

# ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

CLEVELAND, OHIO

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## Answering a Calling to the Catholic Faith and a Life of Stewardship *Meet Linda McCormick*

Since childhood, Mrs. Linda McCormick, parishioner and current Assistant Principal of St. Ignatius of Antioch Elementary School, has had a deep appreciation for the “smells and bells” of liturgy. This was first instilled in her as a young girl. Growing up in a devout Episcopal family, attending worship each Sunday was a central part of family life. Her mother was the choir director for their home church in Kentucky, and she encouraged all of her children to become active participants in the liturgy from an early age.

“We were all expected to partake in the liturgy in some form,” Mrs. McCormick says. “My sisters and I sang in the choir and taught Sunday school, while my brothers were altar servers. Church on Sunday was not optional.”

These early memories of church left a deep impression on Mrs. McCormick, planting the seed for her eventual conversion to Catholicism. Having gradually grown “disenchanted with where the Episcopal Church was headed,” she became increasingly attracted to the Catholic faith. This was further encouraged when she began teaching at a Catholic school in the early 90s.

“There was an elderly nun at my previous Catholic school who used to tell me on a daily basis that she was praying for me to ‘make the switch,’” Mrs. McCormick says.



*Linda and Richard McCormick*

## Answering a Calling to the Catholic Faith and a Life of Stewardship *continued from front cover*

“Her prayers have really made a difference and I’ve often wondered about her since.”

In 2001, Mrs. McCormick began teaching at our own parish school as a junior high instructor. Surrounded by the beauty of our Catholic faith, Mrs. McCormick began to fall in love with the richness of our liturgy and traditions. So, when she had the opportunity to become religion teacher for the school, she had that final nudge needed to fully convert.

“My faith is the center of my life and the life of our family, so when the opportunity was made available for me to teach religion, I jumped at the chance – that was what finally helped me make the switch,” Mrs. McCormick says. “As Fr. Troha has said, however, it is not religion, but rather that relationship with Jesus that is important. Being able to help the students understand that and to share my faith with them was a great blessing.”

Since her conversion in 2009, Mrs. McCormick has wholeheartedly entered into parish life, echoing the lessons she learned from her own mother as a child. She enjoys serving as both a lector and greeter during liturgies, participating in the yearly stewardship retreat, and serving the parish school in whatever ways she can. She and her husband, Richard, are also deeply committed to tithing, whether to St. Ignatius of Antioch or to the Advent Episcopal Church in Westlake, where her husband continues to worship and serve.

“For us, tithing is not optional,” Mrs. McCormick says. “God has been very faithful and very generous. However, He is a ‘just in time’ God, and I firmly believe that is so we have to trust in Him and not ourselves. We have received so many answers and ways out of difficult situations over



*Mrs. Linda McCormick with her daughter, Erin,  
and two granddaughters*

the years that, humanly speaking, we didn’t think we could ever get through. Our peace and conviction is that God is at work – He has never let us down.”

Through her involvement within the Church and her personal prayer life, Mrs. McCormick has been blessed to watch her faith continuously “grow and evolve.” For her, faith is the “rock on which everything else is built” and it remains a wellspring of joy and peace. Yet, this is only truly possible through that relationship with Christ and – like her mother taught her so many years ago – it begins at the liturgy with that active participation.

“People who think being a Christian means they are going to go to church on Sunday are only getting a little, tiny piece of the pie,” Mrs. McCormick says. “I used to tell the kids I could go and sit in a garage, but does that make me a car? The same thing is true about being a Christian. For me, you’ve got to have that day-to-day connection to God.”

*“People who think being a Christian means they are going to go to church on Sunday are only getting a little, tiny piece of the pie. I used to tell the kids I could go and sit in a garage, but does that make me a car? The same thing is true about being a Christian. For me, you’ve got to have that day-to-day connection to God.”*

*– Mrs. Linda McCormick*

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

# A New Year, New Challenges, New Opportunities

Dear Parishioners,

**I**t is a new year, and it is my prayer for all of you – and for me, as well – that we can take new steps on our faith journeys, and seek new ways to live out discipleship and stewardship.

Pope Francis once commented on his perspective of our modern approach to life. He said, “Certainly, possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want more, never satisfied. I have learned that the most important thing is to put on Christ in your life, place your trust in Him, and you will never be disappointed.”

