

OUR STORIES 2

OUR FRIEND SALLIE

In the words of Sallie P. Coaston (from "Tracing Your Catholic Roots" from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 2008)

I was baptized at Friendship Baptist Church in Crawfordsville, Georgia. I never will forget how my childhood friend Jessie Jack and I decided that if I would say that I was saved and wanted to be baptized, he would too. Well, that is exactly what happened. We planned it. We sat on the mourner's bench and after the preacher's sermon he opened the doors of the church. It was then that I proclaimed that I had the Holy Spirit and was ready to be baptized. So did Jessie Jack. We were around 9 or 10 years old when the preacher took us outside in long white robes to baptize us in a pool. I was scared to death. I thought I was going to drown.

My father had his own farm before the 1920s. The KKK torched it. It burned our house down to the ground and destroyed the farm. Nobody was arrested, but it didn't catch fire on its own. It was awful! We were homeless. I remember my mother telling us all "Hate grows like a tree. It will take root and grow branches if you keep it in your heart."

That's all I have to say about that.

I attended a one-room schoolhouse, and there were no whites to be found. The standards in the Colored Schools were terribly low. If you finished the 11th grade you were qualified to teach. The school board (I guess) was not interested in Colored folks learning. They'd give us some old raggedy books and head on back to their side of the tracks.

When I finished the 11th grade in Crawfordsville, I went to live with my aunt in Atlanta so that I could attend Washington High School and earn a real diploma.

My aunt had a rule: "Everybody in my house goes to church," she would say. Even in my hometown, I didn't like the Baptist church. I didn't like all of that hollering and shouting. I had to go even if I didn't want to – to somebody's church. So, I visited different churches before settling on a Methodist Church.

After high school I went to Reed's Business School in Atlanta. It was a two-year Secretarial School. I left there after 1-1/2 years. I had the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C., to work in the Pentagon. All I had to do was pass the test, which I did.

Back then, everything was segregated, including the train that I was to take to Washington. The porters were black. When the porter spotted me, he instructed me to go to the back of the train to the "Colored Section." Well, I showed him my government issued orders. I never will forget how he smiled at me proudly and said, "Come on then, get on in here!"

I worked part-time in the Pentagon in Munitions Building #2. The Pentagon was huge. I got lost often.

I got my first taste of the Catholic faith when I went to church with one of my co-workers. I was interested, but only observed.

I met an Army man that fought in WWII. We married at the Justice of the Peace in Baltimore, Maryland.

While on the train on our way back to Washington from getting married, some white folks threw a brick through the window. Luckily the porters knew that something like that might happen and didn't seat any black folks by the windows.

After my husband was discharged from the Army, he brought me to Cincinnati. We have three children.

Since I love the Lord and have always had a need to worship, I thought that I would give the Baptist church one more try. Well, the preacher said that he would not preach until the congregation had put enough money in the collection. I thought, "That's the end of that!"

I had noticed a sign at St. Joseph in the West End that said they had information classes in regard to Catholicism. I knocked on the door and told the priest, Father Marinella, that I was interested in the classes. He welcomed me, scheduled me for Catechism classes, and I have been Catholic since. I was finally home.

Once I finished Catechism classes and was baptized, we move to Madisonville. Segregation was STILL in effect, and there were no black families at St. Anthony. The parish would provide black folks with bus fare to a black church, Mother of God in Walnut Hills.

The priest at St. Joseph gave me a letter of introduction to give to the priest at St. Anthony stating that he did not want me to be sent to Mother of God. After the priest read the letter, he told me that I could enroll my son in the school. We were one of two black families at St. Anthony. Nobody wanted to socialize with us, but it didn't bother me. I was raised in segregation. I would go to church and go home. I have always known that God would fix the wrongs that black folks went through, so I put it in his hands and went about my business.

Since I was converted, I have grown closer to where I want to go – to be in communion with my Lord and Savior. Faith is something you grow into. When I was baptized in the Baptist church, I did it because the preacher would stop glaring at me on the "mourning bench." My friend did it because I did it . . . I often think about that. I chose the Catholic Church and I like going to Mass. The main thing is the Eucharistic offering. What sustains me through good times and bad times is the knowledge that God will never abandon me. He never has.

