

Church Shines After Restoration Project

In just three months, from April to June, 2018, St. Sebastian Church was restored from top to bottom, inside and out. The last newsletter featured the restoration of the church's art and decorative elements. This issue focuses on the restoration of the pews, kneelers, floors, doors, and lighting as well as the reconfiguration of the entrance and installation of a new front plaza.

Parishioner Tom Welsh served as the tireless volunteer owner's representative for all these aspects of the restoration project. Tom is a graduate of St. Sebastian (1965), as are his sisters: Sally Stein (1961) and Mary Kathleen Thompson (1972). Tom was tapped for the job by the parish business manager, Kevin Audin, who worked closely with Tom in guiding this historic project.

Pews and Kneelers: One of the first and biggest tasks of the project was removing all 113 pews and 240 kneelers so they could be repaired and refinished. The day after Easter services, a large group of volunteers

from St. Sebastian's Knights of Columbus Council #14255 descended on the church and spent countless hours removing about 80 screws per pew (screws for the kneelers, hat clips, floor braces, pew crests, etc.).

The Knights helped disassemble all those heavy pews, and then they moved on to the next big project of installing new padding and covers on each kneeler. Tom's wife Joanne and her sister Ellen Audin, who also reupholstered nearly 50 chairs used on the altar and in the praise and worship area, installed new rubber stoppers on all the kneelers. The restored kneelers have more cushion but are still lighter, so it is much quieter now when they are put up! When the refurbished pews returned, the Knights helped carry them in and screw everything back into place, including 224 new book racks. The



"I can't say enough about how great the Knights were," says Tom, who is a member of the Knights himself. "Some of these guys were here eight hours a day. It was tough work. Many of the screws were worn out by years of polishing and being ground into the floor. Not a single one came out without a big effort. We had to use an angle grinder and vice grips to remove most of the anchors. Those pews are very heavy, and it was no small task to move them." Tom noted with a chuckle that the Knights even stayed and worked while the organ was being loudly tested and tuned ALL DAY.

In total, Tom estimates that volunteers removed 10,000 screws and put back in about 9,000! Fewer screws were used for installation since the new book racks needed fewer screws than the ubiquitous hat clips, which were not re-installed. The beloved hat clips were

Knights made the process go quickly and smoothly, saving the parish an immeasurable amount of money by doing this work as volunteers.



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We Will Remember

The Alumni Association extends our sincerest sympathy to the families and friends of our deceased alumni. If you learn of the passing of a St. Sebastian alumnus, please contact us by phone at 330.836.2233 x119 or by email at alumni@stsebastian.org.

(June 1, 2018 through September 30, 2018)

✠ Please keep these friends in your prayers ✠

Patricia Towell Claypool '44, June 18, 2018

Ralph Del Greco '48, August 20, 2018

Daniel A. Finelli, M.D. '73, July 25, 2018

Edward L. King '68, July 18, 2018

Christopher C. Miller '78, August 15, 2018

Jay R. Mitzel '65, August 10, 2018

Patrick D. Borovitz '68, April 2, 2018

Robin Camilletti Raya '72, July 22, 2018

Mary Lou Willemsen Syracopoulos '57,

September 1, 2018

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saved, however. Please see page 6 for information on purchasing a keepsake hat clip!

Floors and Doors: While all the pews were out, the terrazzo floors, which cover 10,700 square feet of the church, were repaired and professionally refinished. In some spots where the terrazzo was corroded or buckled, sections of terrazzo were cut out and replaced, a job that required trial and error until a match was found. The marble floors on the altar were also repaired and refinished, and all of the church's heavy glass and metal exterior doors were replaced. Tom notes that all the floor work was done by Youngstown Tile & Terrazzo, whose owners have relatives who were involved in the original construction of the church in 1959-60.

Lighting: New outdoor lighting was installed, and most of the lights inside the church now have LED

bulbs vs. fluorescents, which vastly increases their energy efficiency. But of course, replacing them was no easy job, given the height of the ceiling, which required the changes to be done from 40 feet up in the rafters. And the recessed lights in the ceiling may look small from below, but replacing those large incandescent lights was difficult. Some lights simply hadn't been on in 40 years, says Tom, due to the difficulty in changing them and dealing with the old ballast system. "Everything was a bit of an adventure," laughs Tom. Now all the lights are operated by switches and without any ballast.