The pope has been called “the world’s parish priest.” As we pray for one another in this New Year, may we all ask the Lord to help us appreciate Pope Francis’ approach to life, his simple way of seeing things, and his very basic way of appreciating things. I would hope that we see this year as a time for opportunity, a time to deepen our relationship to Christ, and for that matter to one another.

If we really wish to change our lives and the lives of others, there are two easy ways to do it. We are blessed with many opportunities in this parish to pray, but as much as it is important for us to take advantage of those, we

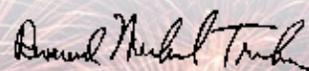


also need to develop a strong personal prayer life. Recall the young Samuel, who was not quite sure what to do with his life, or what direction to go. When he finally settled on that one important prayer, “Speak, Lord, for I am listening,” Samuel gave us the hint as to what we need to do. Prayer is a two-way street, and part of that is taking the time to listen to God.

The second important way is to exude joy. Christ certainly called us to do that. Pope Francis has had much to say about joy, as well. The Holy Father says, “Joy cannot be held at heel; it must be let go. Joy is a pilgrim virtue. It is a gift that walks – walks on the path of life, that walks with Jesus... proclaiming joy, lengthens and widens that path.” We must seek that joy and then we need to share it. That is truly our call. Joy translates quite easily into “love your neighbor.”

Yes, there may be challenges ahead in 2017, but we must focus on the opportunities, and then exert the effort to benefit from those opportunities. Happy New Year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Michael Troha

# Alpha Offers Opportunity for Better Knowledge



*The Alpha team looks forward to sharing this new ministry with other parishioners at St. Ignatius of Antioch. (Back row, from left) Alex Clark, Ed Kostyo, Mike Lauer, and Steve Arnold; (front row, from left) Joe Robinson, Jeann Strok, Jane Thill, and Brook Benedict (Not pictured, Greg Coloian)*

Jane Thill points out that she had followed the path of so many others – trying to build a life around a career, making money, enjoying “things,” and having fun. But she realized that all was not quite right.

“You keep thinking, you’re going to get ‘the next thing,’ but it’s never satisfying,” Jane says. “I had an emptiness – a hole – and it wasn’t because I wasn’t doing things or learning things or taking care of myself or keeping up. That is all nice, but it’s empty.”

Despite having grown up Catholic, Jane didn’t really begin developing her relationship with God until several years ago. After experiencing a series of tragedies, she was at rock bottom, and knew there was something missing in her life.

For Jane, that missing piece was a real, deep relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. She

reached out to God in a moment of desperation and it changed everything.

But Jane hopes that others won’t have to go through the devastation she experienced in order to seek a more meaningful relationship with God.

With this in mind, Jane and others – along with Diocesan seminarians – welcome parishioners and non-parishioners alike to experience Alpha. Alpha is an international program that began with a mission to introduce people to the person of Jesus Christ and give them an opportunity to develop a deeper relationship with Him.

The 10-week Alpha program explores topics such as “Who is Jesus?” “What is the meaning of life?” and “How do I pray?” Dinner is provided each week, and participants are encouraged to encounter Jesus in a relaxed setting

# Opportunity for All to Know Jesus

that includes watching a brief recorded presentation and a small-group discussion.

“I wanted to figure out a way to share Jesus, to share the joy of our Catholic religion and having a relationship with Jesus Christ,” says Jane, who, after going through Alpha at another parish, decided to help bring it to St. Ignatius.

“I want people to meet Jesus and see who He really is and build a closer relationship with Him,” adds Ed Kostyo, another member of the team.

Alpha is designed for people in all different stages of their journey of faith, from young people to older people, from those who come to Mass every Sunday, to those with no faith at all.

“I’ve learned so much more about Jesus,” Ed says. “Everybody has room to learn more about Jesus, get closer to Him and develop a closer relationship with Him.”

Not only did Ed find that going to Alpha helped them grow closer to Jesus, but it also helped him feel more connected to others in the body of Christ.

“I keep learning new things about my faith,” Ed says. “There were things that I wasn’t familiar with, and I also met so many nice people and people were so honest. You meet people that have the same questions that you do.”

Jane encourages parishioners to consider coming to Alpha, regardless of where they are in their faith.

