



The Mustard Seed

Letter from Our Pastor

by Father Pires

Dear
Parishioners:

Once again
The Mustard Seed is back to tell not just one story but several. In telling our stories we are at the same

time sharing our faith. Rev. Dr. James Czegledi once said: If we do not share our faith with others, how will they come to faith themselves? That's the main reason we are back. Stories are told all the time, some very noticeable, others hidden or anonymous. We expect that the ones we have chosen will inspire you as you write your own.

Hopefully everyone has had a very pleasant summer. Some have taken vacations; others have simply enjoyed the beautiful weather of Cache Valley and surroundings. Now we are back with schools, sports of all sorts and, I hate to say, already preparing for the winter.

You all know that parish life never stops... our classes for our Religious Education Program are starting up. Each year it is always a challenge to staff this program because so many volunteers are involved and needed. As a reminder, it is our responsibility to supply volunteers who will share their faith with our young people.

A project that it is long overdue, our Meditation Garden, is in the works. Plans

are under way to mark the path and to begin planting some trees this fall.

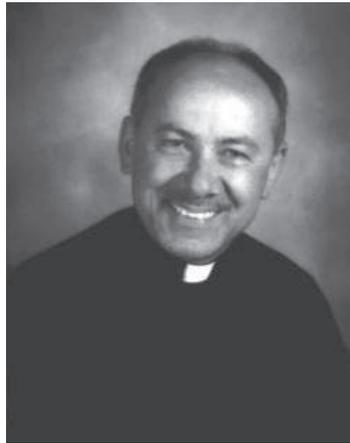
We are about to embark on a new adventure with a new Boy Scout program. Several members of our parish and the valley in general have been very supportive of the program and willing to help us. This will be a Catholic-based program open eventually to all of our children and youth, both girls and boys.

Also, the parish has been awarded a grant from Oregon Catholic Press (OCP) for \$2,000 to go towards new hymns for Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish that we are asked you to match this amount.

The parish council will continue working on projects and goals, such as the hospitality ministry and the meditation garden. We were so fortunate to acquire the donation of a baby grand piano which was on Sister Marlyn's wish list. Please read about its former owners and the piano's journey to our parish chapel.

Next time your story could be the one featured in **The Mustard Seed**. Share your stories, share your faith.

Blessings,
Fr. Pires



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Spotlight on Anne and John Elsweiler

by Linda K. Bradak

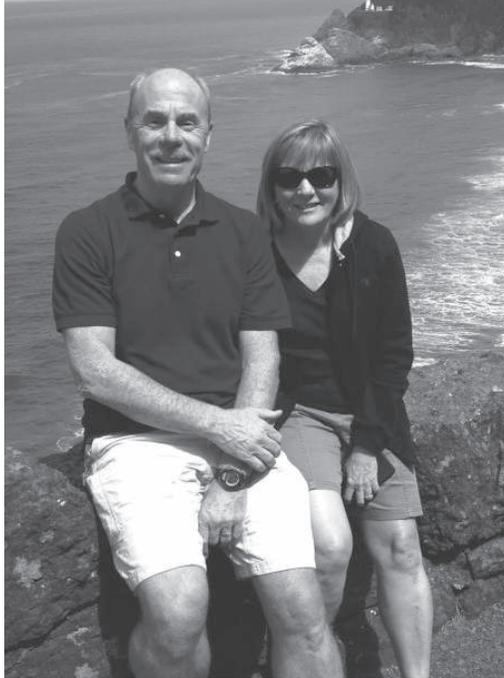
The idea to interview Anne and John Elsweiler for **The Mustard Seed** arose from questions posed to me in early Spring by several parishioners, when John was suddenly absent from his usual position as a Music Minister who plays guitar at the 5PM Saturday Mass. "Where's John? We miss him." Thankfully, John is back after a hand and wrist injury that put him out of commission for a few months. Now, let's get to know Both John and and his wife Anne and to hear their story.

Anne was born in Junction City Kansas to a faithful Catholic family. The eldest of four children, Anne's family moved to Arlington TX when her father, a grocer, went there to work for Kroger. Anne attended Catholic schools for all except seventh and eighth grade and comments, "We all went to Mass every Sunday." After graduating from high school, Anne began college at Washburn University in Topeka, where she met her future husband in a freshman French class. Lovers of music, Anne and John's first date was to a rock concert in Kansas City.

