

Transformed!

Good News at St. Hilary Parish

April/May 2017

Trip to the Holy Land a transforming journey

By Fr. Steve Brunovsky

Let me begin by admitting that I was apprehensive about going to Israel. News stories about the constant conflict were one thing, but I was also concerned that actually being in the Holy Land would be somehow underwhelming and not live up to the images that I had constructed in my mind over the last 50 years regarding the places of Jesus' life and ministry. My concerns quickly evaporated!

The Holy Land, the country of Israel, is stunningly beautiful! We arrived as the two month rainy season was ending, and so the hills and valleys were alive in lush green, yellow, and purple. And there were many hills and valleys! The country from top to bottom undulates, falls, rises, and though very small, includes a mountain with snow on top which feeds the Sea of Galilee and Jordan River, to the lowest place on earth, the Dead Sea, from which no water escapes, except to evaporate into the desert sky.

It is a landscape of extremes! It is easy to see why the landscape—hills, rocks, mountains, deserts, gardens, valleys—are so frequently mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures. And speaking of scripture, perhaps the most transformational part of this pilgrimage will now be reading those scriptures with a clear picture of the mountains, hills, valleys, rocks, and deserts that are mentioned there. Amazing!



Fr. Steve celebrates Mass at the Church of Annunciation. Photo by Rosanne Rohana.

I also am humbled by the experience of praying and celebrating Mass in the actual places of Jesus' life and ministry. We began in Nazareth, where the church sits atop the remains thought to be the actual house of the blessed Virgin. There we prayed the Mass for the Feast of the Annunciation! Indeed, it is noted in the missal that "here" the Angel of the Lord appeared to Mary.

We then went to Bethlehem, celebrating the "Word becoming Flesh" in the actual place it happened. It was very moving as we sang Christmas carols in the grotto chapel! Not a dry eye! We visited, prayed in, and celebrated Mass in chapels around the Sea of Galilee, the place of most of Jesus' ministry. The area is still largely rural, so here

it was easy to imagine Jesus calling fishermen from the shore to become fishers of men and women.

Most moving for me, however, were moments in the City of Jerusalem. As in Jesus' day, so also now, this is the religious center of the country. For Jews the holiest site is the base of the Western Wall (or Wailing Wall), the only remnant of the temple to survive the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD. Here we joined many others praying: Jews, Christians, and Muslims, inserting our petitions written on paper into the spaces between the massive two-ton stones. Here is where I especially prayed for the intentions of our parish families. It was very emotional being in that holy spot.

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We also spent a day following in the footsteps of Jesus' final days on this earth. We visited the Garden of Gethsemane and its 2000 year old olive trees. Could Jesus have prayed beside one of these actual trees? We prayed the Stations of the Cross along the Via Dolorosa, the narrow and winding streets of the Old City of Jerusalem. Amid the din of vendors, school children, and fellow travelers, the noises and smells of the street added a perspective of reality to our prayer. Jesus would have carried the cross through these streets, enduring the stares, derision, and mocking of the people he came to save.

The road rises to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which is really a building of many chapels in one, with spots designating the hill of Golgotha, the anointing stone, and the burial tomb. Touching these



Fr. Steve took the petitions of the parish to the Western Wall, the only part of the temple still standing in Jerusalem. Photo by Rosanne Rohana.

spots with our hands and religious objects, and spending time in prayer among the ornate mosaics, lamps, and other expressions of over 2,000 years of Christian devotion was both humbling and profound.

To see people from so many different countries and faith communities reminded me that though different in many ways we are all striving for the same thing—trying to get closer to God through our faith in Jesus. This is the goal of *our* pilgrimage, whether we are journeying in the Holy Land, or right here in Akron, Ohio.

My time in the Holy Land was a time of transformation in how I will visualize the Biblical landscape and imagine the events of Jesus' life and ministry. I am also sure it will deepen my prayer and reflection as we celebrate the Sacred Mysteries of Holy Week and Easter.



Rosanne Rohana and Randy Malick carry the cross on the Via Dolorosa followed by Kathleen Considine, Paul and Rosie Orchosky, and RJ Bradner in back.

Now you can see the places Jesus walked!