I'm not leaving my church until they wheel me out.

SALLIE COASTON RETIRES

by Chris Klein (from the San Antonian Summer 2002)

It was 1990 when Father George Jacquemin began his search. He needed a parishioner with plenty of energy and compassion to serve as the Coordinator of Evangelization and Bereavement Ministries. Sallie Coaston had recently retired from her job as a Certified Nurses Assistant. She had no intentions of taking on a new job. But Father George had different intentions. As Sallie remembers it, "He kept bugging me and bugging me. Taking the job was the only way I could get him to stop!"

Because evangelization was fairly new to the Catholic Church at the time, Sallie started from scratch. By attending workshops, and with the help of others, Sallie eventually made evangelization a regular part of St. Anthony's mission. For the last twelve years her work has brought the gospel to shut-ins, the sick, the needy, to current parishioners, and to those still forming their faith.

Today Sallie is ready to retire. But don't expect to find this feisty lady (she claims her age is "nobody's business") at home in a rocking chair. Instead she wants to "volunteer my time helping others somehow." Anyone would agree – she's an expert at this.

A member of St. Anthony since 1952, Sallie has three children. Daughter Audrey Coaston-Shelton and son Byron are both members of St Anthony, as are Byron's wife Jody and their daughters Susannah and Jane. Sallie's son Earl lives in Houston.

LIVING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

by John Bange c. 2008

Jack Gilligan is a cradle Catholic. One of four children, he went to Summit, and St. Xavier High School where he was shaped by the Jesuit traditions. At the University of Notre Dame, he was deeply influenced by his literature studies, especially the European authors who frequently included their religious beliefs in their writings. Jack's early life was filled with the many riches of the Catholic tradition.

War was approaching while Jack was at Notre Dame. He was having thoughts about joining the Jesuit order, but with the attack of Pearl Harbor, he decided instead to join the Navy. Jack was in his junior year. The Navy allowed him a delayed entry so he could complete college, which he did on December 20, 1942. The Navy ordered him to report five days later.

Going into the Navy was a real shock for Jack. They taught violence (self-defense) and weapons. This was something he had never experienced. And the racial disparity was also a shock. In Cincinnati there was racism, but it was more subtle, and people were at least polite. In the Navy, black sailors completed basic training and they were "handed an apron" as Jack says, assigned to be cooks, attendants and stewards. Those are important jobs, but why only those jobs, wondered Jack.

Jack was assigned to a destroyer, the USS Emmons, as a gunnery officer. He quickly found out that black sailors were assigned the worst jobs for general quarters (their battle stations). The munitions (shells, etc.) were stored below decks, way down in the hold of the ship. There were some mechanized devices that could elevate the shells up to the guns during battle, but often the sailors formed a human chain, quickly passing the shells up one by one. If the ship was hit with a torpedo and began sinking, or if there was fire and explosions down below, the sailors at the bottom were the least likely to survive. And that's where all of the black sailors were assigned! These were standard, unwritten rules in the Navy. The officer that made the assignments on the Emmons changed assignments and Jack was assigned that duty. He decided to shake things up a bit. He moved some of the black sailors to other assignments. He put some of the white sailors in the lower areas. They were furious! The black sailors were a bit confused, but appreciated what Jack had done. His assignments stood. This was the beginning of Jack working for racial equality throughout his life.

During the war, censors read all outgoing mail to make sure the sailors did not share any information that would be helpful to the enemy should the mail fall into the wrong hands. Jack was one of the censors. He was amazed at the things the black sailors wrote about the racial injustices they endured in the military. He remembers that one of the men was a well-educated, doctoral candidate from Chicago, yet was destined to be a cook.

These events helped shape Jack's life. He came out of the Navy with an entirely different outlook. He went to UC and received a Masters Degree. Because there were so many men and women going to college on the GI Bill after the war, it was easy for Jack to become a teacher. He taught English at Xavier University. And again at XU, he saw racial injustices. There were unwritten rules limiting the admission of black students, those who either had certain high grades or had connections. The faculty, both Jesuits and lay, discussed these issues. During that era, the bishops issued a letter stating that segregation within the Catholic Church and its institutions was wrong. This letter gave their beliefs much credence.