“If you’re content with where you’re at, that’s great – but maybe there could be more?” she says. “Just come with an open attitude – it’s a meal, a conversation. Just check out the first one and see if you want to come back.”

At the end of the day, you can have everything in the world, but it won’t make a difference without a real, meaningful relationship with Jesus.

“I hope people come away with a better understanding of Jesus and all he can do in your life,” Ed says. “It’s given

me a completely different perspective on life. I feel God has a purpose for me, and I have to fulfill that purpose so I can be the best person I can be.”

“Now I have a peace with who I am,” Jane says. “I still struggle with all the temporal things, but I don’t struggle as much. I feel so much joy in my life. I’m still human, but I have a lot more joy in my everyday life.”

Maybe Alpha could be the start of something new for you!

*For more information on Alpha, or to register for the session beginning Tuesday, Jan. 24 (see below), please call the parish office at 216-251-0300 or email [alpha.sioa@gmail.com](mailto:alpha.sioa@gmail.com). Alpha will begin Tuesday, Jan. 24, from 6-8 p.m. Weekly sessions will be held in the St. Ignatius School cafeteria. Dinner is provided each week. There is no cost to attend these sessions.*

*“I hope people come away with a better understanding of Jesus and all he can do in your life. It’s given me a completely different perspective on life. I feel God has a purpose for me, and I have to fulfill that purpose so I can be the best person I can be.” – Ed Kostyo*

## The Patron of Catholic Schools in America *St. Elizabeth Ann Seton*

As the first American-born canonized saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton's entrance into history was guided by Divine Providence. Born on Aug. 28, 1774, just months after the Boston Tea Party, Elizabeth's childhood witnessed pivotal events in the formation of our country – the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Revolution. At the time of the foundation of the new Republic, in a society predominately hostile toward Catholicism, a flower blossomed that would forever change the shape of education in the United States.

Elizabeth Seton was born into a wealthy Protestant family in New York City. Her life, although materially blessed, was not without suffering. Elizabeth's biological mother died when she was only 3, and her younger sister, Catherine Josephine, died at the age of 2. A spark of faith, however, was visible even in her early childhood. When questioned about her sadness concerning her sister's death, Elizabeth simply responded, "Kitty is gone up to heaven. I wish I could go there too."

Elizabeth grew into a beautiful woman, courted lavishly by handsome young men from prominent New York families. At the age of 19, she met a charming New York financier, William Seton, and the couple was wed in 1794. They remained in high society until her father-in-law's passing, which left them to care for William's seven younger siblings, along with three children of their own. Consequently, the Seton finances crashed.

The couple traveled to Italy – it was here that William's health failed him, and he died in December 1803. Providentially, Elizabeth was left in the company of a strong Catholic family where she witnessed the practice of the faith. In a letter to her sister, Elizabeth wrote, "My sister dear, how happy would we be, if we believed what

these dear souls believe, that they possess God in the Sacrament, and that He remains in their churches..."

After an eight-month stay, Elizabeth returned to America, and she began to investigate Catholicism more deeply. She was besought by Protestant friends who hoped to dissuade her. At this time, Elizabeth prayed repeatedly, "If I am right, Thy grace impart, still in the right to stay. If I am wrong, oh teach my heart to find the better way."

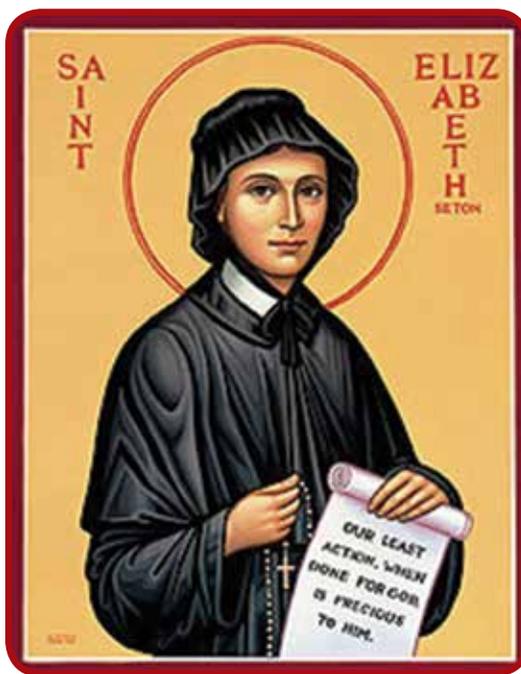
In 1805, after much interior struggle, Elizabeth became Catholic. Abandoned entirely by her family and friends, she resolved her financial difficulties through teaching.

