



# St. John BEFORE THE LATIN GATE

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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## THE FRUITION OF GOD'S PLAN: CRISTEL MILLER SHARES REFLECTIONS ON HER RCIA JOURNEY

Looking back, our new St. John Catholic School Principal, Cristel Miller says that Catholicism was always part of God's plan for her life. When she was 10 years old, she was given a crucifix necklace from a non-religious person. That crucifix has been carefully stored in her jewelry box ever since, almost as if it was just waiting for her eventual conversion.

"I just can't help but think God had a hand in that," Mrs. Miller says. "He also brought me and my two sons to the school, which has played such a major role in my conversion."

Mrs. Miller says that as an adult, she always wanted to join and truly belong to a church community. Yet, despite attending numerous churches in the Nowata area, none ever truly felt like the right fit. This all changed, however, when Mrs. Miller was led to our parish school. Surrounded by the richness of the Catholic faith, Mrs. Miller felt an increasing desire to learn more about the Church and its teachings. And so she began attending the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults sessions, or RCIA, as a way of learning about and further discerning the Catholic faith.

"As I learned more about the faith, I increasingly began to feel that it truly fit with



*Mrs. Cristel Miller is deeply grateful to all of those who have walked with her through her faith journey — offering support and encouragement, sometimes in ways they never even realized.*



## KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH THE HOLY FATHER: THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!



“Let the Church always be a place of mercy and hope, where everyone is welcomed, loved and forgiven.”

These words from Pope Francis weren't delivered during a homily in St. Peter's or in a speech from St. Peter's Square — nor were they written in a papal bull or apostolic letter. Rather, they were delivered in an instant to millions of Catholics around the world through the pope's very own Twitter account.

The technology of communication has perhaps changed more in the past century than in the previous 20 combined. And with these developments, the Catholic Church — led by our Holy Fathers, from Pope St. John Paul II through Pope Francis — strongly encourages that the faithful adopt and adapt these resources for the all-important task of spreading the Gospel throughout the whole world.

Just as St. Paul used every convenience at his disposal to spread the Gospel throughout the far reaches of the Roman empire, today's evangelists are using every resource available to them. Examples of Catholic figures using the new media with great success abound.

Only a few months into his pontificate, Pope Francis took the Vatican's social media efforts to a whole new level. In spring 2013, the Vatican released *The Pope App*, which features quotes, news, images and videos of all the Holy Father's latest doings.

Following the pope's lead, bishops, priests and apologists are taking the technological gifts at their fingertips and utilizing them to spread the Gospel throughout the world in a variety of ways.

One great example is Bishop Robert Barron of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, whose Word On Fire Ministry has produced wildly popular YouTube videos discussing everything from controversial Church teachings to movie reviews from a Catholic perspective. Word On Fire also released the critically acclaimed *Catholicism* DVD documentary series.

Independent Catholic bloggers and Web-based media are also widely established and provide their audiences and readership with Catholic news and cultural commentary.

Throughout America, parishes, Catholic schools, dioceses, and even the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops are utilizing these tools as well, creating first-rate websites, maintaining Twitter and Facebook accounts, and more.

All of these resources are geared toward a wide variety of audiences, from the un-churched and fallen-away Catholics to active parishioners.

Being knowledgeable of the new media tools available to us as Catholics is a great way to be more effective in our universal call to evangelization. Take some time to see what media resources our parish and diocese are using, and be sure to pass them along to those in your sphere of influence!

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## THE *Light* AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Dear Parishioners,

As this unprecedented crisis for our Church, nation and world continues to unfold, we are starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel. As we begin to join together at Mass and other events, we have so much for which to be grateful.

I have witnessed so many of you continuing to actively live out stewardship during these past few months while our parish family has been apart, and that is truly a blessing. But with the uncertainty of what the near future will be like in the days, weeks and months ahead, I ask you all to again consider how you are living out your call to stewardship.

Regardless of whether or not we can physically gather in our church or come together for ministry activities and events, our faith always lives on.

Remember that stewardship is a way of life, meaning that we are called to live as intentional disciples of Christ through the practice of stewardship in all circumstances.

Have you been giving God your Time? I encourage you to pray every day. Use this time as an opportunity to develop or strengthen your prayer life.

How can you serve the Lord right now with your



Talents? Serve your family and friends in the ways that you can. Use your talents wisely to grow in relationship with others near or far.