Front Plaza: The church's front steps were pushed out about eight feet to create a larger portico. The portico is now wide enough to allow for a full ramp, which was added to the left side without changing the appearance of the façade. The rectangular flower bed in the front plaza was removed and new paving stones installed, creating a wide open plaza featuring tiles set in a pattern that echoes the pattern of the green tiles above the front doors. The result is a more visitor-friendly and visually appealing plaza that can also accommodate wheelchairs and funeral processions, which previously required carrying heavy, unwieldy caskets up and down the steps.

Tom says his favorite part of the project was learning so many new things, like how to get screws out of the floor without damaging the terrazzo, how to repair bent stained glass windows, and how difficult it is to match granite installed nearly 60 years ago and worn by weather! Tom was also touched by how many people stepped up to help, from the sacristan who successfully prepared for Masses in the midst of construction and chaos, to donors who stepped in to cover the costs for refinishing all the brasswork in the church. "Never in the three months did we come up short on help," says Tom. "I had no budget and no authority to make volunteers show up. I would make my needs known to Ron Smetana of the Knights. Ron, who was there helping practically every day, would get the word out, and people would show up right when they were needed. We never had to hold up work because volunteers didn't show up or finish their project."

Despite the countless hours he devoted to the project, Tom insists he got more than he gave. "As I have heard Fr. Valencheck say before, the church is the people, not the building. After seeing the way so many people came together to support this project, I have a new and deeper appreciation for all that people do for our church."



Alumni Updates

Class of 1941

Richard (Dick) Hamlin and his wife Yvonne received the Summa Health Boniface DeRoo Award for Philanthropy at the May 24, 2018 Summa Society Celebration. According to Summa officials, donations from the Hamlins have elevated the heart and vascular program at Summa Health and given its physicians the ability to perform a full range of advanced cardiovascular procedures, including some not previously offered in the Akron region.

Class of 1945

John Friess, who is retired from the Summit County Common Pleas Court, shares these memories: “My first summer job was given to me by Father Zwisler during the summer of 1945. I worked with Nick the gardener cleaning the classrooms for the next year. Also during that summer, I replaced the kneeler covers in the original church. I also worked with my close friend, Richard (Dick) Fetzer, who worked on the outside grounds. I have many fond memories of attending school there. I believe that I was a member of the first football team in 1943-44.”

Class of 1961

Tim App visited family in Akron this summer and took time to visit the church and school with Kathy Holaday from the St. Sebastian Parish Foundation. Tim is a painter whose work can be found in many museums as well as private and public collections. He is also a retired professor of art, having taught for 47 years at colleges in Maryland, New Mexico, and California. Tim lives in Baltimore with his wife, Theresa Bedoya. They have one daughter, Jennifer, who is married, and a 14-year old granddaughter. His parents, Joan and Bud App, were very active at St. Sebastian for many years. His brother Tom, who is deceased, graduated from St. Sebastian in 1957, and his sister, Christine, who went to the Elms, is married with two grown children and lives in Akron.

Tim wrote, “One reason for writing you is my respect and gratitude, after all these years, for the education I received at St. Sebastian. It was challenging for me, to say the least, and I was anything but a model student. But the support and encouragement from some nuns and lay teachers alike, along with invaluable experience of playing organized sports, helped inestimably to prepare me for what was to come at Campion [boarding school] and beyond. Being chosen as an altar boy also contributed profoundly to my development. It was an honor then to be chosen. Learning the rubric of the old Mass strengthened my spirituality, if not my Catholicism, and bolstered a serious attitude about ritual that has influenced my work as an artist.”



Class of 1961

Hank Baumgarten and his wife, Kay, live in La Quinta, California. They have three children: Heather 42, Ashley 41, and Scott 38. When he wrote to us over the summer, Hank said he was looking forward to meeting up with classmates while he was in Akron at the Bridgestone Invitational in August.

Class of 1971

Bob Zwisler kept himself very busy this summer serving as the Volunteer Tournament Chairman for the 2018 Bridgestone Invitational World Golf Championship in August. Bob, who lives in North Canton, is the great-great-nephew of Monsignor Hilary Zwisler.

Send Us Your Alumni Updates

We love to hear from our alumni! Please drop us a line and let us know what you are doing. Newly married? New baby? Get together with fellow alums? Email Anne Morgan Dennée '85 at alumni@stsebastian.org or fill out the online form at alumni.stsebastian.org/contact.html.

Class of 1972

Mark Wernig and his wife, Colleen, served as chairs of the Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens 2018 Gala “Beautiful Bounty,” which was held June 22, 2018.

Class of 1976

On September 15, 2018, at the 4:30 p.m. Mass, over 10 members of the Class of 1976 gathered to celebrate Mass and to remember classmate Kurt Klein.