During the 1950's, as Jack became more involved in politics, he could see some positive changes in Cincinnati. Theodore Berry was elected to City Council in 1949 and was eventually the first African American mayor in 1972. Jack and Rev. Clarence Rivers and others formed an informal group. They would go from parish to parish, meeting with sodalities and men's clubs (this was before parish councils existed) and would ask them pointed questions about why there were black children in their area yet none attended their school, and so forth. There were some heated discussions and some red-faced parishioners, but Father Rivers' calming nature brought about order and more discussion. Gradually they opened people's eyes.

All of his learnings were a part of Jack's public service as Cincinnati City Council member, Ohio State Representative in Congress, Governor of Ohio and Administrator of USAID (United States Agency for International Development) in Washington D.C. He has such a strong love of education, it is no wonder that he answered the call to serve as a member of the CPS Board of Education (1999 to 2007) on behalf of improving the quality of our schools for ALL children.

Jack has a definite feeling of elation with the recent election of Barack Obama. He firmly believes Senator Obama is right for the job. They have met several times and Jack is impressed. They share many ideals. And what a wonderful example to people of all colors that all things are possible.

Throughout his 87 years, Jack's faith has remained unwavering and provided a guiding force in his various careers. Sometimes his faith was maybe not a conscious thing, but it was there, at work in the background. It is no surprise that St. Anthony is a perfect faith home for him, as we represent many of the values and traditions he holds dear.

BESSIE DRANE

In the words of Bessie Drane (from "Tracing Your Catholic Roots" from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 2008)

The only way for me to live my life is to believe and trust in God. I take my burdens to the altar and leave them there.

My family was a part of the Great Migration from the south; we came from Camden, Alabama. Once we settled, my uncle took me to a Baptist church, and it scared me. My cousin and I were happy to be recruited by the Sisters at Holy Trinity Church and School in the West End.

Jim Crowe was a way of life back then and it was hurtful. I got through it with prayer. I've always felt that if I went to God, all things were possible. Consequently, when I came up against racism and unfairness I would let them know who I am and whose I am . . . it worked.

I was hired as an elevator operator and wore a uniform at Cincinnati Bell back when they first started hiring blacks. One day, the company president was on the elevator and the passengers were intimidated into silence. In front of everybody on the elevator, he asked me, "Why is your hair like that?" I didn't react, but silently prayed. After everyone was off of that elevator, I marched to the president's office and politely told him, "I know what to wear and how to wear it! If you have a problem with how somebody looks, it ought to be with some of your inappropriately dressed office workers!" Oh, he was a big deal, but I was just as big as he was. I won his respect and he eventually hired my son, a Boston College graduate, as a manager at my request.

I have scuffled in my life, but I say, "Get out of my way devil! Get out of my way!"

The hardest thing that has happened in my life was that the Lord took my son in 1991. He was a big part of my husband's and my life. He was loyal and wanted to take care of . . . I still miss him dearly. I am blessed to have his two sons and his wife in my life.

I had been a member of St. Mark in Evanston, but when I visited St. Anthony and the choir sang "Somebody's Knocking On My Door," I knew then that I was home.

I have built my life around my church and my family. I enjoy working in the church and established with my church family an annual "Taste of African-American Food." It has grown. People attend from all over Cincinnati, and we raise a nice piece of money for the church.

I pray that I have done some good in this world.

FRONT PORCH MINISTRY

by Dave Scharfenberger (from the San Antonian Summer 2008)

Bill Otto goes out on his front porch every morning around 5:30 or 6:00 a.m. and stays there most of the day. He waves to cars passing his house on Roe Street in Madisonville. Roe has lots of traffic, so Bill gets to wave to lots of people.

"As long as they look at me, I wave to them," Bill said. "They don't always wave back the first time, but the next time they will," he said, his eyes twinkling.

Bill's smile and sense of humor are well known in the community and at St. Anthony's. Sitting on the front porch and waving is something he picked up from his parents. "My father always sat on the front porch. I started sitting there next to him. After he died, I just kept up his tradition. I love people, a quality that I got from my mother. Mother's heart went out to everyone."