At the time, John was driving a 1967 VW Beetle. He wanted to borrow his dad's car, a larger, speedier Plymouth Duster, for their first date. "I met my future in-laws at their house that night," Anne reminisces. The concert ran late, and when it ended, John found himself going the wrong way on the freeway toward St. Louis instead of Topeka. This was still the era of college curfews so Anne got back to her dormitory a bit late. For violating curfew, the university grounded her for the next two weekends, "but John came and visited me," Anne laughs.

After two years, Anne became clear that she wanted to transfer to Texas Woman's College in Denton TX "for their good speech language pathology program." In the meantime, John continued his studies at Washburn in Topeka, majoring in history. They remained a devoted couple despite the distance.

John was born in Rochester, New York, also to a devout Catholic family. His father served in the Army in Japan. When John was 6 months old, he, his mother and his two older sisters followed his father to Japan, where John lived until he was three and a half. "That's where I probably learned to love rice," he chuckles. Then his father was transferred to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, where he served for 25 years. "We moved right across the street from Ft. Leavenworth to Leavenworth," notes



John. He went through 12 years of parochial school there. He was an altar server and singing as a boy soprano in a boys' choir from 7th through 9th grade.

After high school graduation, John studied at Washburn University, earning a B.A. in history in 1974. By then, he had concluded that he wanted to earn a degree in library science, so he followed Anne to Texas and earned a masters' degree at North Texas State University in 1977. John supported himself by driving and loading trucks and working at Pizza Hut, where Anne waitressed and attended graduate school at night.

They married in 1976 at St. Maria Goretti Parish in Arlington, Texas. After graduation, both Elsweilers worked in Lubbock for two years, and subsequently for six more in Houston. In 1986, John and

Anne moved to Logan when John was hired as director of reference services at USU's Library. Anne worked in local public schools as a speech pathologist from 1986 till 1993, when she accepted a position as a clinical instructor in USU's Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education. Currently, she is the clinical director and also a board-certified specialist in stuttering disorders.

Note that until then, John had not yet begun to play the guitar. He explains, "We were new here. After we had been in the parish for perhaps six months. I was singing, and a woman in front turned around and said, 'I'm Mary Veronica Kolesar. My mother wanted me to be a nun, hence my name. You have a beautiful voice, John. You should sing in the choir.'" Surprised, John took it to heart and joined the choir. At that time, Mary Veronica's husband Peter played guitar during Mass. John took to Peter at once, and John too gravitated toward the guitar. "At first I borrowed one and took some lessons, until I bought a Yamaha guitar. I have been playing ever since, perhaps 20 years now." John acknowledges Peter for his patience and musical guidance, noting that "he probably has no idea how much he helped me along with his humor and encouragement. We have fun together." The "John and Peter duo" have been playing at Saturday Mass for several years now.

John's guitar playing was sidelined this past February when he helped workers at USU shoveling snow in front of the USU Library. He slipped on the ice, fell backwards, and broke his left wrist. He now has a plate with nine screws securing his radius bone. There was initial doubt that he could continue to play – but fortunately he has been able to return. Though the wrist is still somewhat weaker, "playing my guitar is good therapy" he

notes. Other fun things for John are snowboarding and golf, though he probably won't return to the links for another year. He enjoys bicycling and woodworking. Anne proudly points out the four nightstands, the living room CD rack, and the headboard in the bedroom.

Though John is the professional librarian, Anne is probably the more voracious reader. She favors fiction and mysteries and belongs to a book club along with several other parish women. She loves to hike, to walk their dog Riley, and she is "learning golf" herself. Anne also "dabbles in stained glass."

The Elswailers do not have children, though they have a number of nieces and nephews on both sides with whom they are close. Their German shorthaired pointer, Riley, is a rescue dog. "The first year was the hardest," they agree. "Riley was initially pretty traumatized. He'd rip up my roses and run through the yard with a rose in his teeth, like Carmen," Anne chortles. John soft-pedaled it when Riley chewed the corner off Anne's Oriental rug. When he chewed up the TV remote, it bothered John much more. But Riley has settled down, and he struck me as a well-behaved and comfortable companion.

At St. Thomas, Anne Elswailer serves as a Communion Minister. She observes, "I love how it connects me deeply with the parish community." Her other parish activities have included teaching Children's Christian Formation for several years. She has helped parishioner Jacquie Rulis with Sub for Santa and has served on the Social Justice Committee. John has served our parish for 25 years as a Music Minister. John concludes, "I feel that the Music Ministry really helps in the literal **celebration** of the Mass. For many Catholics, a Mass without music seems to be missing something. Music *completes* the celebration of the Mass, activating parishioners and drawing people into the Liturgy."

We at St. Thomas Aquinas are so very glad that both Anne and John Elswailer show their love of the faith and this parish by sharing their many talents.

