



# The Shrine of Saint Joseph's Friends, Inc. NEWSLETTER

1220 N. 11th Street • St. Louis, Missouri 63106-4614 • Rectory Phone (314) 231-9407  
e-mail: info@shrineofstjoseph.org

WINTER - SPRING ISSUE 2025

## The Shrine's Indescribable Beauty at Christmas

One worshiper said, "it's difficult to find the right words to describe my feelings when I come in to this Shrine at Christmas time." Unless you are actually here, it becomes almost impossible to describe the resplendent and stunningly beautiful seasonally decorated Shrine, which brings up feelings of joy and a closeness to the Lord.

When the Friends organization took over financial stewardship granted to us by Archbishop John May in 1980, there were plenty of skeptics who didn't think we had much of a chance of saving the Shrine from eventual demolition. But thanks to the help of many donors, benefactors, and dedicated volunteers, we are now in our 46th year and we have been able to give the Shrine a first class, and considered to be an internationally acclaimed restoration.

Christmas Eve Mass at the Shrine beginning at 4 pm with Carol singing at 3:30 was an extraordinary and meaningful religious experience. To the many families who attend, it has become for them a richly rewarding family tradition, thus creating memories to be cherished. As the sun begins to set, the visual aura in the early evening hours of over 32 lit Christmas trees, the beautiful colors, red poinsettias, and the nativity scene on the east altar becomes even more splendid and striking. It couldn't have been described better when Father John Nugent, SJ guest homilist, said: "the beauty of this space uplifts the soul, heart, and mind..."



As the familiar Christmas carols are sung before Mass the entire experience helps us to keep in mind the Lord's birth. And for those of us who have been volunteers here for many years, all of the Shrine's splendor once again reminds us of just how far we have come and prompts us to remember former deceased volunteers and donors who dedicated so much of themselves to contribute to making all this magnificent restoration a reality.

From our rector, Father Wunderlich, the Board of Directors, and all of the volunteers here at the Shrine we gratefully thank you for your support and wish you and yours a very happy and healthy New Year.

## Ted Wofford Completes 50 Years of Dedication to the Shrine

We want to recognize a man who is no stranger to Shrine followers.—Ted Wofford—who has led the entire Shrine restoration from the very beginning. But when it was announced after Mass by Father Wunderlich of Ted Wofford's 93rd birthday last August, we suspect that most people didn't realize that Wofford had been involved with the restoration of the Shrine for 50—now going on 51 years. Amid the rumors that were spreading of the plans to take down the Shrine and sell the property back in 1974, Landmarks Commission hired Wofford, a well-known architectural restorationist, to visit the Shrine and determine if it could or should be saved. This was the very beginning of Ted's long and dedicated service which has lasted to this day. The initial visit with Father Filipiak 50 years ago and then in to the church for several months of thorough investigation, convinced Ted that this religiously and architecturally significant edifice was absolutely worth saving.

In 1979, Ted and five small business owners founded our organization, the Friends Inc. Said Wofford, "in my opinion, the second miracle of the Shrine was that we six men who had no common thread but the church, could come together, without friction, and against enormous odds, to do the impossible." Wofford noted that "most of those active here now have no real personal knowledge of the extremely difficult days that we went through back then." But, beginning in 1985, and for 10 years, Ted and his hand-picked artisans, depending on cash on hand, slowly, methodically, and patiently restored the vast interior back to its original colors and design; it was indeed a herculean effort requiring perseverance, tenacity, research, and total commitment.

Ted has also been a champion of preserving part of St. Louis heritage. His pro bono studies played a critical role in saving the Wainright Bldg., the Old Post Office, Lacledes Landing, Lafayette Square and other treasures. Following is a partial list Ted also played in the design or restoration of other buildings: Climatron in Shaw's Gardens; Missouri Governor's Mansion, Jefferson City; Olin Library and Medical Library Washington University; Missouri Historical Society on Skinker, St. Louis; Old St. Vincent's Catholic Church, Cape Girardeau, MO; Willamette University, Salem, Oregon; St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Kelso, MO; Loretto Hilton Theatre at Webster University; Chancellors Residence, Mizzou, Columbia, MO; Canisius College Library, Buffalo, New York.