Join Fr. Steve for a Photo Pilgrimage from his recent travels to the Holy Land with fellow St. Hilary Parishioners.

Friday, April 7

7:30 pm in the church
immediately following Stations of the Cross

All are welcome!



Women's retreat brings new life in Christ

Tina Oelschlager was in need of alone time when she said yes to attending the Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP) renewal weekend. She was among nine participants from St. Hilary who experienced the retreat at St. Francis Xavier in Medina in October 2015 with the intention of bringing it back to St. Hilary. Little did she know how the experience would change her life.

"I read about the retreat in the bulletin, but the idea of leaving my husband and 20-month old daughter for a day and a half seemed impossible. I wouldn't have signed up if it weren't for the invitation by Beth Rado. Mark and Jamie were perfectly OK without me!" Tina said.

Newfound confidence in God

"I was looking for something to lift me physically and spiritually. I went because I wanted time away. It was a difficult period of time because we endured disappointment after disappointment at having another child. I recall my volume of notes, analysis, our meetings with doctors, and even number crunching—all in attempt to improve our odds of conception. I kept saying I trusted God, but I was also trying to solve the problem on my own," she explained.

'I now have new eyes that look for and see the Holy Spirit working.'

In the end, Tina came away from the weekend with a sincere confidence that God could do anything—even allow her and her husband to have another child without medical intervention. God rewarded their faith with son Cliff who is now nine months old.

Tina said she also gained "peace, comfort, trust, and the ability to yield control—I don't have to do life on my



Tina with Cliff at his baptism.

own. The Holy Spirit is within each of us. Knowing that is a peaceful feeling. Struggles are still painful, but enduring them in the context of God being by my side is hopeful."

After attending the retreat in Medina, Tina became a team member of St. Hilary's first women's CRHP Renewal, held last May. As the group prepared for the retreat, Tina's faith grew as well. "Through my participation, I went from worried to amazed at how such a tall task could come together. It was the Holy Spirit at work. I now have new eyes that look for and see the Holy Spirit working."

As Tina's faith grew, so did her trust in God as well as her prayer life. She often rises at 5 am to spend time in conversation with the Lord or arrives to work early so she has time to pray. "I have a desire for quiet prayer time and God makes space for that," she said.

The gift of community

Community has taken on new meaning when it comes to her family and the parish itself. "It's a sweet feeling when my daughter Jamie is loving to Cliff. I imagine we make God proud when we are loving to each other as brothers and sisters. I've realized that putting God first makes relationships better—namely marriage. Through the lens of what God wants, I aim for humility and service. I have a long way to go!" Tina said.

"I understand now why the retreat is called Christ Renews His Parish. CRHP gave me the chance to know more women at St. Hilary. It's a gift to know them, pray for them, and perhaps have them pray for me. It ultimately fosters a stronger and larger community, and interacting with so many faith-filled women strengthens my faith."

Being an instrument

One of the surprises for Tina was the way God continued to use her as an instrument after the retreat. "A friend said that a statement from my CRHP witness echoed in her head during a recent health scare. I never intended or imagined that something I shared could inspire someone's faith. I remember as a kid feeling so uncomfortable at the very mention of God. I was so private about my faith," she recalled.

"We are vessels through which God works. That's what makes it possible for me to step outside my comfort zone and share my faith. It's not about me, whether I'm creative or unique or intelligent enough. It's God working through each and every one of us, if we let Him, to help one another and live fully in His plan for us," Tina concluded.

The next women's CRHP weekend is April 29-30. Contact Beth Rado at the parish office for more information.

Stewards among us—*All is Gift*

Pope Francis' message for Lent this year – “The Word is a gift. Other persons are a gift.” – has inspired the theme for our Annual Parish Stewardship Response – “All is Gift.” We see this message lived out at St. Hilary each and every day by the good and faithful stewards among us at Mass, in our classrooms, and in our ministries. Each month we will be featuring Stewards Among Us in our parish bulletin. Read on and discover why All is Gift for these stewards at St. Hilary Parish!

Alex Spalding

Alex Spalding, an engineer and member of the Young Adult Group, is involved in a number of ministries. “I’ve had a lot of enjoyment with different activities with the church and part of what I see is getting others involved and sharing that joy as well. I felt very welcomed in the Young Adult Group and getting involved. It’s been fun, but having a source of community and getting involved with others has helped my faith life and being able to share that has been important to me.”