Occasionally someone will not only wave back but will stop and share their story. Bill told me of an Indian Hill woman who joined him on the porch. "Who the heck are you, waving at me?" she asked. Bill answered, "Well, who the heck are you?" The woman eventually poured out her life story, telling him about the fire that destroyed her house and how her dog had saved her life. "I've had several people tell me that God put me on this porch for a reason," explained Bill.

Bill is well known at the 8:30 Mass. Though he no longer serves as Liturgical Ministry Coordinator, he is always in the back of church greeting people as they enter with a smile and usually a joke.

Bill first joined the parish in 1983. "I walked into St. Anthony's and sat in the back where I sit today. As soon as I came in, I felt I had a family. I felt, "Oh my God, I've come home." Bill is still at home here. "My life has been wonderful. I can't think of anyone who is an enemy. There are things done for me that I don't deserve."

Bill Otto is one of our blessings at St. Anthony. If you get an opportunity, talk to him after church. Better yet, stop by Bill's house and sit a while on his porch.

TRUE ST. ANTHONY SPIRIT – RANDY AND ALBERT

combined from writings as noted

by Elaine Dillhunt (from the San Antonian Winter/Spring 2000)

Almost every Sunday morning **Randy Bennett** and **Albert Purcell** arrive at St. Anthony at 7:30 a.m. and begin removing the discarded pop cans, beer bottles, broken glass, paper bags and boxes that litter the streets, parking lots and walkways around the church.

Randy and Albert are ushers at the 8:30 a.m. Liturgy. Their job description doesn't include cleaning up the trash, but they do it as part of their service to the parishioners. They feel that our Sunday worship could be marred by our having to walk through and around the litter in order to get to the church and they are more than happy to clean it up. These two retirees have been friends ever since Randy volunteered to be Albert's RCIA sponsor in 1992 when Albert and his wife, Catherine, joined the Catholic Church and St. Anthony Parish.

Randy is a convert to Catholicism himself. When his wife, a member of St. Anthony Parish, was dying, he was so impressed with the care and attention she received from members of the parish that in 1985 he decided to join.

Both men had previously belonged to Presbyterian churches, but interestingly, Albert discovered in 1992 that he had been baptized Catholic as an infant. "I was Catholic all my life but I didn't know it," he laughs. Albert credits parishioner Bill Otto with finding the baptismal certificate in the Archdiocesan archives indicating he had been baptized "Albertus" on July 29, 1923. Raised by his grandmother and an aunt, no one ever told him about his baptism in the Catholic Church.

A hurtful experience at a Presbyterian church and an invitation from Bill Otto are what brought Albert and Catherine to St. Anthony. And he has been serving the community ever since. Albert also cuts the grass at the parish cemetery on occasion.

Randy also wears more than one service hat at St. Anthony. He also serves as Sacristan Coordinator for inside cleaning ("they let me be the Coordinator" is the way he sees it!) and he also helps with grass cutting as a sub during the summer.

Much of the service Randy and Albert provide is "behind the scenes." It is service that is very important to the prayer life of the community, but that many of us take for granted. So what's in it for them? Both agree that the smiles of parishioners in response to their Sunday morning greetings are all the reward they need.

by Dave Scharffenberger

Randy Bennett brought out measuring cups, bowls, baking sheets and other utensils that he uses to bake bread. They were wrapped up in a plastic bag marked 'St. Anthony's.' He spoke with pride of his special baking utensils and how he reserves them only for the bread he bakes for St. Anthony. "Father Len asked me to bake the bread for communion for Christmas and Easter," said Randy. "He heard that I was a baker. Since he asked, I couldn't say no."

Randy does a lot around St. Anthony. In the past he has cut the grass and helped at dinners at the church and at other special events. "I try to do what I can," he told me. "Bill Otto and I used to cut the grass at the local cemetery." He attends the 8:30 mass and has attended St. Anthony since the late 1970's.

Originally from Jamaica, Randy Bennett married his wife in 1972. He was a Presbyterian and his wife was Catholic and a member of St. Anthony. When she had heart surgery in 1975, Father Shappelle came to visit. "He was the only one (from a church) who came to visit and showed that he cared," said Bennett. "I decided that since the people from St. Anthony showed their concern, I needed to go to that church even though I wasn't Catholic. I received spiritual support from St. Anthony. You can't beat that."