Understanding True Loss

by Rich Horrell

How can we come to understand true love, without understanding true loss? If I could draw a picture of the ultimate loss, I would draw the Crucified Christ. For it is in understanding this loss that we discover true gain ... on our way to the ultimate joy in Christ. We can exclude all that is wrong in our lives until we fall again. The Crucified Christ gave us the Sacrament of Confession. "Father, forgive

them for they do not know what they do." We look up and say I am sorry, He looks down and says how much He loves us. When we know that God is always on our side in our own suffering, in our losses, our daily failures in this life, we can smile as Christ smiles upon us, because we know these sufferings are only fleeting. I am forever forgiven, especially as I keep my face, my heart turned towards His. I will see those I have lost on this earth again. I can see that my enemies are just as much loved by God as I.

How much joy can one stand? Accepting who we are and asking Christ to improve upon it can bring joy to one's life in ways that nothing else ever will. Others will benefit because it will be for their benefit that we work. It is all of us gathered at the foot of the crucifix looking up that we realize how much we are all loved. It is at this place that we can see others as God sees us all. A place that we can receive answers to life's harder questions; it is here that we discover our true destination, where we learn how to forgive and how to be forgiven gracefully, where we find His love, true joy in this life and beyond.

As Catholics, we have the greatest symbol of faith that heaven can offer. We each have a special place in our own parishes at the foot of the crucifix, a place where we can look up and ponder the whys and the reasons for His death for us, for His life now in us.

Having a positive attitude aligned with Christ in suffering is the path of least resistance. It is true strength found in the Crucifixion. Rather than expel us as we expel Him, He embraces us.

Jesus speaks about what we have done, what we have failed to do, in a loving way. He uses love to help us discover a life over death; a life of true freedom from sin's bondage; a life conquering sin each and every day. He keeps us on the road,

and we choose to be on this road with Him.

You find yourself wanting to help Him in His cause. You see your own causes but they are never as good, never as worthy. We know what the alternative is -- distancing of ourselves from Christ.

Some will say "Rich, do you live all of this that you have written? Do you go to Confession often?" No, I fail often in all of these areas I write about. I know where I need to go and I will never stop going there and writing about it, in spite of myself. Suffering and forgiveness is the Cross. It is also the Tree of Life— it holds Christ and it is at the very core of His Mission for us.

Editor's Note: Former parishioner Rich Horrell lives with his family in Sacramento, CA. Rich contributes frequently to The Mustard Seed and shares his faith with us. Please visit Rich's website at www.utahmission.com



God Works in Mysterious Ways, His Mysteries to Perform

by Linda K. Bradak

You may remember that a few months ago, Bill Grewe, president of Parish Pastoral Council, addressed our parish after Masses one weekend. He reported that Sr. Marilyn was seeking the donation of a grand piano to St. Thomas Aquinas parish. The council saw this as a long term “wish” that would require creativity and, most likely, fundraising.

When Adrienne Akers heard about Sister Marilyn’s dream, a light bulb turned on. She said, “It felt like a moment of grace.” The coincidence was that her son, Ian Peterson and his wife Charity, were in the early stages of moving Detroit for a new job for Ian. A Mason & Hamlin baby grand piano from Adrienne’s family was living in the Peterson home in Salt Lake City. The piano was likely to be put into storage.



Aleksander Karczynski

The piano had come into Ian and Charity possession in 2003, from the estate of Adrienne’s stepmother, Alice Lukaszewski of Chicago, following Alice’s death. When it (and its piano bench) arrived here, the bench proved to be a treasure trove and a “time capsule.” Marrying Alice after Adrienne’s mother Celia died, Alice Fliieger Lukaszewski was the niece of a relatively unknown Polish composer of great merit named Aleksander Karczynski. The piano and contents of the bench were Karczynski’s and included

manuscripts of some of his liturgical music, both published and unpublished, as well as newspaper articles from the 1950’s and 1960’s and reviews of his performances from a Chicago Polish daily newspaper.

Seeking the help of a local Polish immigrant, Margret Dobrowlowska to translate the articles, Adrienne learned that Aleksander Karczynski was born in 1882 in Pelplin, Poland, where he died in 1973, after returning to his native country after living most of his adult life in the U.S. The son of Ignatius Karczynski, a watchmaker and church organist, Aleksander came from a devout Catholic family. Among 11 siblings were three priests, one of whom lost his life in the-Buchenwald concentration camp, and two nuns. Aleksander was always passionate about music, and after high school he studied at the Royal Academy of Music in Munich, the leading European center of musical training and home of many famous composers at that time. In 1907 he moved to the U.S, where he was church organist in Chicago at St. Apostles Peter and Paul Parish and St. Innocents Parish. Aleksander took an active part in the life of American Poles, conducting the renowned Polish Singers Alliance of America based in Chicago. Adrienne’s father, Edwin, a physician, was a member of that choir, singing as a basso profundo, the lowest male bass voice. Although Adrienne vaguely remembers Mr. Karczynski, she remembers that her father and Mr. Karczynski were good friends.

