



# CHURCH *of* ST. ALBERT

## Gaining a Glimpse of Heaven with the Help of the *Sacred Arts and Environment Ministry*

**W**hen you walk into our parish, you enter into a little piece of heaven. Because of the beauty you see before you, your soul desires to contemplate God's goodness, and your heart is drawn to His mercy. With the help of the Sacred Arts and Environment Ministry, the liturgical seasons of the Church and the majestic Real Presence of Christ in the tabernacle become vibrantly alive in front of our eyes.

"As the liturgical seasons change in the life of the Church, it helps us contemplate the life of Christ, and what we do in this ministry reminds us of this," says Kelly Perrault, who coordinates the Sacred Arts and Environment Ministry along with Susan Zachman. "For example, having a penitential atmosphere in our parish during Lent reminds us all to repent and do penance, while Easter decorations help us celebrate the joy and beauty of the Resurrection."

The Sacred Arts and Environment Ministry members work to beautify our parish year-round for the enjoyment of all of our parishioners, and the enrichment of their spiritual lives. For example, they change the side curtains to match the colors of the liturgical seasons, reminding us of the profound significance behind the Church's great feast days. In honor of Lent, they take away the plants, and set up a large wooden cross, draped with a cloth of the appropriate liturgical color.

"We also make the altar bare and put out two simple wooden candle holders, so it is not as celebratory," Kelly says. "During Holy Week, we put a crown of thorns on the large wooden cross as well."



When the Easter season breaks forth, the ministry members adorn our parish with Easter lilies and other types of flowers. For Christmas, they set out a Christmas tree with lights, along with wreaths and poinsettias.

"It is a lot of work and it needs to be done in a shorter time frame, especially because of the various events happening in church," Kelly says. "That is why we could use more volunteers to help around Christmastime."

Ultimately, the Sacred Arts and Environment Ministry gives us a way to be faithful stewards of God's house — and our faith.

"I believe I am being a steward of God's house because I am doing this ministry for Him," Kelly says. "It brings out the various aspects of the Catholic faith, enhancing our life of stewardship. Participating in it gives us a hidden way for

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## Got Talent? *Bring It to the Spotlight!*

The word “talent” often conjures up images of stage performers in the spotlight, captivating awestruck audiences with their impeccable musical or acting skills.

While these talented performers are certainly deserving of applause, the majority of the population sits hidden in the shadows, staring on in amazement while feeling overlooked — and perhaps wishing to possess such talents themselves. But even when we feel overlooked and untalented, God knows better. As Christians, we are all called to dig deep and trust that we are uniquely blessed with valuable talents and abilities, even if our talents aren’t so obvious or don’t garner applause and accolades.

Along with “time” and “treasure,” “talent” is one of the “three Ts” of stewardship. Exploring our natural inclinations and preferences, especially when guided by the intricacies of our unique personalities, can unearth God-given talents.

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same spirit,” writes St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians. “There are different forms of service, but the same Lord.”

Some people have the gift of working peacefully with children. Equipped with patience and gentleness, they can guide young souls to the Lord. Yet, others shudder at the thought of a classroom full of

5-year-olds and instead seek the quiet solace of behind-the-scenes tasks — cleaning the church, sewing altar cloths or stuffing envelopes.

Our interests and abilities are varied, and our volunteer options are endless, as we are called to give our talents back to God in loving service. Examine your heart and prayerfully discern your gifts, then direct those gifts towards serving the people of God.

H. Jackson Brown, Jr., author of *Life’s Little Instruction Book*, once said, “Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There’s plenty of movement, but you never know if it is going to be forwards, backwards, or sideways.”

If our gifts of talent are not guided by the discipline of prayer, just like an octopus on roller skates, we will get nowhere fast! Yet, if we keep our eyes on the goal of heaven and serve the Lord with joyfulness, our efforts will produce a bountiful harvest. In the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will reap bountifully.”

The next time you sit quietly in the shadows behind a glaring stage spotlight, rest assured that your talents are no less impressive in the eyes of God, and will always be “applauded” when directed to the service of His people.

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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. Brian Park*

Fr. Brian Park  
Pastor



# Meet the Lahr Family



*George and Melissa Lahr with their children, Isabelle and William.*

So many things in life are all about timing, and stewardship is no different. The ways we can share our time, talent, and treasure with the community often change and develop throughout the various stages of our lives. George and Melissa Lahr became members of the parish after moving to this area in 2006. Sunday Mass attendance has always been a priority for them, and several years ago, they knew the time was right to take a leap of faith and became even more involved in church life.

Melissa first began serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion over two years ago, and George became an usher around the same time.