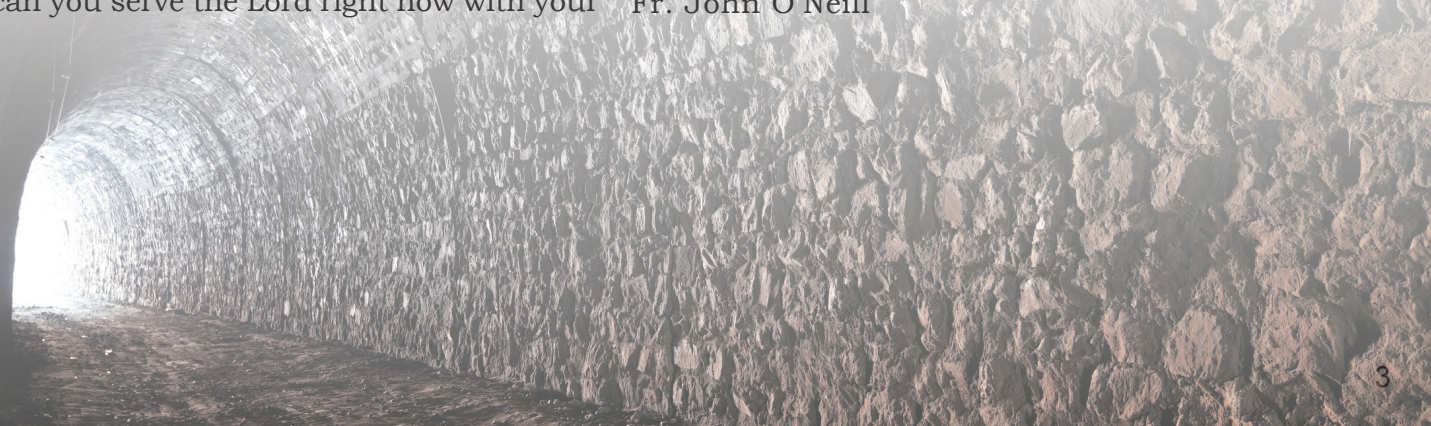
Finally, is God still a priority in your Treasure? Despite the hardships, are you still keeping God at the heart of all your financial decisions. I encourage you to give God a portion of your treasure out of gratitude, no matter how big or small.

Thank you for your continued support by way of prayers, service and generous financial giving during these challenging times. I have been overwhelmed with a new sense of gratitude and dependence on our Lord during this crisis, and continue praying for each of you. I look forward to the day our parish and our church is bustling with life again, and I pray that day is coming soon.

Let us live with the joy of the Resurrection each day of our lives!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. John O'Neill





## Welcome Home: RETURNING TO MASS IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19

The past several months have changed much about the way we live our lives — from the way we shop for groceries, to the way our children receive their education, or the way we worship. For many Catholics, this has been the longest people have gone without participating in Sunday liturgy within a parish community. And while we are blessed to have livestreamed Masses, time in prayer with our immediate families, and opportunities to creatively connect to our faith, there is certainly anticipation about returning to celebrate Mass in person, as the body of Christ.

So, whether you are looking forward to this return to Mass in eager excitement, or if you're hopeful but careful about the risks involved in slowly venturing into more public activities, we welcome you back to St. John Before the Latin Gate. And while you seek to discern the best way for you and your family to pray in this time, we hope that you know that we are working hard to ensure everyone's safety and peace of mind, in every way possible.

Our diocesan team has been collaborating with a number of experts in a variety of fields to determine the safest and most respectful ways for us to celebrate the liturgy as a community. In turn, Fr. John O'Neill and our parish team have been diligently working to implement these changes. As you prepare to return to Mass for



*Fr. John and Fr. Carlos have been streaming daily Mass online since the first day of the cancellation of public Masses and will continue to do so, for the foreseeable future.*

the first time, there are a number of things to keep in mind.

Parishioners are encouraged to wear masks and wash/sanitize their hands prior to coming to Mass, in order to minimize the spread of the virus — particularly through those who are asymptomatic. Parishioners are encouraged to receive Holy Communion in their hands. Those who would like to receive on the tongue may do so, however, they are asked to wait until everyone else has received. As always, those who are sick or exhibiting any symptoms are asked to remain at home.

Some of the other changes that you will notice include people only being able to enter the church building through

the east side main doors and every other pew being roped off in order to maintain social distancing. An overflow area will be set up in Fr. Lynch Hall, where Mass will be livestreamed and Communion will be distributed. People are asked to leave their weekly contributions in the baskets near the door, before or after Mass. There will also be a reduced number of people on the altar during Mass, with only our priests and deacons distributing Holy Communion.

For those who are part of a high-risk population, Sunday Mass will be celebrated on Thursdays at noon. We ask that only those who are particularly vulnerable attend this Mass. A dispensation from attending Sunday Mass is still in

effect, per our bishops, so those who are concerned about the risk are encouraged to continue praying with our community through Masses streamed online or on television.

