



The Shrine of Saint Joseph's Friends, Inc. NEWSLETTER

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SUMMER – FALL ISSUE 2025

In Memory of Jim Blum



Jim Blum, our organization's president for the past 10 years, passed away on February 21st from complications related to pancreatic cancer. A Shrine Board member for 32 years, Jim was absolutely dedicated to this sacred place. Those who knew him best described him as quiet, unassuming, modest, and

humble. Many were unaware of his countless volunteer hours because he worked so quietly behind the scenes.

Jim was among the very last of the early group responsible for saving this Catholic landmark, dedicating 48 years of his life to bringing it to fruition. While he joined the Board in 1993, his commitment began around 1976 when he and his wife Annie were part of the first group who embraced the seemingly impossible goal of saving the Shrine from demolition. At that time, few held much hope for preserving our historic religious monument.

A Life of Service

Captain Blum retired in 2014 as a civilian employee of the U.S. Coast Guard and held a Master's license for Steam and Motor Vehicles upon the Western

Rivers. He piloted the iconic Steamboat Admiral excursion boat for several seasons, while his wife Annie worked aboard the Admiral for 16 summers during its glory days.

After joining the Shrine's Board in 1993, Jim was elected vice president one year later. He would frequently come to the Shrine after work in the evenings to perform various tasks. After serving 21 years as vice president, he was elected president in 2015 following his retirement—a position he held for the past decade.

Quiet Dedication

Jim was at the Shrine almost daily, frequently returning on weekends to assist with wedding rehearsals and Saturday ceremonies. During the COVID pandemic when the facility was shut down, Jim was here almost every day, faithfully caring for the Shrine.

Growing up in Cincinnati, Jim attended Xavier Jesuit High School and Xavier University. His strong Catholic upbringing gave him a remarkable ability to convey dignity and reverence, combined with deep knowledge of church liturgy—invaluable assets to the Shrine.

A Vision for the Future

Shortly before his death, Jim reflected: "We are in a new era now. Nearly all of those who had a personal relationship with this historic Church have passed on. We need to convey to a new generation the Shrine's religious importance and architectural significance—to give them an appreciation of the effort it took so they will be energized to carry on with the same love and devotion our organization has provided over these past 45 years."

Jim remained singularly focused on the Shrine, willingly helping with any task, no matter how small. As president, he inspired us through his constant devotion, never with an exaggerated sense of self-importance.



Jim has certainly earned his eternal reward. We thank the Lord for having given Jim to us and for the many years he dedicated to this Shrine. Without Jim and others like him, the Shrine would surely not have survived.

Joe Finazzo Becomes Board President

Joe Finazzo has been named president of the Shrine Board, replacing Jim Blum upon his passing in February. Joe previously served as vice president since 2015 and has been a board member since 2012.

The connection that Joe has to the Shrine began in childhood with his family's Christmas Eve tradition of attending services. But it was a family crisis in 2006 that deepened his commitment to the sacred site. "A pretty serious medical issue had developed with my wife, Donna," Joe recalled. "We decided to get a support group together and go to the Shrine on her behalf." Kevin and Denise Finazzo, along with Joe's brother, brought about 70 people to Sunday Mass. Father Valentine had the entire group pray together with the St. Peter Claver relic after Mass. "Further testing found no evidence of the diagnosis given," said Joe. "From what transpired that day, I felt like I owed the Shrine a huge debt of gratitude. From that time forward, Donna and I, along with Kevin and Denise, started coming to the Shrine regularly and volunteering."

Drawing on his experience as owner of a home remodeling business, Joe has overseen several major renovation projects at minimal cost to the Shrine. His early projects included renovating both bathrooms and installing new flooring in the east sacristy. In 2016, he converted the Shrine's lighting to LED, replacing over 267 bulbs in 15 chandeliers. He then installed a new sound system, crawling under floors to discreetly run over 250 feet of cable to eight speakers. Joe also headed the Shrine's new broadcast center, which enables livestreaming through eight strategically placed cameras.