“Our kids were old enough where it allowed the flexibility for us to be on the [liturgical] schedule at the same time,” George says. “We have an aging usher population, and the church was looking for the next generation, so to speak — some new blood in that role. By that point, we had been established members of the church for over 10 years and there is a familiarity there where you understand what the church needs. You feel a little more comfortable getting involved.”

This past summer, George became the usher liaison for the Liturgical Committee. The committee meets with our parish priests and representatives from each liturgical ministry. From there, George can bring our ushers the feedback he has received and any new protocols to be followed by the ministry. Especially during the public health crisis caused by COVID-19, this role has been essential for our parish as our ushers work to ensure the safety of those attending our Masses in person.

George also serves on the St. Albert Finance Committee, lending his talents as an accountant.



# MAKING STEWARDSHIP A NATURAL PART OF LIFE

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This contribution, too, has become even more important in recent months as the pandemic continues to affect the financial situations of many in our community.

While family life can certainly get hectic at times, the Lahrs always have made their faith life a top priority. One thing that has helped them participate in parish life without overloading their already busy schedule is serving at the Mass itself. And of course, something else always helps as well — a good dose of faith that all will be well!

“I think in everything we answer the call to, there is always a question about how we can fit another thing into our lives,” Melissa says. “But we were called and we answered, and now we just have to trust and have faith that we can get everything done. Sometimes it’s a little bit of a juggle, but there are so many little things that we can do to help, and you just have faith and you can do it.”

In all the ways they have served, George and Melissa have always found that the rewards are many. They pray that their children — Isabelle, 14; and William, 11 — will find the same fulfillment in an active faith life. As a family, they thoroughly enjoy our parish’s Total Lifelong Catechesis program. The Lahrs are also thankful for our wonderful Youth Ministry, and they have enjoyed watching Isabelle grow in faith as she helped with Children’s Liturgy last year and attended Extreme Faith Camp.

Encouraging their children to make the Catholic faith a living, breathing part of their own lives is yet another reason George and Melissa have chosen to become more engaged in parish ministries.

“I think part of it is to set an example for our children, to be a witness,” George says. “We’ve always tried to talk about time, talent, and treasure, and it sets an example for them as far as giving back. I hope that they find enjoyment out of attending weekly Mass and that it’s not just something that they do because it’s something they did growing up. I hope they find their own spiritual path.”

The Lahrs are thankful for the tight-knit, caring faith community they have found here at St. Albert as they continue to get more involved in church life. They look forward to seeing what additional blessings the future will hold — not only for their own family’s faith journey but also for the entire parish.

“Before the pandemic, our services were at capacity, so there was talk of a possible expansion,” Melissa says. “My biggest hope is that once we can have full Masses, that everyone will come back, and it will be bursting at the seams again. Everyone’s faith is personal to each individual, but it’s so important to be with our brothers and sisters in Christ and to worship together and be witnesses to one another, and it’s so important that we’re together in church.”

***“I think in everything we answer the call to, there is always a question about how we can fit another thing into our lives. But we were called and we answered, and now we just have to trust and have faith that we can get everything done. Sometimes it’s a little bit of a juggle, but there are so many little things that we can do to help, and you just have faith and you can do it.” — MELISSA LAHR***

## Understanding the Role of *Sacramentals* in Our Faith

Most Catholics are familiar with the idea of *sacraments* in the Church, of which there are seven. Sacraments are the foundation of the spiritual life for an individual and the Church. Sacraments are sources of grace — God’s very presence in our lives and unmerited favor from God. They are signs of God’s love, and these signs make present what they signify. Although a person benefits — receives the gift of grace — from the sacraments regardless of whether he or she is well disposed to them, one must cooperate with what the Spirit is doing in the sacrament to receive its full benefit.

*Sacramentals* are different. These are also sacred signs that can build holiness, but they do not work on their own. One must be aware and fully conscious of the sacred action. Sacramentals sanctify us to get the most benefit from the Sacraments (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1667). Sacramentals are given to us to make holy certain actions in life and life’s circumstances. There are many such sacred signs that are reminders to us of God.

The sign of the cross is perhaps one of the most fundamental of these signs, and for Catholics, this invocation is done at the start of every sacred action and prayer. Holy water is a sacramental, as it reminds us of our Baptism. By dipping our fingers into holy water and making the sign of the cross, we are combining two foundational symbols of the Christian life and the Paschal Mystery — the passion, dying and rising of Christ — and bringing them to life in us.

The exchange of peace in the Mass — and at other Catholic rites — is another example of a sacramental. By making some kind of meaningful sign of peace, we are giving the peace of Christ to another person. The chalice and other sacred vessels at Mass also are sacramentals, as they remind us of what they are to contain — the very Body and Blood of Christ.