Alumni Updates (continued)

Classes of 1976 and 1979

Brian Thomas (Class of 1976), was named the new head of United Disability Services in July, 2018. Prior to that, Brian served as the president/CEO of AAA Akron Auto Club. Soon after Brian left AAA, his brother Kevin Thomas (Class of 1979) was hired as the new president/CEO of AAA Akron – now that's what you call following in your brother's footsteps!

Class of 1980

Andrea Janovic is an attorney in northern Kentucky where she practices family law, probate/estates and bankruptcy law. Andrea has two children, Hanna and Patrick, and two grandchildren, Amara and Micah. Andrea says she is eager to reconnect with fellow classmates from her days at St. Sebastian.

Class of 1982

Todd Mesek was named chief marketing and development officer at the Cleveland-based public media company ideastream in June, 2018. Prior to that, Todd was vice president of marketing and communications at Cleveland's Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, where he worked for nearly 20 years.



Class of 1983

Jeff Conway was the leading fund raiser for the Hawaii Walk to Defeat ALS, which was held on September 15 in Kapiolani Regional Park, Honolulu. Jeff's brother, Jason (Class of 1985), also raised money as part of Jeff's team and traveled to Hawaii to be by his brother's side during the walk. Individually, Jeff raised over \$33,000, and his team, 808 ALS Vets, raised over \$49,000! Jeff is a former Naval Aviator who was diagnosed with ALS in 2014. According to Jeff, veterans are twice as likely to be diagnosed with ALS than anyone else. Within the last year, Jeff has been unable to walk unaided and uses a wheelchair. Jason notes that in addition to the ALS walk, Jeff supports his local ALS chapter and helps others in the area. Jason says, "Jeff continues to work for the benefit of military veterans like him and others living in Hawaii with ALS. He is an inspiration." Pictured here are brothers Jim '81, Jeff '83 and Jason '85 Conway. Gifts for the 2018 walk are being accepted through January at www.HawaiiWalkToDefeatALS.org.



Class of 1985

Bridgett Niekamp celebrated her July wedding to Chad Fix at St. Sebastian Church with four fellow members of the Class of 1985 in attendance: Heather Frattura Littler, Kelly Murphy Hickey, Anne Kidder Gillin, and Beth Yakubowski Shumaker, along with friends from St. Vincent-St. Mary High School Michelle Montinola Miluk, Mikie Kareski Wilkey and Evelyn Kaeberlein Ruth, who is married to Matt Ruth, also a member of the Class of 1985.



Class of 1993

Mike Hamad is general manager of Blu Plate, a dining spot that opened last year upstairs from Blu Jazz, a music venue in downtown Akron. Blu Plate features windows overlooking Market Street, live piano music on weekends, and discounts for those who dine at Blu Plate and buy tickets to a Blu Jazz show the same night. According to Blu Plate's website, the chef-driven menu features Southern-inspired fare with Akron flair.

Class of 1994

Christopher Zwisler and Jennifer Cragel were married on August 18th at St. Sebastian Church – in the parish that Christopher's great uncle founded 90 years ago. In fact, it was almost exactly 90 years before, on August 16th, 1928, that Monsignor Zwisler performed the very first wedding at St. Sebastian Parish for David Towell and Lorena Mulson. In a happy aligning of events, Fr. Valencheck reports that at Christopher and Jennifer's wedding Mass, he used the chalice that Monsignor had begun using in 1929.

Parish Celebrates 90th Anniversary Mass With Bishop Perez

On June 30, 2018, the bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, the Most Reverend Nelson J. Perez, joined St. Sebastian Parish in celebrating a special Mass of thanksgiving in honor of the 90th anniversary of the founding of St. Sebastian Parish.

The Mass kicked off a year of anniversary celebrations, which will include a 90th Anniversary Gala on November 10, 2018. Other activities include a parish photo directory, the sale of commemorative items (see page 6), the publication of a book of the church's history written by Fr. Valencheck, and several festivals, concerts, recitals and parish gatherings.

The Mass also celebrated the near-completion of a \$1 million restoration of the church building. Projects completed for the "Cornerstone of Our Faith" church restoration effort include refinishing the terrazzo floors, restoring all 113

pews and 240 kneelers, installing new exterior doors, redesigning the main entrance, restoring the altar mosaic, upgrading the sound system, installing new lighting, and restoration of the shrines, statues, brasswork, woodwork and marble.