"Over all these years," said Ted, "here at the Shrine we have accomplished what many said could not be done. Many people—our donors and faithful volunteers—have made all this happen and I will forever be grateful for their support, and dedication to high quality restoration." From the Board of Directors: our hearts are filled with appreciation and gratitude to Ted for his selfless and knowledgeable lengthy service to the Shrine.



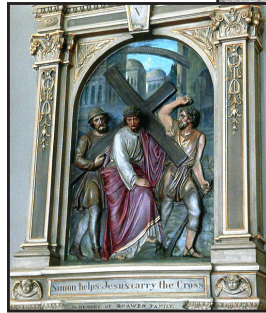
Ted Wofford, Architect

# Lent and the Shrine's Stations of the Cross

As we move away from the beautiful memories of the Shrine at Christmas, we gradually move into the Lenton season officially beginning on Ash Wednesday, March 5th.

The Shrine's enduring beauty evokes a reverence-- especially during Lent --where we can enter into a sense of sacred stillness with the Lord. And Lent is an ideal time to meditate more fully upon the sacrificial journey of Jesus to his death and entombment. Stations of the Cross is a way to appreciate this journey described in each of the 14 elaborately hand-carved three-dimensional wooden works of art on the east and west side walls of the Shrine which are sometimes overlooked because of the magnificence of the front altar areas.

Before restoration, the surrounding frames of all the Stations—like all of the altar areas—had been spray painted with an off-white grayish color. In 1987, artisans discovered that parts of the surrounding frames of each Station were originally a gold color. The Shrine's artisans re-painted all of these areas back to the original gold but, instead, used 24-carat gold leaf which is of very high quality and extremely luminescent. One visitor who had expertise in religious art, upon viewing these 14 Stations, commented that he believed these were of "museum quality." Especially during Lent, we invite worshipers and visitors to take a more careful look at these splendid pieces of art.



One of the 14 exquisitely restored Stations



A 1987 photo of artisans restoring Stations of the Cross

photos by Arteaga

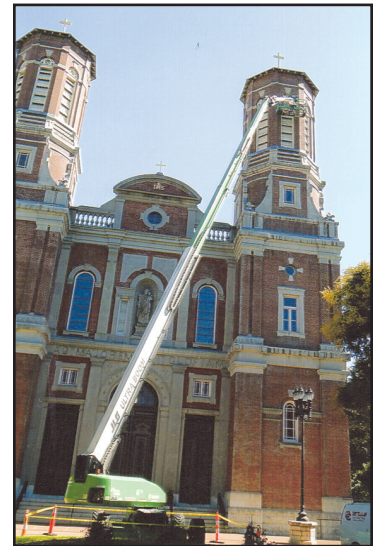
## Tower Maintenance and Inspection

After Jim Fesler, one of our volunteers, discovered rotting wood on some of the tower's louvers, it was decided to engage the services of Bob Diestelkamp, the owner of an industrial construction company, to come and take a closer look at the towers. It made sense to also have the entire tower areas inspected while we had the use of the rental of a lift with the capability of going up well over 125 feet as shown here in photo.

Of primary concern was determining the level of deterioration of the wood making up all of the louvers, but the lift allowed workers to also inspect the condition of the asphalt shingles on the tower roofs as well as some lower areas. During the inspection process, 16 louvers were completely in need of being replaced, a fleur de lis in one corner had split and broke, and some tuckpointing was recommended. An inspection of the roofing shingles revealed no problems.