When the board decided to replace aging carpeting in 2023, Joe chaired that project as well. He also coordinated the Shrine's 175th anniversary celebration and Father Wunderlich's 50th ordination anniversary banquet. Known for his focus on getting jobs done without seeking personal recognition, Joe will transition to a more managerial role as president, partly due to a recent injury. However, he expects to remain actively involved in projects whenever possible.

"I have found the Shrine to be an unusual place of worship with highly dedicated and enjoyable people doing all kinds of things for the greater glory of God," Joe said. "I hope the good Lord will permit me to continue contributing to this wonderful sacred Shrine."

Note: Kevin and Joe Finazzo are not related, though both have Sicilian roots.



Joe and Donna Finazzo

Maintaining the Shrine

Thanks to the financial support and contributions by our many friends of the Shrine and the ongoing efforts of our dedicated volunteers, the restoration and maintenance of the historic Shrine continues.

West Wall

Moisture penetration below areas of some of the window sills on the west side wall had occurred. First, exterior areas were waterproofed and re-caulked. Then, on the inside, the damaged plaster areas were replaced and high quality re-plastering was done (as shown in the photo). Finally, Michelle Bowman owner of Restoration Plus, re-painted these newly plastered areas to resemble the rest of the existing wall covering.



Maintaining the Roof

The slate roof was inspected and found to need at least 20 cracked tiles replaced, along with some flashing requiring attention.

Refurbishing Statuary Areas

Michelle Bowman, in addition to her work on the west wall, will also be restoring areas such as statues and pedestals that have become marred, scratched, or otherwise damaged.

HVAC Maintenance

Jim Fesler and Mark Ames have been busy on Tuesdays replacing all the filters in the blower system. Routine spring maintenance on the outside compressor unit that services the church has also been completed.

Record Updates

Carolyn Ames volunteered to review all wedding, funeral, and baptismal records, bringing them up to date both at the Shrine and at their depository in the Archdiocesan central office.

The Shrine Gift Shoppe

Under the direction of Board member Kathleen Weltzin, she, Mary Matthews, and Susan Luepker have spent many Tuesdays removing difficult-to-sell items, adding fresh new items and interesting displays, and making the entire area more attractive and user-friendly.

Main Altar

On both sides of the altar, artisans will scrape and repaint areas where paint is flaking and chipping. Scaffolding will be erected in August during a break in the wedding schedule.

New Furnace

The furnace that services the rectory had to be replaced. Fortunately, the compressor unit for the furnace was repairable.

Appreciation Sunday BBQ



On June 1st, we were blessed with a beautiful, sunny spring day to hold our annual Appreciation Sunday barbecue and outdoor event in the courtyard behind the Shrine. There was an abundance of food, drink, camaraderie, and fellowship.

This day also marked the end of our spring fundraiser. We thank everyone for their very generous response and participation in our spring raffle. Please know that we are profoundly grateful for your prayers and financial gifts, which go a long way in helping us take loving care of this historic Catholic landmark.

Following are the raffle winners that were drawn: 1st place: Gary Weiss, Manchester, MO; 2nd place: Pam Fondell, Webster Groves, MO; 3rd place: Mary Herring, Holbrook, Arizona; 4th place: Heather Martin Cooper, Creve Coeur, MO.



Financial Gift from Sicilian Cultural Association

For a number of years, the Sicilian Cultural Association of St. Louis has been a generous contributor to the Shrine's maintenance and restoration efforts. The organization recently invited Joe Finazzo, our president, and his wife Donna to their dinner meeting on June 6th. Once again, the association presented their annual financial gift to Joe on behalf of the Shrine.

"We have greatly appreciated the long-standing relationship the Shrine has enjoyed with the Sicilian Cultural Association," said Joe. "We are extraordinarily grateful for their continued support."

John O'Leary Movie Due in October

Many of you have been asking about the upcoming film based on John O'Leary's remarkable story of faith and perseverance. We're excited to share that "Soul On Fire" is scheduled for nationwide release around October 10th.

This inspirational movie tells the incredible story of John O'Leary, a St. Louis native who survived devastating burns at age nine when doctors gave him little chance of survival. His journey from tragedy to triumph has touched countless lives and serves as a powerful testament to the strength of the human spirit and God's grace.