Having played the clarinet since elementary school and minored in music at Case Western Reserve University, Alex puts his musical abilities to work in the bell choir. “I guess part of it is getting to use the talents I have and praise God at the same time. It’s enjoyable as well.” For Alex it provides a different means of being active in the Mass “and hopefully enhancing the Mass for others.”



Alex Spalding and Amy Hoffmeister pause before painting a house for Habitat for Humanity.

Alex joined the Knights of Columbus when he joined the parish in October 2015. He said he would have joined if he were still living in his home town of Great Falls, Virginia. “I got into it for the service aspect. They have a large variety of events they sponsor—Free Throw Contest, different dinners, fundraisers and one of the things that struck me was the Habitat for Humanity builds.”

As part of the parish’s Day of Service, Alex did some painting for Habitat for Humanity. While the connection to stewardship is not on his mind while volunteering, focusing on helping others is important to him. “The person who ended up getting the house worked along side us for a little bit. Seeing her appreciation of the work meant a lot to me. It’s positive feedback. I’m doing something good, and they are receiving it well.

“Even if I’m painting a wall and no one’s going to see that wall or think too much about it, I’m going to do my best and get it to look good. They’ll appreciate it by *not* noticing it. If it looks like a normal wall, I’ve done well enough,” he said with a chuckle.

For Alex, stewardship is part of the ebb and flow of his faith. What is fulfilling, is “knowing it’s the right thing to do and getting some consolation that I’m getting closer to God. I’ve gotten to see that through college and different young adult events whether it’s through small groups or lectures or other activities.” Those include XLT! and young adult events outside the parish such as the Ite Project and Theology on Tap, even inviting friends from work.

LuAnne Toth

LuAnne Toth teaches music at St. Hilary School and directs the Contemporary Ensemble at the 9 am Mass on Sundays. For her stewardship became intentional when she attended the Joyfully Gifted workshop last spring and again as a faculty member the following August. Each time she learned something new about herself.

Through Joyfully Gifted, participants take a survey and then review their responses to discern their own gifts and talents. The first time, LuAnne’s result showed she was geared toward faith, giving, healing, helps and creativity. She was surprised that teaching and music were not in that list. Stewardship Minister Marie Colaner pointed out that she did indeed operate in those gifts through teaching and music. “She made me feel better—that I didn’t miss the boat.”

When she took the survey again in August, a different set of gifts surfaced for LuAnne: discernment, faith, prophecy, teaching, creativity. She learned from course materials that discernment means “the special grace to intuitively sense or recognize what is of God or human origin.” Likewise, she found out that prophecy is “the special grace to envision God’s will clearly enough to communicate the message, truth or call.”

Thanks to Joyfully Gifted, now she is more aware of her gifts and what it means to put them into action. For example, LuAnne was physically moved when Terri Heckman came to



Ministry takes place right in the classroom for LuAnne Toth.

speak to the parish about her work as director of the Battered Women's Shelter and Rape Crisis Center, now known as the Center for Hope and Healing, and efforts to renovate their new location.

"I have never had a physical reaction to anything like this before—it was like boom right to the chest. I knew I had to do something. I am supposed to get involved," she explained. LuAnne, who plays piano in the Contemporary Ensemble, said she found herself so rattled by her own reaction that she found it hard to focus on playing the next song. She immediately thought of giving piano lessons or bringing music in some way to the shelter.

She acted on that experience, putting the gifts of giving and helps into action. "I found a used piano from a parishioner who was moving. I also talked to Jennifer Woodman and Tracy Arnone about doing something at the school. I wanted to do more right away. The students ended up collecting items needed at the shelter. The faculty members started making lunches after school on Fridays."

She is also sensitive to what her students say and how they reacted to the presidential election, particularly when it comes to race. "This year I'm

so uncomfortable how everyone is reacting to one another. I can't even grasp how one side feels or the other side for that matter. I need to help fix things in my own little corner." Recognizing the need for healing, she decided to take part in this year's Wednesday evening Lenten Series on race.