Workers began on the east tower replacing rotted wood, then prepping and re-painting all the louvers. The west tower proved to be more of a challenge when there was a discovery of an unusually large swarm of honey bees. Work had to cease until a group of bee experts from the Eastern Missouri Bee Keeping Association were called to carefully and humanely remove what was estimated to be over 50,000 bees, and re-locating the entire hive to a new home elsewhere. Overall, it took workers just over 20 days to complete this tower work which was finalized on July 26th. Western Waterproofing Company did the necessary tuck pointing and repair of the fleur de lis ornamental.

The last time the louvers had received maintenance was 25 years ago in 1999 when all the louvers were replaced with new wood. So, once again, this project is a reminder to us that certain areas of the Shrine needs timely attention and requires us to have sufficient funds set aside ahead-of-time. While there will always be the possibility of urgent and "unplanned needs", our goal is always to anticipate as much as possible in advance projects that will need attention.



Workers on the East tower using a 125 foot lift

## Organ Improvements

Maribeth McMahon, the Shrine's music director, urged the Board to get the Pfeiffer pipe organ back up to peak playing condition. At its November meeting, the Shrine's Board subsequently approved the spending of \$16,000 to have the Chris Soer Pipe Organ LLC refurbish the organ's manual keys on the keyboard by replacing bushing cloth and worn leather to each of the keys. This will require removal of the keyboard from the chassis and fixing the broken key desk. The price would also include the purchase and installation of a new zimmelstern for the historic 1890 Pfeiffer pipe organ, which is an addition that creates the sound of bells.

## Terry Davis Resigns from the Shrine Shoppe

Since 2012, Terry has been a dedicated and extremely reliable volunteer in our Shrine Shoppe. Said Kathleen Weltzin, Board member, "Terry has committed many years and hours of service to the Shrine" When Terry first began 12 years ago, there was a great need to organize and re-arrange the religious counter which, at the time, was just one 16 foot counter space and rear display. He headed up the effort to expand the space which now includes an additional 50 feet all the way down the north wall as well as the rear display behind the cases. Terry has resigned for medical reasons. He will be greatly missed and his departure leaves a big void in our hearts as well as with the Shrine Shoppe. On Dec. 29th after Mass, a warm and sincere thank you and send-off reception took place.



Terry Davis

## The Shrine's Giving Tree

Christmas was a time where the Shrine community contributed toward making a commitment to those in need. Kathleen Weltzin, a Shrine Board member, and her husband, Mike, have really become quite personally involved for the last three years with the Women's Night Out program which provides temporary shelter to women in need- helping them to get permanent housing and providing other support services.

A Giving Tree was set up in the rear of the Shrine throughout December where donations could be made to this program and to another program which was the Crisis Nursery, serving children who are given a short-term safe haven whose families are facing an emergency.

"All of the financial gifts received," said Kathleen, "allowed us to purchase much needed items for both programs. Thanks to all for making this possible." The holy spirit at work!



## Father Wunderlich's 50th Anniversary Celebration of his Ordination *a Joyful and a Memorable Occasion*

It is not often that a Catholic church's congregation can come together to share with their priest his 50 years of ordination. On August 4th, that's exactly what happened here at the Shrine as many gathered for Father Wunderlich's Mass followed by a truly wonderful reception and luncheon for well over 175 folks including a number of those from Washington, Missouri, Father Dale's hometown.

Maribeth McMahon, the Shrine's music director, arranged to have Father Dale's guests, the Carmelite nuns from St. Agnes Home, sing in the choir. Among other hymns, she chose two of Father Dale's favorite hymns—"Now Thank We All Our God" for the processional and "Holy God We Praise Thy Name" for the recessional.

Joe Finazzo, Board vice president, was the driving force and organizer of an absolutely enjoyable reception and luncheon after Mass with help from Kevin Finazzo and others. Kathleen Weltzin designed and sent out invitations and Denise Finazzo created some exquisite but simple table center pieces. Howard Matthews put together a booklet including photos of Father Dale through the years from early childhood. The four grandchildren of Kevin and Denise Finazzo and Joe and Donna Finazzo were very impressive as they assisted with food service and clearing of tables. Jim Blum, Board president, gave brief but to the point, remarks of how Father Dale has contributed to the Shrine through his "calmness, patience, kindness, and always gently guiding us."