Production took place in November and December of 2023 throughout the St. Louis area, including here at the Shrine. Our beautiful church served as the backdrop for several scenes, including the wedding sequence that recreates John's actual marriage ceremony at the Shrine 24 years ago.

We're looking forward to seeing how much of our beloved Shrine appears in the final cut. This promises to be a deeply moving and uplifting film that celebrates the power of faith, family, and determination in the face of seemingly impossible odds.

Shrine Honored for Crisis Nursery Support

The Shrine was recognized for its generous spirit at the Crisis Nursery's annual awards ceremony on April 24. Board member Kathleen Weltzin graciously accepted the award on behalf of the Shrine, celebrating the tremendous impact of our Giving Tree Program.



Through the faithful donations of our Shrine family, Kathleen and her husband Mike were able to provide many essential items to the Crisis Nursery, an organization that offers temporary, safe care for children whose families are facing difficult circumstances. "None of this would have been possible without the generous donors to the Shrine Giving Tree," Kathleen shared.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone for their contributions to the Giving Tree Program, making this wonderful ministry possible.

Doing Ordinary Things with Extraordinary Love

Excerpt from Father Dale's Homilies

When you were baptized, part of the ritual is an anointing on the crown of the head with sacred chrism oil, which comes from the same root word for Christ. The prayer that the ritual accompanies is, *"As Christ was anointed priest, prophet and king, so may you live always as a member of His body, sharing everlasting life."* Part of this baptismal ritual is to make every baptized person priestly, prophetic, and kingly.

Today, we are reminded that each of us is called to live a prophetic life. While we have marvelous books and preaching from the prophets, often the prophets were very, very reluctant. What does that say to us about our prophetic way of life? I was thinking of the phrase, **"We are not called to do extraordinary things; we are called to do ordinary things extraordinarily well."**

That particular phrase comes from Thérèse of Lisieux – Saint Therese of the Child Jesus. When Thérèse entered the Carmel convent, she was very young and desired to be a saint. She wrote in her autobiography that, compared to all the other great and magnificent saints, she was never going to be a great saint. But eventually, Thérèse came to realize that maybe she wasn't supposed to do extraordinary things. Thérèse wrote, **"I think I'm called to do ordinary things with extraordinary love."** She compared that thought to a small boy trying to climb up a set of stairs. The toddler could not even get his leg up on the first step, but he kept trying. Eventually the father at the top of the stairs came down to pick up the child and bring him up to where he wanted to go. Thérèse said, "You can't stop trying...doing ordinary things with extraordinary love."

I find it interesting that Mother Teresa of Calcutta, whose baptismal name was Agnes Bojaxhiu, took Thérèse of Lisieux as her patron saint upon entering religious life. And Mother Teresa too, began using that phrase, "I want to do ordinary things with extraordinary love." The first we ever see Mother Teresa is as an older woman, after she spent a good deal of her life doing ordinary things with extraordinary love.

I think it's an accumulative thing, my friends. We're not all called to do grand things. What the word of God reminds us is to live our baptismal prophetic life by living an ordinary life of faith, and live it well: staying in touch with God, listening to what He is telling us about living our life, and sharing what we sense in our relationship with God with the world around us.

And, according to these two saints, we do that, not with grand gestures, not with great preaching, but by simply trying to live a faithful life—**doing ordinary things with extraordinary love.**

Transcribed and edited by Mark Ames



Father Dale Wunderlich

Remembering Eldon Arteaga: A Legacy Through the Lens

It is with heavy yet thankful hearts that we remember our dear friend and photographer Eldon Arteaga, who passed away on January 20, 2025. Born on March 9, 1936, Eldon lived a remarkable life dedicated to capturing the beauty and history of St. Louis and the Shrine of St. Joseph through his camera lens.



A Family Legacy in Photography

Eldon joined his father Robert at Arteaga Studios in 1954, beginning what would become a legendary career in photography. The defining moment for the Arteaga family came when they were hired as the official photographers of the Gateway Arch during its construction. On September 19, 1965, twenty-nine year-old Eldon stood atop the Gateway Arch to photograph the final section being lowered into place while his father captured the historic moment from a helicopter. Together, this father-son team took some 12,000 photographs and published *The Building of the St. Louis Gateway Arch*.

