

## MORE THAN FOUR WALLS: THE HOUSE THAT MADE ME

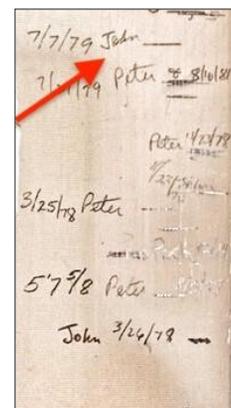
Okay, it was a bit of a whim. I'm not exactly in the habit of stopping by someone's home unannounced! But glancing at my key chain, I instinctively knew it was time. I parked in front of the home of the family that had just signed on the dotted line and rang the doorbell. You see, I possessed something I no longer needed. Ramsey County may define it as "**Lots 3 and 4, Block 4 of Loudon Park Plat**" but to me, it is the only place I have ever really called home. After 52 years, our family home on Berkeley Ave. now belongs to its fourth owner since its construction in 1925. I surmised they might want an extra house key. After all, I had made my peace and said goodbye. Our wonderful visit ended with a standing invitation to visit my former home anytime. We'll see— I'm a little torn.

Do I have any regrets? Perhaps two. Some health issues for my parents this past summer hastened the sale in the fall, such that we never knowingly had a "final Christmas" there. I would have loved that. The other— well, we used to jump down the steps from the landing. There are sixteen stairs in total to the second level— ten from the main floor to the landing, and six more to the second floor. Climbing up the first group, one encounters the threshold from the second floor. As a result, when jumping down, we had to be sure to **duck our heads!** I distinctly recall my success from step nine, but was always too afraid to try from the top step. Being slightly taller than I was at age nine, I paused at the landing for a split second, knowing this would be my last chance. Pondering how I would explain my broken ankle or bruised skull to my family (not to mention the Archbishop), discretion became the better part of valor!

We each had an assigned place at the dining room table— the family's two lefties (my oldest brother and me) on one side, my other brother and my sister opposite, with Mom and Dad occupying the two heads. The family dinner time was always a high priority and truth be told, I assumed that all families ate together nightly. That is just what we did. On summer evenings after dinner, the street was filled with neighborhood kids playing "Kick the Can" or other games that we ourselves invented and managed. No parents to be seen, but they were surely always near. The games were never "scheduled," merely presumed. I actually enjoyed mowing the lawn. The periodic emptying of the bag enabled me to catch up on the Twins score from the portable radio tuned to WCCO, once the din of the motor shut off. But taking out the trash to burn it—that's right **burn it!**— well, that was the prerogative of my brother as the eldest son and aspiring pyromaniac. The city banned that practice in 1969, but it sure was fun while it lasted.

Memories flood my mind, though in no particular order: listening to the "Victrola" while doing "mandatory" spring cleaning; foosball games (I eventually became a decent player, having tired of consistently losing to my siblings); hand stitched Christmas stockings hung on the fireplace; losing our brand new Norwegian Elkhound puppy Sonya, only to find her peacefully sleeping underneath the peony bush; planting two small trees that now majestically tower over the south side of the house; the infamous June 30, 1967 storm, during which I vividly recall the screaming of the nearly 100 mph-winds; scavenger hunts, Easter basket hiding, and the unwrapping of the Christmas Crèche pieces, hoping to be the "lucky one" to **find Baby Jesus**. I listened to my favorite "records" in the basement and who could forget having my **very own bedroom** for my Senior year in high school? With all my older siblings away, I was living the life! It was short lived, as I acquired a roommate again in the college seminary!

A house may be comprised of four walls, but not a home. Our home was built through my parents' commitment to the nightly family dinner table, in piling into the station wagon (remember those?) each Sunday to go to church, in bedtime prayers, and in television restrictions on school nights, etc. I took their commitment for granted, but it was **foundational to our formation**. At dinner, I learned about world events, science, history, reviewed the day's events at school, and was encouraged to participate in the discussion, even as the youngest. My greatest achievement while in the house? It was July 7, 1979— passing up my older brother in height! I preserved the photographic evidence from the closet door where my Dad periodically took measurements! My favorite chores were vacuuming and washing the storm windows each fall before changing out the screens. My least favorite chores were using the wire brush to clean the radiators and cleaning the dog pen!



Being acutely aware of my own shortcomings on this Feast of the Holy Family, the building up of family life necessitates that it **remain a priority** among all family members and at every stage in our lives. We look to the Holy Family for encouragement and inspiration. In retrospect, I am content that our family did pretty well by that house. While we were not a perfect family (besides JMJ, whose is after all?), our house fulfilled its essential function, providing shelter, stability, countless memories, and was the locus for myriad lessons in life and faith. They say, “The clothes don’t make the man,” and I agree. But in its own unique way, this house “made me” and will always occupy a treasured place in my heart. One fifty-two-year chapter has now definitively concluded, the next one continues to unfold. Whatever your current family situation, may this special feast of the Holy Family touch your heart, and draw you closer to Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

- We are offering four Masses for the **Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**, a holy day of obligation: Monday December 31 at 5:15 p.m. (Anticipatory); Tuesday January 1 at 8:00, 10:00, and 12:00 Noon. What a fitting way to begin 2019, begging God’s blessing and the Blessed Mother’s intercession. I hope you will be able to join us for one of these Masses.
- If you have not yet done so, please be sure to **visit the Crèche** in the BVM Chapel and drive by the outdoor Crèche on John Ireland Blvd. Our amazing volunteers did such a magnificent job in decorating the sanctuary, side chapels and Shrine chapels. It’s more planning (and watering!) than you may realize. We are all the beneficiaries of their hard work. Thanks to them and to all who donated for our Christmas flower fund, making this possible.
- The **three restored windows** above the Selby Ave. confessionals are **stunning**. You can really see the difference by looking at the confessional windows on the opposite side of Church. Restoration work on the windows in the Shrines of Nations will begin after Christmas.
- The calendar year ends tomorrow (Monday), and I wish to **encourage your charitable giving** to the parish. Please see the notice on page 7 for more information on charitable giving at Year’s end. Thank you for your generous support!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel  
Rector

