

# The Soul of Seton

By Barbara Gargiulo

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## John Carlisle



### *Editors Note:*

*St. Augustine wrote, “Christian charity is the human face of God. If you see charity, you see the Trinity.” To give in charity of ones time, skills and money, one loves his brother and sister in a way that makes the presence of God real. Fortunately, so many at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton have seen the human face of God through the work of John Carlisle. To be charitable is to be Christian. To give of ones time, abilities and money to those in need is to be church in the world. For more information on how you can be involved in the service work of our church, please contact the Family Life or Pastoral Ministries offices at 972-596-5505.*

**Why do we come to Mass?**

**On some occasions we sing the answer:**

*We come to share our story.*

*We come to break the bread.*

*We come to know our rising from the dead.*

**(Song of the Body of Christ by David Haas 1957)**

Each member of the Catholic Community of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton comes to Mass with a unique and special story to share. John Carlisle finds many ways to share his time, talent and story.

John and his family moved to Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in 1997. John is a third generation Texan, but his path to Plano followed a diverse and winding route. John’s formative—junior high and high school—years were spent in what was then known as the Panama Canal Zone. His father was able to trade in his time at sea in the Merchant Marine for a dream job as a Panama Canal pilot, guiding ships along the 50-mile journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific and back. The school on the Atlantic side of the area was small. John followed his interests in football, swimming, drama; he was active in student government, ROTC, Honor Society, and in the Future Teachers Club. John achieved first place in an essay contest in which he expressed his feelings about democracy; the prize was a trip to Washington D.C. and the admiration of his teachers and peers. John’s speech at graduation was talked about for years. John attended the University of Texas at Austin where he graduated with a double major—English and Government. Next stop was law school at the University of Houston. After graduating he found work in the field of Admiralty Law. This

circumstance gave John opportunity to bond with his father. John remembers talking about legal cases with his father.

John's family was not committed to church-going. John describes his church experience as "Mainly tagging along with friends". Eventually John was baptized into the Lutheran religion but still felt no particular ties to church.

John made a decision to try private law practice. He moved to Kingwood and joined a small suburban general civil practice. It was there that John met and fell in love with Mary Ann (yes, the same Mary Ann we love for her Hospital Ministry, her teaching and her clown ministry) who was a widow with four daughters. Mary Ann and her family were deeply committed Catholics. Before they married, John warned Mary Ann that there was no way that he was going to become a Catholic. However, after one Sunday at home watching football, John felt it would be best for the family if he attended Mass with them. After a couple of years, John felt the call to become Catholic himself, went through the RCIA process in 1988 and received the sacraments of the Catholic Church. John trained and served as a lector in his new parish.

The family decided that leaving private law practice and taking a job with the FDIC was an appropriate move. From 1988-2000 John worked with the FDIC in Midland, then Orlando, Florida, then Atlanta and finally back to Dallas. At each stop the parish community was important in the Carlisle's life. John served as a lector, as a Eucharistic Minister and as an RCIA sponsor. At Transfiguration Church in Atlanta John took on a special role in the Liturgy; he became a Master of Ceremonies and assisted the altar servers with the details of the Mass. The Carlisle's also became active in the Marriage Encounter movement and John's passion for RCIA led him to become co-chair of the sponsor team. Service to the church community was always an important part of their life.

So the road comes to Plano. Here the Carlisle's found a parish that is "alive." John serves as lector, Eucharistic Minister, Mass captain, in the

funeral ministry, *Why Catholic?* core team, he is the Worship Commissioner and sits on various liturgy committees, and, of course, in the RCIA as a trainer of sponsors. You might also know John when you see him wear his kilt to Midnight Mass. He has been part of the Parish Council, has provided *pro bono* legal work for members of the parish who cannot afford an attorney, and leads a Sunday-morning Bible study. The Bible study follows from John's special interest in adult faith formation. He is also currently discerning whether he is being called to enter the diaconate. (He asks for all of your prayers on behalf of all the men and their wives who are discerning this call.) If John is not at home or at work, you'll probably find him at SEAS.

John's "spare time" is filled with writing from humorous, *Confessions of a Middle-aged Altar Server* and *Hot Flashes Are Contagious* (for excerpts, check out <http://aguidetomiddleage.blogspot.com>) to the very serious, *The Journey: A Primer for RCIA*. He also finds time to serve as president of the Family of Bruce International, Inc., is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and is an active member of the Scottish Society of Dallas, having served as the emcee for a number of their Tartan Day festivities.

John says, "My motto is 'Service with humility.' I am doing pretty well on the service aspect; it's the humility that is more of a challenge. But, I feel that I have been abundantly blessed with gifts from God. I have my faith, my family, my health, a modicum of intelligence and an ability to communicate. We all have been given gifts from God. It is our responsibility to use them for each other's benefit and give glory to God. If we ignore, are embarrassed or otherwise fail to use those gifts for each other, what does that say about our relationship with God? If we do not use our gifts for others, we are turning our back on God. This is something that I choose not to do."

Maybe the best glimpse of John Carlisle can be seen in the prayer that is taped to his computer—*A Prayer for Guidance*. Each day, John asks God to be with him through whatever happens.