

Letter One

Dear Friends and fellow members of St. Wenceslaus

I joined St. Wenceslaus in 1993. Yea, somehow you let me in, this reprobate Franciscan Irish Catholic from the hills of southern Ohio. It was the best thing that happened to me in our move to 'the county,' Leelanau. It remains so. You are my parish until I make the Great Leap, in whatever form we are.

It started with Fr. Charlie, who many of us were very sad when he left, especially those he hired to teach Religious Ed because we always got that incredible perch dinner at the end of the school year that he himself prepared. Fr. Hunko laid us all off within a month or two of getting here. It was Fr. Charlie who asked me to write articles for the St. Mary's bulletin under the umbrella of *Family Thoughts*. Fr. Hunko dropped it soon after arriving.

Was not long before I got a phone call from Phylis asking me if I would consider writing for the St. Wenceslaus bulletin. She offered to pay me! I said, "No!". It was an honor to do it for free. Probably got a missive in most weeks for over three decades, with a few breaks so I could play with doctors, until this latest round of medical games. Figured the best I could do is finish it by writing more consistently with changes coming that might eliminate its need. I'll still be putting out an article weekly on clementcharles.substack.com.

It didn't take Martin long to spot a willing person (even if I did not know that at the time) as he needed another soul to help him in his ministry of helping our little church. Yup, got stuck with cutting cabbage in the basement that first year with Elmer and did so for about six years as well as calling Bingo before Parkinson's cut into my physical ability to do such things. Always felt lucky it was just Parkinson's, but the worst impact was losing the ability to help with the dinners.

But, as you all know, Martin is persistent in helping others follow the Lord's way and not their own, so I found myself becoming a Lector and a Eucharistic Minister for the homebound with my primary care for the folks in the Toy House. The relationships I developed due solely to Jesus' help with those dear ladies carried through years and today I still carry them in my heart and prayers every day.

In the early years my family would participate in the Mass with me. I admit to 'forcing' my three children to serve as Alter acolytes. For a few years they were 'it', as pickin's were slim for young people to help. They did virtually ever Sunday. By the time they the hit high school they started to get a lot of help from kids at St. Mary's, and I allowed them to 'retire'. Even so, that included still getting them to church. Imagine rousing three teenagers at 7:30 AM on a Sunday (one of two days they could sleep in during the school year). I say no more!

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I'll continue with more of my personal history with our Faith Community in ensuing letters as it reflects many of us. I've also offered to put together missives for anyone in the Parish and will still welcome any ideas from anyone.

I know we have some 'interesting' moments coming down the road. I have kept all of you in my daily prayers since I joined way back when and continue to do so. The last two decades you were my true home and my family even some of you 'slightly 'cantankerous ones! Your prayers have lifted me out of the 'dung' heap many times.

As we take our next steps, please let us take out steps together. Be open to any door the Lord opens, and we will survive as a Catholic Community. Listen to Him because His way is the only way. Stash our own egos and pray. Jesus will see us through if we follow the way He wants and not our own agendas no matter how noble we feel about ours. Discern before deciding.

In various letters and comments of late, that pass through my texts and emails, I've seen great hope for us. And with that hope we will continue as that shining little church on top of the hill at the end of Alleluia Row!

Let us 'come together' as the Beatles tried to teach us in the song of that name. Everyone is different, as Martin so often reminds me. This involves love for Him, and all created in His image and likeness. And when we love, we respect another person's point of view.

All His Love, Grace and Peace be with all of us, we of the parish of St. Wenceslaus!

Clement

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