The Arteaga Studio collection spans over ten decades and includes nearly every notable person and building in St. Louis. Today, Eldon's son Brad continues the family business and their photographic contributions at the Shrine.

Devoted Service to the Shrine

In the late 1970s, Eldon's father Robert became an early member of the Friends of the Shrine restoration group, and his photography proved instrumental in the movement to save the Shrine. After Robert passed in 1982, Eldon carried on the Arteaga tradition by volunteering his professional photographic skills at the Shrine for over four decades.

Through his lens, Eldon documented nearly every special event held at the Shrine, creating the celebrated photographs featured in the Shrine's newsletters, website, and materials distributed to members and the general public. "Whenever I asked Eldon to photograph an event at the Shrine, he always graciously and enthusiastically volunteered his talents," said Howard Matthews, Shrine newsletter editor. "We are so thankful to Eldon and the Arteaga family for their four decades of steadfast, loyal, and unwavering support of the Shrine."

A Beloved Member and Legacy

Eldon's dedication extended far beyond the lens. He was a beloved member of the Shrine family, regularly attending Sunday Mass with his wife Carolyn, who volunteers and is a Eucharistic minister at the Shrine. Eldon will be remembered for his infectious laugh, his jokes, his stories of St. Louis, and his genuine kindness.

A wonderful Celebration of Life for Eldon was held on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at the Electrician's Hall in St. Louis, with many Shrine members in attendance. While Eldon will be deeply missed, we find comfort and appreciation in knowing that his legacy will live on through the valuable archive and precious memories he preserved of the Shrine.



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Check if appropriate:

- ☐ My name is misspelled
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 - ☐ I received more than one (1) copy
 - ☐ I no longer wish to receive the Newsletter
- Please clip the address panel and mail it to us noting your correction or request.

Mass Times

Sundays: 11:00am

First Friday of each Month: 12:00pm (Noon)

Holy Days of Obligation:

See Website www.shrineofstjoseph.org for details

Veneration of St. Peter Claver Relic or St. Padre Pio Relic following Mass

Fr. Dale Wunderlich, Rector and Recipient
of the Aquinas Institute "Great Preacher" Award.

Staying in touch with the Shrine:

www.shrineofstjoseph.org



facebook.com/shrineofstjoseph



YouTube StJoseph Shrine

Supporting the Shrine with Your Membership



Sherry Chibnall

Restoration and conservation of the historic Shrine relies solely on private contributions. Basic membership is \$15 per person per year. However, if you can help out a little more, it would be greatly and humbly appreciated. We are grateful for your support and commitment to this historic Catholic landmark. Please make your check payable to "Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc."

Please Remember the Shrine in your Will or Trust.

Application for Membership & Renewal Form

Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc.

Basic membership \$15 per person per year

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Check \$ _____ Check Number _____

Date _____ Cash \$ _____

Make checks payable to: Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc.
1220 N. 11th Street, St. Louis, MO 63106-4614

Special Notice: Please be aware that the Shrine has not and does not give or sell names and addresses on our mailing list to any other groups or organizations.

Air & Steam Club

Members of the Air & Steam Club have, for many years, helped to cover utility costs. Your donations have contributed greatly toward the Shrine's heating and AC bills. If you aren't currently a Member, please consider joining now. Your help is needed! There are monthly drawings for prizes totaling \$200. Tickets are \$12 each, and 1 ticket gives you 1 chance to win each month and there's no limit on the number of tickets you can purchase.



John Colao

Simply complete the form below and mail it together with your check payable to:

"Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc."
1220 N. 11th Street, St. Louis, MO 63106-4614.

For more information, please contact **John Colao**, Chairperson
at (314) 231-9407.

Air and Steam Club

Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc.
1220 N. 11th Street, St. Louis, MO 63106-4614

1st Prize \$100

2nd Prize \$50

3rd Prize \$50

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

☐ Please enter my name. I do not wish to make a donation at this time.