



# St. Francis – St. Joseph Catholic Worker House

Season of Advent, 2019



---

## Memorial Mass for Father Mark Schmieder

A Mass will be held to honor the memory of SFSJ's co-founder,  
Fr. Mark Schmieder, who passed away on Christmas Eve, 2009.

Saturday, December 14 at 5:00 pm

St. Francis Seraph Church

1615 Vine Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202

(On the corner of Liberty & Vine in Over-the-Rhine)

## SFSJ Annual Christmas Party

Immediately following the memorial Mass, we will hold our annual SFSJ Christmas party located at 1437 Walnut Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202 on Saturday, December 14 at 6:00pm. All are welcome to attend.

We will have food, live music and fun! We hope to see you there!

**JONATHAN** endured a horrific childhood. He was abused, shuttled between foster homes and locked up in various juvenile facilities and psyche wards. Amazingly, he blames no one, “I was a rotten, bad kid,” Jonathan admits. “I was drinking and getting high at age 11 and spent my 16th, 17th and 18th birthdays locked up.” He graduated from marijuana and alcohol to opiates and has spent 10 of his 32 years in prison. Jonathan overdosed twice on heroin and had to be brought back to life.



This life appeared hopeless barring a miracle. Jonathan’s faith together with compassionate support provided that miracle. Jonathan stayed at the Catholic Worker House in January and February of this year. He recalls that “I had time to be quiet and listen for direction from God.” While some guests grumble about the rules, Jonathan embraced the environment: “The Catholic Worker House is a great place; the rules make it orderly and comfortable.” At this time, Jonathan “relinquished my will to God,” and his miraculous transformation ensued.

Jonathan is now 15 months sober and has arrived at the place where he can contribute: “I try to help people,” he states simply. He has that opportunity as a new staff member at the Catholic Worker House. Jonathan is a big man and covered with tattoos, a reminder of his difficult past. Despite the intimidating appearance, Jonathan remains intensely earnest; he is strident and serious about his recovery. “I now have a welcome feeling of both freedom and

responsibility. I pay my bills, I’m no longer on probation and I have a driver’s license. I’m not duckin’ and dodgin’ any longer.” Jonathan has happily reconnected with his 11-year-old daughter, further motivating his lasting recovery.

Jonathan currently resides at Charlie’s ¾ House and he looks forward to helping our guests in their respective recoveries. Welcome to the Staff, Jonathan!

---

**MARCUS** is an affable young man, graduate of suburban Kings High School and only 28 years old. He poses an unlikely candidate for homelessness. However, alcoholism and its consequences heed no demographic. Marcus started drinking as a teenager and trouble followed. At first, just underage drinking tickets, then DUI and finally an assault charge. He was in and out of jail in his early 20’s, struggling to get by. “October 19, 2013!” Marcus exclaims. “That was my last day in jail. I’ll never forget that date.”

Although he has since avoided jail, Marcus escalated his drinking, finally landing homeless and tired at the Catholic Worker House in June of this year. Marcus has embraced the spirit of the House and recovery: “I like the accountability and structure. It’s practice for the real world. I needed that.”

Marcus attends AA meeting with vigilance and works the spiritual program to stay sober. It helps that he now resides with other recovering men at Charlie’s. He works at a Clifton restaurant and, for now, spurns any grandiose ambitions. “It’s time to become comfortable in my recovery routine and just enjoy being sober,” Marcus reflects. He clearly understands that sobriety must be his paramount goal. We wish Marcus well as he looks to a bright and hopeful future!





**ADAM** has experienced the chaos and destruction of alcohol and drug abuse since he was 13 years old. Now 37, he is quietly enjoying recovery and looking forward to his future.