With all of the changes going into effect, both at Mass, and in our broader community, Fr. John reminds us that charity is to be at the heart of all of our actions.

"We need to have charity for each other, that's the underlying thought," Fr. John says. "If I'm sick, I should, out of charity, stay home. Even if I don't think I need a mask, maybe there's somebody who's sitting six feet from me who is fearful of people who don't have masks, so out of charity, I should wear a mask."

Fr. John is hopeful that many of the positive things he witnessed in our community will continue, even as we slowly begin to see each other face to face — from the number of people who prioritized prayer through

our streamed Masses; to our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the homebound, who called to check on people; to parishioners who went grocery shopping for those who were higher risk; to those who have been additionally generous in financially supporting the parish; and our school teachers and staff who seamlessly transitioned into distance learning.

"I've seen such beautiful things in our parish and school," Fr. John says. "It's phenomenal how people have stepped up and said, 'What can I do to help those who are struggling?'"

"It is taking our eyes off of ourselves for a moment and looking at others," he adds. "Jesus says, 'If they ask you to take it one mile, take it two miles.' In this day and time, and with all the challenges going on politically and around the world, throw a pandemic in and it looks like everybody is against everybody.

But in our parish, it can be, 'No, we're all in this together.' When we start to look outside ourselves, we see the gifts God has given us, and think, 'Okay, I can do this for someone else.'"

We look forward to welcoming all our parishioners back, whether immediately, or in the coming weeks.

"We're in this together — be charitable," Fr. John says. "It may not be perfect — Mass will not look exactly the same way that it did before. But Jesus is present in all of this — Jesus is present in us. Some of us may be very fearful, some of us may be ready to come back, and some of us may not be sure. But it's all of us, we're all in this together."

"If we can wrap our hearts around this moment that God has allowed us to really care for each other and walk together, through this storm we've been in, then we will come out on the other side better people," he adds.

***"We're in this together — be charitable. It may not be perfect — Mass will not look exactly the same way that it did before. But Jesus is present in all of this — Jesus is present in us. Some of us may be very fearful, some of us may be ready to come back, and some of us may not be sure. But it's all of us, we're all in this together." — FR. JOHN O'NEILL***

If you would like more information on our parish's return to public Masses, please visit our website at [www.stjohn-bartlesville.org](http://www.stjohn-bartlesville.org) or call the parish office at 918-336-4353. Daily Mass will continue to be streamed online, in both English and Spanish.



## A CATHOLIC'S GUIDE TO *Good Summer Reading*

Have you been wondering what to read during vacation this year? Why not give spiritual reading a try?

There are thousands of titles out there — too many for any one person — just waiting to make a positive impact on your faith life. Reading is a fantastic opportunity for general spiritual direction and good practice for every searching soul.

Choose a title from “you can’t go wrong” authors such as Louis de Wohl, G.K. Chesterton, Peter Kreeft, Francis de Sales, C.S. Lewis, and Scott Hahn. Their works alone should take you well into the summer, and possibly through to the next decade.

Or, choose from this list of great Christian books, in no particular order:

### *The Story of a Soul* by St. Therese of Lisieux

In this autobiography and all-time favorite Catholic book, St. Therese teaches her “little way” of spiritual childhood. Millions of copies have been sold worldwide.

### *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis

One of the most popular introductions to the Christian faith ever published, this series of broadcast talks has been collected into book fashion. *Mere Christianity* sets out to “explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times.”

### *Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism* by Scott and Kimberly Hahn

This offers a conversion story of a brilliant, anti-Catholic Scripture scholar and his wife to

the Catholic faith. Now well-known speakers and Catholic apologists, Scott and Kimberly recount their story with simplicity and love.

### *The Good News about Sex & Marriage: Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching* by Christopher West

This down-to-earth application of Pope St. John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* is an easy-to-read, yet insightful account of the Church’s teaching on sex and marriage.

### *What Catholics Really Believe* by Karl Keating

Addressing 52 of the greatest misconceptions of the Catholic faith, Keating draws upon Scripture and Tradition to dispel errors and explain the rationale behind Church teaching.

### *No Greater Love* by Mother Teresa

This anthology collects the teachings and sayings of St. Teresa of Calcutta. Founder of the Missionaries of Charity and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, St. Teresa of Calcutta speaks joyfully about her work with the poor and God’s call in our lives.

### *Surprised by Truth* edited by Patrick Madrid

Eleven converts give their Biblical and historical reasons for becoming Catholic. These unique personal testimonies continue to transform hearts throughout the world in an insightful read for Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Happy summer! Happy reading!