Tom Hudock

Tom Hudock's life is steeped in stewardship, having participated in two parish programs—Living Your Strengths and Joyfully Gifted. He's also part of the Evangelization and Stewardship Committees, and a member of the Be My Witness team, a pilot program at St. Hilary. But it wasn't always that way for him.

Throughout his adult life Tom said he was focused on his career in risk management. The sex scandals that rocked the Catholic Church also put a damper on his willingness to get involved in parish life. All that changed when he retired in 2013.

"When I got ready to retire I started doing some soul searching, thinking about what I'm going to do for the rest of my life. That's what led me to decide that I wanted to look into working at the parish, volunteering, finding ways to serve God rather than



Tom Hudock writes a piece on faith formation in the weekly parish bulletin.

going out to play golf everyday and looking for ways to entertain myself. I think that's a very real thing that everybody who's retiring faces. What am I going to do with my time?"

Tom said that the first year of retirement was a big adjustment. "But I had the grace to persevere, to get involved with evangelization and figure out what it was all about," he said.

"I just feel God moved me to check the Evangelization box on my Stewardship response card. And then I got a call from John Randall. I figured I had better find out about the topic and looked to books." To add to his knowledge, Tom has read studies by the Pew Research Center and books such as *Growing An Engaged Church* published by Gallup and *Forming Intentional Disciples* by Sherry Weddell.

Involvement in the Evangelization Committee led to Tom's participating in the Living Your Strengths Program in 2014. "I really got a lot out of it. It kind of opened up my eyes." Two years later he took part in Joyfully Gifted to see how the two programs compared. Working with fellow parishioners he now hopes to combine them.

Over time, Tom saw the need for parishioners to change their thinking in order for them to change behavior and thus become better stewards and disciples. He felt that communication was the key, so he began writing articles on faith formation that appear in the bulletin. Recent topics have included The Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Mother, Fasting, Pope Francis' Message for Lent and The Blessed Virgin Mary's Role in Salvation.

While he does not credit the two programs with affecting his faith life, he said, "The impact was realizing that the best use of my time on earth was to serve God. 'God, just show me what you want me to do.'

Our Lady of Fatima brings Angle family peace, protection

Julie Angle has a special relationship with Our Lady of Fatima, nurtured by periodic visits of St. Hilary's traveling Fatima statue. For Julie, the presence of the Fatima statue in their home brings heightened awareness of the presence of the Blessed Mother, herself. And when the statue arrives there is a sense of peace. "When Mary's here it is such a relief," said Julie.

The Fatima statue has been coming to the Angle home about four times a year since their youngest was in preschool. Julie always signs up on the calendar in the Gathering Area to have the Fatima statue around the times of her children's birthdays.

The Angles have a special place reserved in their foyer for the Fatima statue, so Mary is at the center of the house. "When we have the Fatima statue we pray the rosary together, or I pray the rosary by myself. When Mary's there I feel this direct link," she said. In the early years of having the statue, Julie said their prayers were formal. Now Julie's prayer time with Mary is more like a conversation.



The traveling statue of Our Lady of Fatima brings a sense of calm to the Angle family.

Julie first heard about the statue of Our Lady of Fatima from fellow participants in Family Life, our parish mom's group. Since then Mary has been a part of the family. Julie and husband Brett have five children: Alex, 21, Maddie, 19, Laura, 16, Thomas, 12 and Noah, 10.

"I rely on her especially as a mother. I pray, 'Mary, help me through this. I need your help. Please take my prayers to your son.'" said Julie. Never was that reliance on Mary so important as when Laura was diagnosed with two overlapping types of liver disease when she was 11—Autoimmune Hepatitis and Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis, diagnosed at stage four, which made it necessary for her to have a liver transplant. Laura was on the transplant list for five years. Each time the Fatima statue took up residence, it became a week-long source of solace and peace.

At first dealing with the diagnoses was hard for both Julie and Brett. However, one incident, Julie related, brought her great comfort. "When Laura was diagnosed five-and-a-half years ago, every day I just sobbed and sobbed. I'd say, 'Why God, why?'"