Randy started attending mass with his wife and helped out at different programs and events. "I attended mass every Sunday with her even though I couldn't take communion," he said. "After my wife died in 1982, I continued to go there." Bennett later was baptized by Father George (Jacquemin). "I was among the first to be baptized by Father George," he said with a smile.

When asked about why he comes to St. Anthony, Randy said, "You feel more welcome there. People share with each other and they care about each other."

Every Sunday, Randy picks up Bill Otto and they arrive at church early. They make sure to help clean up around the church before people arrive. As he says, "You have to clean up first, before you get the blessing."

He and Bill are always standing in the back of church with smiles greeting people as they enter. "I like to joke around with people," said Bennett. "I try to have a smiling face for everyone. It's always better to smile."

by John Bange (c. 1999)

Albert Purcell enlisted in the Navy in February 1941. After Basic Training at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, Albert was assigned to the Heavy Cruiser USS Northampton. He was on board when it was hit by torpedoes and sunk near Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. He was in the water for 2-1/2 hours and feels fortunate to have survived – 450 men did not. He was later in the first landing on Iwo Jima. He was discharged in December 1946.

HOME SWEET HOME
by John Bange c. 2008

In the 1960's, the times they were 'a changin'. Vietnam. Women's Lib. Civil Rights. Peace. Sit-ins. Flower Power. Many young people were not happy with the status quo and wanted to make the world a better place. In the late 1960's, dynamic leaders such as Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King inspired people to work with and for the disadvantaged and the oppressed. One of those was a young college student named **Dave Scharfenberger**.

Dave was a freshman in the traditional field of business and accounting. But he was more interested in bringing about social change and becoming politically active. He transferred to political science. He did volunteer work. He worked on political campaigns. Dave's first job in social services was at Catholic Charities, an outreach organization in Northside, working with Sister of Charity Barbara Busch. In 1978 they co-founded WIN, Working In Neighborhoods. They continue working together these 30 years later.

In his youth, Dave says they may not have called it social justice, but in his home there was certainly a sense of giving back. His parents were wonderful examples, doing much work in their communities and through their jobs, helping those who needed help and hope.

Dave wanted to give others a way to have a voice and make a difference. He saw politics more about electing one person, so Dave gravitated towards community organizing, where several people could unite with a common voice. He became interested in the work he continues today, helping people gain the skills they need to organize in their communities, to speak in unison, to lead a grass roots effort, to host events. By seeing the results of their efforts, they can see that they are as important as any other leader, be it a mayor or council member, a bank or corporation president. Dave has worked with people on issues including foreclosures, predatory payday lending, utilities, weatherization programs and the environment including the reclamation of brown fields in poor neighborhoods.

By listening to the plight of others Dave has learned how unjustly some are treated. Many of those he works with feel powerless, powerless against the bank or the city or the government. Dave gets much satisfaction from helping them attain knowledge and the skills to work through the issues and red tape. He enjoys seeing a person or group feel empowered and seeing that they have a voice.

Dave enjoys going to work even when the days are long with many meetings. He gets satisfaction from being in solidarity with people, learning about the uniqueness and sacredness of each person, seeing the importance of family and community. Developing the opportunity for someone to own a home is a wonderful feeling for Dave, seeing the smiles and excitement on the faces of the homeowner and family members. For some, perhaps it is the first time in a family for several generations where someone has purchased a home vs. renting. Sometimes WIN schedules the closing in the home, with the immediate and extended family and neighbors gathering around a table. The sellers, bankers and community members gather and are all part of the event. There is

a real sense of a celebration within the community. This is something EVERYONE can feel good about.

Dave says that how his faith fits into his work is mostly a subconscious thing. But you can tell it is there. Ask Dave sometime about his work and you too will hear how his faith is at work.

WHAT ST. ANTHONY MEANS TO ME

by Dave Scharfenberger

I first came to St. Anthony about 11 years ago to visit. I had known Father George Jacquemin when he was pastor at St. Bernard's/Mother of Christ parishes so I decided to visit him and the parish where he was now pastor. I was impressed with the way I was welcomed by others, the music (and the fact that people sang with the choir) and the general spirit of the church.

