maintain an active faith life at St. Francis Xavier and stay involved in their children’s lives. Charlie served on the school board and coached many of his kids’ sports teams. Today, he feels blessed that all three of the Fowler children are doing well. Although he still misses JoAnn seven years after her passing, Charlie finds

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St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church

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Web: www.SFXStillwater.org

Phone: (405) 372-6886

St. John Catholic Student Center

at Oklahoma State University

201 N. Knoblock St. • Stillwater, OK 74075

Web: www.catholicpokes.com

Phone: (405) 372-6408

CHARLIE FOWLER *continued from page 7*

joy in their seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, whom he calls “miracles going into the world.”

As Charlie looks to the young generations coming to worship at St. Francis Xavier today, he believes that the presence of our new pastor and the dedication of our new church will revitalize parish life.

“I think the new church is wonderful, and I think the young folks will benefit very, very much,” he says. “It’s just a wonderful setting and a great opportunity for both St. Francis Xavier and St.

John to gather together, and I’m sure that will happen. Our new parish priest, Fr. Brian O’Brien, is wonderful. Oh, my gracious, we are enjoying him very much, and a young priest there for the young people means more people at Mass every Sunday.”

While it is certainly exciting to see all of the growth and positive change occurring in our community, we are thankful that one thing has remained the same for almost 50 years — St. Francis Xavier and the entire Stillwater area are both greatly blessed by Charlie Fowler and his heart for service!

“When a family goes to church all together, it makes a difference growing up. I think it starts at home. You grow up with wonderful parents and that’s all you know — and all you need to know — to be fair and honest and sincere, and then pass that along to your own family.” — Charlie Fowler