Aleksander co-founded and served as secretary of the Polish Society of Scholars, St. Hedwig, and taught singing and Polish literature at Sacred Heart College and St. Ignatius College. He also composed much music for voice and organ including the *Organ Sonata in B-flat Minor, Op. 38*, a three-part sonata which is considered by Peter Szuminski to be “one of the finest examples of late Polish organ music.”

Karczynski in 1912 wrote a *Stabat Mater (Sorrowful Mother)* for six voices, organ and orchestra. Also in 1912 he produced a cantata, *Ode to Youth*, for six voices plus organ, setting to music a poem by a most beloved 18th-century Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. One of the articles stated that Karczynski’s best works were never published. Thanks to the assistance of two of Karczynski’s former choir members, stories have been collected of Polish people, and movement is afoot to publish other examples of Karczynski’s work.

In 1966, Polish Cardinal Stefan Wycynski was to come to Soldiers’ Field in Chicago to celebrate with Americans of Polish descent the Millennium of Polish Christianity. The

Chicago Symphony Orchestra was to play Karczynski's *Stabat Mater*. Remember, however, that at that time, Poland was a part of the (atheist) Soviet Union; the Cardinal's trip was not allowed.

The Polish newspaper termed Aleksander Karczynski an "unknown composer" outside of the Polish community, sharing the fate of many prolific Polish composers other than Chopin or Paderewski. In 1956 when Karczynski was 74 years of age, a reporter visited him in his humble Chicago apartment, which he shared with the Mason & Hamlin piano, with the intent of bringing him and his works to greater public recognition. The reporter found him to be a handsome man, "a thinker, prolific, with deep and meditative eyes, a bright smile, and a natural humility." He learned that Karczynski had not been allowed to take his Matura examination in Germany due to political activities of one of his brothers. The outcome was that Aleksander Karczynski dedicated himself thoroughly to the world of music, not politics. He mastered counterpoint at the Royal Academy of Music in Munich, where he studied with the best teachers of his day, graduating in 1901. He produced preludes, fugues, and 15 Masses deemed as "masterpieces." In 1905 he composed a triple fugue for professor/composer Max Reger, who had expected only a single fugue, earning a reward of 100 gold marks. On another occasion, overnight he wrote a song for a mixed choir, which amazed his professors.

As a consequence of political ferment in Europe, Karczynski came to the US in 1907. In 1910, he composed a cantata in memory of Piotr Skarga for 200 voices. He also wrote a Freedom Cantata for two choirs. Paderewski in 1912 compared his *Stabat Mater* to "that of any masters in music." In 1931 he won first prize for a *Missa Solemnis* for the concertmaster of the Cathedral in Lodz, Poland, as well as a Requiem for Four Men and a Motet for Five Voices. The Polish music magazine *Cecylia* termed it an "irony" that his work was not better known, that Karczynski was a "master of counterpoint." They termed his works, including the Mass for St. Peter and Paul for adult and children's choirs, employing methods of ancient contrapuntal techniques, to be "masterpieces."

Aleksander Karczynski from 1928-1939 conducted the Chicago Polish Choir, considered the best in Chicago, where more Polish Americans lived than in Warsaw, and he performed at a World's Fair in Chicago. He returned to Poland in 1966, where he died in 1973 at the age of 91, after spending most of his intensely creative life in the US. Yet

Karczynski has remained a largely unknown composer... And now, St. Thomas Aquinas has the piano of Aleksander Karczynski, and some of his works, some published, some still in his own handwriting!

Fascinated by Karczynski's legacy, Adrienne met with Craig Jessop, Dean of the Caine College of the Arts at Utah State University, and former director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. She presented Dean Jessop the Karczynski manuscripts for voice and organ found in the piano bench. Upon examining the Karczynski compositions, Dr. Jessop placed them on his desk and patted them saying, "This would make a fine program to presented at your church. I would be honored to help make that happen."