I came back periodically to visit and eventually decided to become a member of the parish. I was drawn by the liturgies – the homilies, music, and participation and friendliness of the people. I especially remember the services at special occasions – the Easter Vigil, Christmas, and the celebration we had after the last renovation to the church several years ago. The spirit of the church lifted me and others as we prayed, listened to the Word, and raised our voices in song.

Later I got involved as a member of the Peace and Justice Committee and I currently serve as a member of Parish Council. I continue to enjoy the liturgies, but what keeps me here is not the music or the homilies but the people. As I have gotten more involved in the parish, I have come to realize and appreciate the diversity of our parish and the generosity of our members, both in money and in the time they contribute.

Last weekend at the 11:30 Mass, I went up front of the church with other Parish Council members to publicly commit ourselves to serving the parish and to receive a blessing. I must say that I felt humbled and honored as I felt the support and the prayers from the rest of the congregation.

The pastor, music and liturgies might have brought me to St. Anthony, but the people are a major reason why I am still here.

FINDING EUCHARIST

by Diana Campbell (from the San Antonian Fall 2005)

Seven years ago my husband of 23 years died suddenly. While the paramedics were still at our house, my mother happened to call. I told her Joe had died, and she immediately hung up the phone and set about the wrenching task of informing my siblings. When she told my sister, Mary Lynn Woebkenberg – whom most of you know – Mary Lynn said, without hesitation, “We’re on our way.” The “we” referred to her and her roommate Kathy McConkey – whom you also know.

I lived in Bloomington, Indiana at the time, so they were facing a three-hour drive beginning at about 9:00 p.m. (and this from Mary Lynn who typically finds it difficult to remain awake much after 9:00!) They stayed with me until the arrangements were made to transport Joe’s body to Cincinnati, welcomed me to stay at their home, helped me through the difficult process of making the funeral arrangements, and hosted out-of-town visitors after the visitation and the funeral. They did all of this without being asked, and with total, selfless generosity. This is Eucharist.

In the days and weeks that followed, they continued to support me with unparalleled generosity. They even took time off from work to help me move from Bloomington back to Cincinnati. And it was they who led me to St. Anthony’s and this amazing community where Eucharist is so evident.

I hope that at times I truly contribute to being Eucharist in someone’s life. I hope that I remind others of the love of Christ that makes us one body.

Mary Lynn and Kathy did this for me – and for that I am forever grateful.

FINDING A NEW PARISH HOME

by Sarah Kelly July 2009

Hi, my name is Sarah Kelly. I’m a new parishioner at St. Anthony’s as of December 2008. I’m a native Cincinnati and was born and raised a Catholic.

After being in St. Louis for college, I knew I wanted to find a church where I felt like I belonged. Upon moving back home, I started going to church with my parents, but it just didn’t feel right to me. I realized I was only going to church because that’s what my parents wanted me to do and because that’s what I had done on Sunday mornings my whole life. After a couple of Sundays like that, I knew it was time I started making decisions about my faith instead of just following my parents to Mass every Sunday. To be honest, I did a lot of “soul searching” in the first two years I was back and I wasn’t having much luck finding a place to worship. I even stopped going to church for awhile because I really didn’t feel connected and it left me very unsatisfied. My mom finally suggested St. Anthony’s to me because a good friend of hers from high school had worshipped there for years and had wonderful things to say about it.

I brought my boyfriend, Ben, with me one Sunday, and as soon as Mass started and we had to stand to be acknowledged, I knew this was the place for me. As I stood, rather embarrassingly I might add, I looked around at all the faces of the people smiling back at me. Everyone seemed warm, open, and genuinely sincere and kind. And not only did people clap for us newcomers, but several people came up to me after Mass to introduce themselves to me. I think the second Sunday Ben and I went to Mass, Father Len knew our names by heart. I thought that was the coolest thing that he not only remembered we were new, but also could call us by name!

To sum it up, what really blew me away was the sense of community I felt from the instant I stepped into St. Anthony's that first day in December. We might be a small parish, but the unity and spirit that one feels upon entering the church is enough to make the unfaithful believe! I look forward to meeting more of you as the year goes on!