Pictured here after celebrating a Mass in honor of the 90th anniversary of the founding of St. Sebastian Parish are Fr. Anthony Simone, parochial vicar; Fr. John Valencheck, pastor; Bishop Nelson Perez of the Diocese of Cleveland; and Fr. William Karg, pastor emeritus.

Alumni Updates (continued)

Class of 2005

Jill Brownfield, the daughter of Joan and Bert Brownfield married Ryan Lang of Marietta, Ohio on August 25. They met during an indoor soccer game. Jill is currently employed as a physical therapist at the Crystal Clinic in Montrose, and Ryan works for Bridgestone as a chemical engineer.

Class of 2014

Claire Heinle was awarded a scholarship to attend the "No Barriers Youth USA" program through a partnership with the National Park Service. The program involved a 10-day rafting trip inside Grand Canyon National Park this past July for 20 U.S. high school students, including 10 students with visual disabilities. Claire and the group enjoyed the trip of a lifetime rafting in the Grand Canyon while learning to work together as people with different abilities and talents. Claire, an Our Lady of the Elms graduate, attends The Ohio State University.

Ryan Huber and Scott Walter were recognized by the Akron Beacon Journal/Ohio.com in its July, 2018 scholar athletes feature. Ryan, who attends the University of Dayton, played football and lacrosse for Archbishop Hoban. Scott, who attends the University of Akron, played football, basketball and baseball for St. Vincent-St. Mary.

Class of 2016

Ben Rosenfeld (Class of 2016) and his grandmother Susie Murphy were featured on the cover of the Spring issue of Impressions, a newsletter produced by Ohio Living Home Health & Hospice. The article inside highlighted how the three-generation team of Ben, his mother Kris Murphy Rosenfeld (Class of 1981), and Susie are long-time hospice volunteers who share greeting cards, prayer shawls, and most importantly, their time and attention with those in hospice care.



Giving Tuesday is Nov. 27:
On this global day of giving,
please consider making a
donation in honor of the
school's 90th Anniversary!
You can join in the exciting
#weGiveCatholic effort
on the first Tuesday after
Thanksgiving by making
a gift to St. Sebastian
Parish School at www.wegivecatholic.org.

90th Anniversary Commemorative Items on Sale Now

In celebration of our parish's 90th Anniversary, St. Sebastian is offering commemorative items for purchase. The Rose Window sun catcher is a replica of the beautiful window in Zwislser Hall, the 90th Anniversary ornament features our stunning altar mosaic, and the St. Sebastian notepads come with original hat clips from the church pews. Fr. Valencheck is also writing a book on the history of the parish, details to come soon! If you would like to purchase any of these items, please contact the rectory office at 330-836-2233.



Class of 1968 Celebrates 50th Reunion

The Class of 1968 held a weekend of festivities September 21-22 to celebrate their 50th Reunion. On Friday morning, a small group of classmates met up at J.E. Good Park for a fun golf outing. That night, classmates met up at Beau's Lounge at the Akron/Fairlawn Hilton for a happy hour meet-n-greet. Even though classmates were given the option of taking in one of the Friday night football games, such as STVM v. Hoban or Walsh v. Cleveland Heights, many stayed around for hours because they were having so much fun catching up with each other, said Patti Large Cleary, one of the reunion organizers.

On Saturday, the Class of 1968 began the evening by attending Mass together in St. Sebastian's newly-restored church. Fr. Thomas Mosher (Class of 1967) traveled to Akron from Vermont to celebrate the Mass with his brother Dan Mosher and his classmates. After Mass, the group was treated to a tour of the school by several current St. Sebastian students. Before dinner in Zwislser Hall, Dan Mosher shared a touching video he created featuring all of the members of the Class of 1968 who have passed away, with several

pictures of each person scrolling while pictures of the school and church served as a background. Dan did a wonderful job on the slide show, working for weeks to contact relatives of deceased classmates to obtain pictures.

Dinner was accompanied by 60's rock & roll, and even the singing of some "Up with People" songs led by Sr. Mary Laurel Smith (formerly Sr. Shamus). Sr. Mary Laurel was joined at the reunion by fellow former teachers Mike Lobalzo and Mike LeHere. In all, nearly 50 people were in

attendance talking and laughing the night away. Many thanks to the reunion committee for planning such a wonderful event: Patti Large Cleary, Mike Del Medico (Class of 1969), Patty Freeman Irvin, Barbara Carroll LaRose, Dan Mosher, Patty Cunningham Post, Dave Singleton, Cathy Sinopoli Davis, John Sloan and Mark Waickman.



... and Then!