Our parish already has established is a fine collaboration between USU's Department of Vocal Music with parish; performances take place each year at St. Thomas. Won't it be wonderful to bring present-day singers and Karczynski's works to our chapel accompanied on his very own 1932 German-made Mason & Hamlin piano...in effect, a gift from beyond? Please stay tuned for what happens next.

Weird Animals

by Jessica Larson

St. Thomas Aquinas' yearly Vacation Bible School took place during the week of August 4th-8th this summer. This year's theme was "Weird Animals" where our children and youth learned that "Even when you feel weird, different, or even lost in a crowd—nothing compares to the extraordinary love of Jesus!" To go along with this

"It's wonderful to bring the Bible stories to life for the kids. They love it!"

theme, each day focused on a lesson from the Bible with a corresponding Bible story to illustrate the concept. For example "Even though you do wrong, Jesus loves you" and the Bible story was *Jesus dies and comes back to life*. (Luke 22:47–24:12) To make each bible story come alive, there were games, crafts, snacks and a Spotlight slideshow starring one of the "crews" groups each day!

It was in 2006 that St. Thomas Aquinas held its first Vacation Bible school. I began helping in 2007 and can say that it is truly one of the highlights of our family's summer!

I am lucky enough to be the resident photographer and put together the slideshows that go along with the bible story for each day as well as just capture as many candid moments as I can. My boys Ashton (9) and Gunnar (6) love VBS! After the first day, Gunnar went to bed singing



"Yes Jesus loves me" and told me that his favorite parts are the games and dancing to all of the songs. Both of our sons loved when it was their day to help prepare the snack and then, of course, when they got to eat it! I love seeing all the children learn so much about God and the bible in such an active and hands on way. I also love that each year we choose a different cause or charity to raise funds for. All of the children are asked to bring in change to donate, teaching them about people and causes around the world who have so much less & how





each one of us can give back. This year we raised money to donate to the Clean Water Project through Food for the Poor, and it was eye opening for the kids to learn that in some places people lack clean water to drink, wash or cook with. We were able to donate over \$300.

“It’s fun to teach the songs and help with crafts and the videos are great too.”

This year there were a total of 99 children that attended; 24 preschoolers/kindergarteners & 75 1st-6th graders. To manage all these “weird animals,” it took over 64 adult and teen volunteers to make the week a success! The children are grouped into different “Crews” of about 6-7 children with one Crew Leader assigned to them for the week. The Crew Leader is in charge of getting their crew to each learning station, leading small group discussions



and also just being a fun, positive influence on the kids in their groups. In watching these youth serve as leaders I noticed what a great job they did! It amazes me what our youth are able to do...when given the chance. We are so lucky to have such great teens in our parish that volunteer their time to VBS. They compliment all the adults that take time out of their busy schedules to help out!

One of the aspects that I love most about VBS is its impact on our older youth who serve as crew leaders. When asked about their experiences as crew leaders, everyone was enthusiastic. Reyna Delgadillo and Robert Lopez, both high school students, volunteered for the first time this year. “It’s wonderful to bring the Bible stories to life for the kids. They love it!”

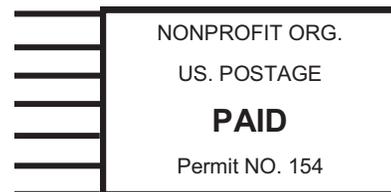
Reese Kleinz, age 11, and his sister, Morgan, age 14, enjoyed volunteering to work with younger children. “It’s fun to teach the songs and help with crafts and the videos are great too.” It’s so gratifying to see how our youth can volunteer their time in such a meaningful way to help our parish.



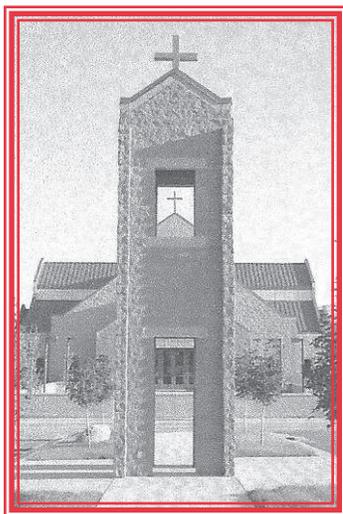
On the last day, parents were invited to come for the last half an hour to see the finale as well as the last Spotlight slideshow. It is such a fun and uplifting week for everyone involved, and I already can't wait for next year!



St. Thomas Aquinas Parish
725 South 250 East
Hyde Park, UT 84318
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Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic



Many thanks to our contributors for this issue:

Editor: Adrienne Akers

Layout: David Welch

Writers: Linda Bradak, Rich Horrell, Jessica Larsen

Photos Provided by: Many

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