



Key Moments in St. Peter's History

A series of historical highlights from the first 200 years of St. Peter – Libertytown.

Father Charles M. Wible

Fr. Charles M. Wible, known affectionately by parishioners as Father Chuck, is the pastor leading St. Peter's into its third century as a community of Catholics in eastern Frederick County and western Carroll County worshipping and serving our Lord in Libertytown. Fr. Chuck came to St. Peter's five years ago when he was initially named parish administrator in January of 2018, before being appointed as pastor.



Fig. 1 Fr. Chuck Wible with Venus Marie

"Our parish anniversary gives us the opportunity to express our gratitude for the blessings of the past, as well as to be hopeful for future blessings as we continue to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ," said Fr. Chuck as the parish kicked off the bicentennial celebration marking 200 years since the establishment of our first church on the same site where we worship today. The building of the first church, a stone chapel, was initiated in 1821 when the parish was formally established. Construction was completed over the next two years and the church was dedicated in September 1823. Our parish was blessed to be able to mark the bicentennial of the beginning of work on that first church with Fr. Chuck shredding the now paid-off loan for our third church at the parish picnic in September 2021. As he noted at the time, only half-jokingly, we avoided the traditional mortgage burning ceremony since the third church was necessitated by the accidental 2004 fire that destroyed our second church building.

Fr. Chuck brought to us his rich background of previous experiences that inform his varied roles as a pastor. The Frederick News-Post described him as "a bit of a renaissance man" in a March 2018 article, noting that he is "an accomplished musician, a published author of two books, a singer and bass player, a former monk, [and] an educator."

Born and raised in the Catonsville area, he attended St. William of York Parish and School as well as Mount St. Joseph High School. Fr. Chuck later graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy from St. Hyacinth College and Seminary in Granby, Massachusetts. He was the youngest of five children, with one brother and three sisters. As he has sometimes noted in his homilies, his father was a typewriter repairman and his mother a bookkeeper. His grandmother lived with the family from the time he was 6 years old.

It was after high school that Fr. Chuck joined the Conventual Franciscans beginning his theology studies at St. Anthony-on-Hudson Seminary, in Rensselaer, New York. After St. Anthony closed, he transferred to the Washington Theological Union in Silver Spring, where he received his Master of Theological

Studies degree in 1989. His career as a high school teacher began while he was with the friars, teaching religion and social studies at St. Francis High School near Buffalo. Discerning out of the friars after 10 years, he left before being ordained and was dispensed from his vows in 1990.

His teaching ministry continued though, and he taught religion at Seton Keough High School in West Baltimore for two years before becoming coordinator of youth ministry at St. Louis Parish in Clarksville. Fr. Chuck says that the ordination of a good friend and his attendance at the 1993 World Youth Day with Pope St. John Paul II in Denver moved him toward priesthood.

He was accepted into a program at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Roland Park and assigned to St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Riviera Beach, for pastoral work on weekends. He also completed a pastoral year there. Fr. Chuck was ordained as a transitional deacon in November 1995 and as a priest in 1996. He then served as associate pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Hydes, and St. Joseph in Cockeysville.

In order to discern a contemplative vocation with the Camaldolese Benedictines, a monastic community in Big Sur, California, he took a leave from pastoral ministry for four months in 2003, but missed being a parish priest. He would return to Maryland as associate pastor at Sacred Heart Church, Glyndon, then as pastor of St. Francis de Sales, Abingdon, followed by St. Michael the Archangel, Overlea. Before coming to St. Peter's, he served as associate pastor at St. John the Evangelist, Frederick. "St. Peter's has been wonderfully warm and welcoming to me," Fr. Chuck told the News-Post in 2018. "There is a genuine sense of community here, and the parish has been quick to incorporate me into it. I am privileged to stand on the shoulders of giants who have each had a unique mark on St. Peter's."

Parishioners have heard Fr. Chuck sing, but all may not know that he plays bass, guitar, ukulele; and writes songs. He's had several poems published and authored two books "*Bible Stories That Speak to Our Heart*" (Paulist Press) which explores the joys and challenges of human love and friendship through the example of timeless Bible stories, and "*I Do and Beyond, Planning the Catholic Wedding Ceremony*" (Cathedral Foundation Press) which helps engaged couples prepare their nuptials. As parishioners also know, Fr. Chuck resides with a Russian Blue cat, a rescue named Venus Marie.

Fr. Chuck enjoys reading and visiting historic sites when he vacations. In 2022 he led a group of parishioners on a pilgrimage to Austria and Germany including the COVID-delayed decennial presentation of the Passion Play in the village of Oberammergau. The travel delay was certainly not the only impact of the pandemic, and Fr. Chuck led our parish as we navigated the uncertainties of that extraordinary and evolving situation, finding new ways to minister to his flock.



Fig. 2 Fr. Chuck Wible shredding the loan for the third church September 21, 2021