## ST. JOHN CATHOLIC SCHOOL STAFF AND STUDENTS ADJUST TO DISTANCE LEARNING

The 2019-20 school year was certainly full of ups and downs. When we celebrated Catholic Schools Week in January, little did we know that just a few months later, school buildings would be closed for the rest of the school year. In turn, staff and students quickly adjusted to distance learning so they could continue with their curriculum. Principal Lexie Radebaugh is so proud of how quickly and efficiently everyone adjusted. Staff took the time to learn Google Classroom, Facebook Live and the Zoom video conferencing tool.

“Our staff is amazing and jumped into action quickly,” Mrs. Radebaugh says.

Each week, staff members met with each other via Zoom, using the opportunity to share ideas and encourage one another. Staff members also used a variety of ways to social distance and provide the students with the materials and information needed. Some dropped off items by car, and others sat in front yards to watch project presentations.

Mrs. Radebaugh is proud of how everyone made the best of the difficult and unprecedented situation.

“Staff didn’t complain or drag their feet,” she says. “They just jumped in and did what they needed to do.”

With some parents at home full time and others still working, it was difficult to find the right balance for each family. Some families had limited internet access, which was also a challenge. She said staff took the time to check in with families and see if there was anything they could provide to help. Mrs. Radebaugh is thankful for all the support they received from families.

Staff will continue utilizing alternative communication tools in the fall, in the event the school building will need to close again.

Teachers stepped up and used whatever innovations they could to help students. Mrs. Radebaugh was impressed that even the Take Flight program, which helps students with dyslexia, was able to continue via Zoom.



Although the celebrations had to be altered from previous years, the end of the school year was still commemorated. Each grade celebrated with a virtual award assembly. Mrs. Radebaugh says these virtual celebrations turned out to be a lot of fun and were well attended. There was also an “Eagles Cruise,” where families drove a path to see teachers and staff waving and holding signs. This was another fun event to mark what was certainly an unforgettable school year.

The four eighth-grade graduates were able to celebrate with a small Mass at the end of May. Each student received a mask decorated with the year 2020, the school logo and mascot.

Although Mrs. Radebaugh and all the staff certainly found it challenging to not be present with each other and the students, there was some good that came from the closure.

“We all learned a lot about media for instruction,” she says. “I also think parents have a clearer understanding of what it takes to be an educator.”

Mrs. Radebaugh hopes school can resume in the fall, as there is no replacement for seeing students face-to-face. But, no matter what she knows staff and families will adjust as needed.

# St. John BEFORE THE LATIN GATE



715 S. Johnstone Ave. | Bartlesville, OK 74003  
Office: (918) 336-4353 | [www.stjohn-bartlesville.org](http://www.stjohn-bartlesville.org)

## *The Fruition of God's Plan*

*continued from front cover*

my beliefs," Mrs. Miller says. "My husband and I also attended Retrouvaille together. That experience, plus what I had learned, convinced me this was the right Church for me to join."

Mrs. Miller says she was surprised to discover that many already-practicing Catholics chose to attend RCIA sessions as a kind of faith refresher. This was a powerful witness to her, demonstrating that faith formation truly is a continual process. She also enjoyed the group atmosphere, which enabled her to listen to and benefit from the questions of others as well as her own. Not only did this help prepare Mrs. Miller personally, but it also gave her the tools needed to dialogue effectively with others about the faith.

"I have really enjoyed the RCIA process," Mrs. Miller says. "I also enjoy being able to talk to my non-Catholic friends about our faith and hopefully clear up misconceptions."

Mrs. Miller is deeply grateful to all of those who have walked with her through this journey — offering support and encouragement, sometimes in ways they never even realized.

"I just want to thank everyone that has prayed for me or been a part of my conversion," Mrs. Miller says. "You never know the impact a positive conversation can have on someone else! In fact, there are people that have contributed to my conversion that will probably never realize the part they played."

***Mrs. Miller is the new Principal at St. John Catholic School. We are currently accepting enrollment for the 2020-21 school year.***

If you are interested in entering the RCIA process and exploring the Catholic faith, please contact Pat Netzer-Willard at [noplan43@aol.com](mailto:noplan43@aol.com).

### ..... LITURGY SCHEDULE .....

**Saturday:** 5 p.m. | **Sunday:** 8 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. (en Español)

**Tuesday:** 7 a.m. (chapel) | **Wednesday:** 5:15 p.m. (church) | **Thursday:** 7 a.m. (chapel), 7 p.m. (en Español)

**Friday:** 8:15 a.m. (church during school year/non-school days in chapel)

**Reconciliation:** Saturday: 4-4:45 p.m. | Sunday: 12:30-1:15 p.m.