A highlight of the banquet was one of Father's guests: his 1st grade teacher, Sister Janet Abbacchi of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. At 90 years of age, she could still re-call some memorable and sometimes humorous anecdotes about Father Dale when he was a first grader in her class at St. Francis Borgia parish in Washington, Missouri. All in all, it was a memorable and grand celebration. Congratulations to Father Wunderlich for his 50 years as a truly remarkable, holy priest and we thank the Lord that we have benefitted from 16 of those years...and still going.



*Sister Janet Abbacchi, Father Dale's  
1st grade teacher*



*Part of the 175 guests in attendance at  
the luncheon reception*



*Carmelite nuns part of Father's guests  
were also in the choir*

## Shrine's Multi-generational Weddings Create Lasting Memories

Shrine weddings have long been known as extraordinarily superb and memorable. But what also makes weddings held at the Shrine special are multi-generational weddings where the parents of the bride or groom were also married here some 30 years earlier or even the grandparents.

One such wedding was celebrated last Fall with the marriage of Abigail Witte and Kevin Buettner in which Abigail's parents, Tina and Jim Witte, were also married at the Shrine 33 years earlier. Not only that but all of Abigail's siblings were baptized here at the Shrine. Thus, the Shrine has become very special to her and her family.

Said Abigail, "it was the most perfect day as I walked down that long aisle—it was like a taste of heaven gazing down with all those statues and gorgeous glimmering gold on the altars. When my sister sang the Ave Maria that echoed throughout the Shrine, it was heavenly," she added. Kevin commented that knowing that Jesus was there with both of us, the Sacrament of Matrimony and Communion were incredibly powerful—it was overwhelmingly beautiful. "Knowing the Shrine was so important to Abigail's family made it special for me too", said Kevin. He added "we had not only many Catholic but also non-Catholic guests tell us it was the most magnificent church they had ever seen."

Thirty-three years earlier in 1990, when Abigail's parents were married at the Shrine, they re-called that it was in the early stages of restoration. However, they said that it did have new carpeting installed just before their wedding and that the altars looked as beautiful as they do today but also remembered that there was no air conditioning. Said Tina, Abigail's mother, "Jim was perspiring so much I remember handing him a folded tissue during the Mass." Jim commented that "it was so comfortable this time to have the Shrine air conditioned for our daughter's wedding"

They mentioned that their son, Christian, recently became engaged. He and his fiancé are also planning their wedding at the Shrine. Both Abigail's parents said, "what a blessing and joy it has been for our family and now extended family members to be a part of the Shrine and its rich history."

Another Shrine wedding took place last Sept. 28th between Hannah and Charlie Hente where Charlie's parents, Holly and Carl Hente were also married here 34 years earlier.

A wedding took place last October 26th between Morgan Utrecht and Stephan Powell. This represented the third generation marrying at the Shrine where the bride's parents, Jennifer and Peter Utrecht, were married here in 1994, and the bride's grandparents were also married some 30 years before that. The bride's father, Peter, remembered at their wedding scaffolding still up as the restoration was just finishing up.

The Shrine's multi-generational weddings certainly help these families to realize what is truly important in our lives. The restoration of the Shrine and the very fact that it is still here is an epic achievement worthy of inspiring generations of families to also keep their legacy going by having this most important celebration here which contributes toward binding generations of families together and providing joyous memories that encourages a path for future generations to follow.

If you have questions about Shrine weddings and/or making a visit to see the Shrine, please call our wedding office at 314 231-0869.



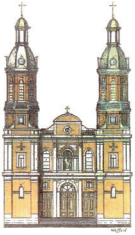
*Abigail Witte and Kevin  
Buettner - 2nd generation  
Shrine wedding*

## Fall Fund Raiser: *with humble gratitude*

Our Friends organization has completed 45 years of successfully rescuing, restoring, and maintaining this historic Shrine. Over the years, this success can be attributed to the financial support many of you contributed toward this effort for which we are most appreciative and humbled.