In 1807, Elizabeth was invited to establish a Catholic school for girls in Baltimore. The task was daunting, and Elizabeth labored intensely, explaining how "from half past five in the morning until nine at night, every moment is full – no space even to be troubled." After winters spent in continual hardship and sacrifice, the school flourished and, within years, Mother Seton planted the seed from which

sprang the parochial school system – along with hospitals and orphanages.

Before her death in January 1821, she was the active mother of five – although two of her daughters died young – and the spiritual mother of a full-fledged religious congregation known as the Sisters of Charity. She was canonized in 1975, and her feast day is celebrated on Jan. 4.

Thanks to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Catholic parochial school system remains vibrant and active. And as we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we are thankful for the sacrifice of this loving wife, devoted mother, foundress, and all-American saint.



*“An Opportunity to Celebrate the Gift of Our Catholic School”*

## Catholic Schools Week at St. Ignatius of Antioch School

National Catholic Schools Week is the annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States. This year, it takes place from Jan. 29 to Feb. 4. The theme for the National Catholic Schools Week 2017 is “Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service.” The theme encompasses several concepts that are at the heart of a Catholic education. First, schools are communities – small families in their own right, but also members of the larger community of home, church, city, and nation. Faith, knowledge and service are three measures by which any Catholic school can and should be judged.

Catholic schools offer academic excellence and faith-filled education for students nationwide. And while some Catholic schools face the challenges of declining enrollments and school closures, the good news is that there is a strong demand and enthusiasm for Catholic

schools. Thirty-two percent of Catholic schools have waiting lists for admission and new schools are opening across the country.

Miss Margaret Ricksecker, in her 11th year as Principal, recognizes the importance of a Catholic School and Catholic Schools Week as well.

“Catholic Schools Week offers us an opportunity to celebrate the gift of our Catholic school,” she says. “It also presents us with ways we can thank those who make our school possible – our parents, our faculty and staff, the people of our parish community, our clergy, and especially our students.”

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education at the Vatican has this to say about Catholic Schools: “The Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith. Remembering that ‘the simultaneous development of a person’s psychological and moral



consciousness is demanded by Christ almost as a pre-condition for the reception of the befitting divine gifts of truth and grace,’ the Church fulfills her obligation to foster in her

*continued on back cover*

*“In addition to the general theme which has been stated, we will also keep in mind that our school theme for this year is ‘Take the Word of God with You.’ It is all about discipleship and being a disciple of Jesus as we are all called. During Catholic Schools Week, we will make an effort to celebrate and to thank all the people whom we should show our gratitude to – also, we will open our hearts and our school to our faith community.” – Miss Margaret Ricksecker, Principal*

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## Mass Schedule

Saturday, 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

## Catholic Schools Week *continued from page 7*

children a full awareness of their rebirth to a new life. It is precisely in the Gospel of Christ, taking root in the minds and lives of the faithful, that the Catholic school finds its definition as it comes to terms with the cultural conditions of the times.”

The specific details of the plans for Catholic Schools Week are still being developed, but Miss Ricksecker offers a preview of what our school community can look forward to as part of this year’s celebration.

“In addition to the general theme which has been stated, we will also keep in mind that our school theme for this year is ‘Take the Word of God with You,’” she says. “It is all about discipleship and being a disciple of Jesus as we are all called. During Catholic Schools Week, we will make

an effort to celebrate and to thank all the people whom we should show our gratitude to – also, we will open our hearts and our school to our faith community.”

Miss Ricksecker suggests keeping an eye on the bulletin for a listing of specific activities during Catholic Schools Week.

“We tend to devote specific days to certain parts of our community including our local community, our parish, our students, our nation, vocations, faculty and staff, volunteers, and our parents and families,” she says. “We plan to have some fun, as well. Our school is a great blessing, which has been a part of this faith community for well more than 100 years. We look forward to commemorating that, especially during Catholic Schools Week.”

*If you would like more information about St. Ignatius of Antioch School,  
please call 216-671-0535.*