It might be helpful to organize the types of sacramentals into categories, as author Michael Pennock lists in *This Is Our Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*:

“*Actions* (blessings; genuflections; the sign of the cross; bowing one’s head at the name of Jesus; church processions); *Objects* (candles; holy water; statues and



icons; holy pictures; blessed ashes; palms; rosaries; relics; incense; vestments; scapulars; church buildings; crosses; religious medals); *Places* (the Holy Land; Rome; Fatima; Lourdes; the National Shrine in Washington, D.C.; and other places of pilgrimage; chapels, retreat centers, and even Catholic cemeteries); *Prayers* (short prayers we say throughout the day; grace before and after meals; prayers at rising and going to bed; praying the rosary, praying a host of other traditional Catholic prayers and devotions); *Sacred Time* (liturgy; holy days; feasts of saints; your saint’s name day; special days of prayer; fasting and abstinence; retreats, etc.)” (*This Is Our Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 176-177).

“Sacramentals...prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it” (CCC 1670). In a word, sacramentals, through the prayer of the Church, bring us to holiness in Christ. All devotions of piety, including sacramentals, should point us toward the liturgy of the Church, a connection to a local parish community, and to the Eucharist (CCC 1675).

The Church, through Christ’s passion, death and resurrection, has given us these sacred signs to lead us in holiness, and to better recognize an authentic Christian life. How many sacramentals can you recognize in your life? Probably more than you think.

# WELCOME RETREATS

## *Opportunities to Renew and Connect in the Faith*

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?

Welcome Retreats — formerly Christ Renews His Parish — have been a part of our community for more than 15 years, conducted in partnership with St. Michael Parish. This year, the retreats will be held in late May at St. Albert's. The men's and women's retreats are held on separate weekends.

About four years ago, Rick Kosey was looking to grow in faith and become more active in his family's faith life. His wife, Patricia, and children, Michael and Rebecca, were active parishioners, but Rick wasn't as involved as they were. He credits a 2017 Welcome Retreat for changing his life.

“I am glad I took that step,” Rick says. “Since attending, my children have commented that I am working more as a team with Mom. They have noticed the impact this has made on my faith.”



*Rick Kosey with his wife, Patricia, and their children, Michael and Rebecca. Rick says the Welcome Retreat he attended changed his life.*

After attending a retreat, the 25-person group meets together for the following year. The group also leads the retreat the following year. Rick now serves on the Core Team for the retreats.

The Welcome Retreat begins on Saturday morning and ends Sunday afternoon. Attendees spend the night at St. Albert's.

“Everyone gets something different out of the retreat,” Rick says. “The material really connects with hearts. It triggers conversation and conversion.”

After spending small-group time with other attendees, Rick recalls feeling as though he wasn't alone in his struggles. He connected with his group members as they shared their ups and downs.

“The weekend was so great,” Rick says. “The next year giving the retreat was even better, since I was with my group sharing our stories to the next group.”

All of the members with whom Rick attended the retreat in 2017 took the next step to become involved at St. Albert's — from serving on the Parish Council to serving as lectors at Mass.

“We have become good friends,” Rick says. “It has been great to share my faith with them. This has really changed my life for the better.”

*Please refer to the church bulletin for Welcome Retreat registration information, or visit [churchofstalbert.org/welcome-retreat](http://churchofstalbert.org/welcome-retreat) to learn more.*



## CHURCH of ST. ALBERT

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### HOLY MASS SCHEDULE

**Weekend:**

Saturday: 4:00 p.m.

Sunday: 9:00 a.m.

**Weekdays:**

Tuesday & Wednesday: 7:30 a.m.

**Reconciliation times:**

Sunday: 8:00 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.

Wednesday: 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

Saturday: 2:00 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.

## *Sacred Arts and Environment Ministry* continued from front cover

us to contribute to our parish, giving our parishioners hope and reminding them of God's goodness."

Those who give their time and talent to this effort have found it to be a rich blessing in return.

"It has enriched my life, and has been a wonderful way for me to have time to pray and be with Jesus," Kelly says. "It allows me to spend peaceful time in God's house. I often contemplate when I am doing it, 'Lord, this is Your house, how would You like it done?' I am a bit of a 'Martha' by nature instead of a 'Mary,' so it has been very helpful for me to have something to do for the parish, especially with all we have been going through because of the pandemic."

***"I believe I am being a steward of God's house because I am doing this ministry for Him. It brings out the various aspects of the Catholic faith, enhancing our life of stewardship. Participating in it gives us a hidden way for us to contribute to our parish, giving our parishioners hope and reminding them of God's goodness."***

— KELLY PERRAULT

*More volunteers are needed to help decorate, especially during the Christmas Season. For more information on how to help, please contact Kelly Perrault at 763-295-2775 or Susan Zachman at 763-497-2573.*