The fall fund raiser yielded a huge response--we have total gratitude to all of you who participated. Make no mistake about it--your continued contributions to our two yearly fund raisers does matter--when your participation when added together with literally hundreds of other donors, it immensely supports our efforts at maintaining this historic Shrine.

Even though we always name the raffle winners that were drawn on Dec. 1st, to all of you in the St. Louis region as well as those of you representing 32 states around the country, you are all winners and we abundantly thank each of you. The raffle winners pulled by Father Wunderlich, Shrine rector, were: 1st place: Mr. Claus, Fenton, MO; 2nd place: Robert Conrad, O'Fallon, MO; 3rd place: Tony Carlton, St. Louis, MO; and 4th place: Ms. Linda Ressel, St. Charles, MO. May God bless all of you for your prayers and financial support.



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 1220 North 11th Street  
 St. Louis, MO 63106-4614



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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Check if appropriate:**

My name is misspelled

My address is incorrect

I received more than one (1) copy

I no longer wish to receive the Newsletter

*Please clip the address panel and mail it to us noting your correction or request.*

**Mass Times**

Sundays: 11:00am

First Friday of each Month: 12:00pm (Noon)

Holy Days of Obligation:

See Website [www.shrineofstjoseph.org](http://www.shrineofstjoseph.org) for details

Veneration of St. Peter Claver Relic or St. Padre Pio Relic following Mass  
 Fr. Dale Wunderlich, Rector and Recipient  
 of the Aquinas Institute "Great Preacher" Award.

**Staying in touch with the Shrine:**

[www.shrineofstjoseph.org](http://www.shrineofstjoseph.org)



[facebook.com/shrineofstjoseph](https://facebook.com/shrineofstjoseph)



**YouTube** StJoseph Shrine

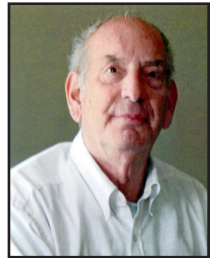
**Supporting the Shrine with Your Membership**



Sherry Chibnall

Restoration and conservation of the historic Shrine relies solely on private contributions. In 1980 membership was \$10 per person per year. Now, in the 21st century, we would like to encourage you to be a **St. Ignatius Companion** member at \$20 or more per person per year. One can still be a basic member. However, if you can help a little more, please consider the St. Ignatius Companion level member. Please check one of the boxes below & include a check in the proper amount.

**Air & Steam Club**



John Colao

Members of the Air & Steam Club have, for many years, helped to cover utility costs. Your donations have contributed greatly toward the Shrine's heating and AC bills. If you aren't currently a Member, please consider joining now. Your help is needed! There are monthly drawings for prizes totaling \$200. Tickets are \$12 each, and 1 ticket gives you 1 chance to win each month and there's no limit on the number of tickets you can purchase.

Simply complete the form below and mail it together with your check payable to:

"Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc."  
 1220 N. 11th Street, St. Louis, MO 63106-4614.

For more information, please contact **John Colao**, Chairperson at (314) 231-9407.

**Please Remember the Shrine in your Will or Trust.**

Application for Membership & **Renewal Form**  
 Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc.

- Basic membership \$10 per person per year   
 St. Ignatius Companion \$20 per person per year

Mr./Mrs./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Check \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check Number \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Cash \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc.  
 1220 N. 11th Street, St. Louis, MO 63106-4614

**Special Notice: Please be aware that the Shrine has not and does not give or sell names and addresses on our mailing list to any other groups or organizations.**

**Air and Steam Club**

Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc.  
 1220 N. 11th Street, St. Louis, MO 63106-4614

- 1st Prize \$100  
 2nd Prize \$50  
 3rd Prize \$50

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please enter my name. I do not wish to make a donation at this time.