"I still remember I was in the kitchen, the kids were all at school. It was a beautiful September day. The situation was bad and every time we went to Cincinnati it seems we got worse news: The fact that there's this overlap with PSC; the fact that this was stage 4 and it was as bad as it could get. I had this moment where I was filled peace that did not come from me. And I had this one thought in my head and it wasn't from me: *Gift*. It was a gift to just help Laura through this."

In the meantime, Laura tried to live as normal a life as possible while waiting for the liver transplant, including

participating in the St. Vincent-St. Mary High School marching band as an eighth grader.

However, life was anything but normal. Because liver disease had affected her growth, Laura needed to gain weight before receiving the transplant, so she had to use a nasal-gastric tube for added nutrition. With the help of teachers including band director Brian Campbell, students were understanding and accepting of Laura. And eventually, with the added nutrition she gained the required weight.

In 2015 a liver became available, and Julie, Brett and Laura made the trek to Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Laura was prepped for surgery only to have the procedure stopped. The liver was found to be inadequate.

While disappointing, Laura's specialist, however, told the family to wait for the perfect liver. In the end, Julie saw the hand of God in this situation because going through with the surgery would have been disastrous.

The family turned disappointment to prayers for the golden liver. "We called it the 'golden liver' like the golden ticket," said Julie referring to the golden ticket in the play *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

A year later in October, they received that long awaited call for what proved to be the perfect liver and Brett, Julie and Laura were again on their way to Cincinnati. Many fortunate events surrounding Laura's successful surgery revealed to Julie God's perfect timing and Mary's presence.

Alex and Maddie were home from Ohio State University when the family got the call. Family and friends stepped in to stay with their younger boys. Instead of being in ICU for five days, Laura was out in two days. She was placed in a room painted in a color Julie's friend Joya Hart described as "Mary's blue." Laura was discharged in 25 days when it normally takes two months. "And Mary was with us the whole time," said Julie.



Julie with Laura (left), who is the picture of health, six months after receiving a new liver.



The Angle family on the Noah's First Communion day. Front: Thomas, Noah and Laura. Back: Julie, Maddie, Alex and Brett.

Julie looks to all the details that made her daughter's transplant a success and recognizes what God has done for them. "I realized God gives us faith, hope and love, and I had not accepted His gift of hope. During that time I started to hope. When we got home I said, 'So Laura, where do you want to look for college?' I had known for the last few years that Laura wanted to be a hepatologist (liver specialist). Before, this was a shut door I would not open. Now I know God gives us that hope and we need to embrace it."

'We have been surrounded with Mary's love throughout all of this.'

Another blessing for Laura was being able to remain a student at St. Vincent-St. Mary during her hospital stay, the length of which

exceeded the limit of the school's absentee policy. The school made arrangements for teachers to email assignments and for Laura to complete them.

Looking back on Laura's successful surgery, Julie said, "We are blessed beyond what we deserved. We have been surrounded with Mary's love throughout all of this."

In January, the Fatima statue returned to the Angle household, and Julie was able to present her daughter, now healthy, to Mary. "I put my hand on the statue of Our Lady and I feel peace, knowing I'm not alone, knowing Mary's there. We are under her care. When she's in our house, it's a sigh of relief and we're OK."



St. Hilary Parish
2750 West Market Street
Fairlawn, OH 44333-4236



Discover Your Spiritual Gifts

Join our FREE Joyfully Gifted Retreat!

Saturday, April 29, 2017

10:00 am – 3:30 pm

Gathering Area – All are welcome!

Contact the Parish Office to Register

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Holy Week 2017

Private Reconciliation:

April 10, 7:00-8:00 pm

April 11, 10:00-11:00 am

April 12, 2:00-3:00 pm

Holy Thursday, April 13:

Mass of the Lord's Supper
7:30 pm followed by Adoration
until 11:00 pm

Good Friday, April 14:

Stations of the Cross

Noon (outdoors)

2:00 pm (in the church)

8:00 pm (Living Stations)

Celebration of the Lord's Passion
3:00 pm

Holy Saturday, April 15:

Blessing of Food

2:00 pm

Solemn Easter Vigil

8:30 pm

Easter Sunday, April 16:

7:30 am Mass

9:00 am Mass

10:45 am Mass

12:15 pm Mass

Parish Offices will be closed all day
Friday, April 14 and Monday, April 17.



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The newsletter of St. Hilary Parish

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