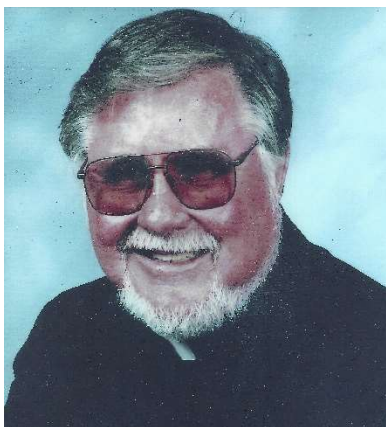
The “bottom” occurred in 2016 when Adam broke his ankle. With too much time and pain, he accelerated his drinking and turned to heroin. Fortunately, he had known House Manager, John Clark, and contacted John for help. Adam stayed at the House for two nights, then went to Dayton for rehab and 6 months at a sober living house. However, shortly after his departure from Dayton, he returned to Cincinnati and his old habits. Adam relapsed and was miserable, again calling John for help. He checked into the Catholic Worker House on June 19 this past summer and stayed for six weeks.

Often, our guests do experience relapse and need another chance. Relapse is not unexpected, and the guest is welcomed back and encouraged to keep working on recovery. For Adam, he needed the structure and discipline provided by the House rules: “They held me accountable and now I am more responsible and disciplined.” Adam calls the House staff “very helpful” as he embraces the tenets of AA by “doing the right thing.” This commitment has engendered confidence and a new happiness.

Adam is now self-sufficient, working for Hilltop Landscaping and living in his own Covington apartment. We wish Adam continued success and he is a stellar example of the power of persistence as well as the efficacy of second and third chances.

---

### **Reflections on a Priest of Integrity**



It is hard to acknowledge that our house’s founder, leader, and inspiration, Fr. Mark Schmieder, died a full decade ago, on Christmas Eve 2009. In a very Christian sense, Mark is still with us.

We could write a book about Fr. Mark. But we would not merely call it a book. It would be more properly termed a gospel, The Gospel of Fr. Mark.

Fr. Mark was a great preacher and teacher. Not an orator who wowed people with polished rhetoric and dramatic flair. Leave that for politicians and televangelists. Mark preached and taught by personal example, merely being himself and giving of himself. He does this still, through the organizations and persons he influenced.

We can recite a lot of facts about Mark, but they will not fully tell you who he was. Only by pondering his deeds do we get the full picture.

Mark was one of seven children, born in Minster, Ohio, about 100 miles north of Cincinnati, part of a Catholic farm belt started by German immigrants in pre-Civil War days. Minster is named after Muenster, Germany. The town is still dominated by the twin towers of St Augustine Church, built by the immigrants in 1848.

Mark attended Minster public school, which, as was common in that area at that time, was staffed by Catholic nuns. His uncle was a priest. His religious instruction was the Baltimore Catechism. Mark entered diocesan

seminary in the latter 1950's, at a time when Pope Saint John XXIII, who had experienced first-hand the evils of the Second World War, began opening the windows of the Catholic Church.

Mark was ordained a priest in 1966, right after The Second Vatican Council. He was a priest and servant to others for 43 years, until he succumbed to pancreatic cancer.

During his first years as a priest, he was an archdiocesan high school teacher, the Newman campus minister at Wittenberg College, and an associate pastor. He obtained a master's degree in religious education from Loyola University in Chicago. During those years, Mark began to show that he was a genuine disciple of Christ, a member of the People of God, rather than a "company man" loyal to the human institution known as the Vatican. Mark, in his quiet, unassuming way, learned to speak truth to power.



In 1980, Mark was struggling to find his role in the institutional Church. He was the proverbial round peg who could not be forced into a square hole. There was a job opening: Catholic prison chaplain at the Lebanon Correctional Institution (LCI.) Mark took the job, hit his stride, and was there for 22 years, serving a flock unimaginable to the average priest.

Mark was elected president of the American Catholic Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCCA). This led to a visit to the White House and a tête-à-tête that almost did not happen. Mark had received an invitation from the White House to join President George W. Bush in greeting Pope Benedict during his visit to the U.S. Mark thought the invitation was a practical joke played on him by some friend who knew that Mark expressly did not agree with the Vatican on several issues, such as ordination of women and married persons, and treatment of persons abused by priests. [I was prime suspect.] Mark ignored the invitation. The invitation came a second time. He ignored it again but began to wonder about the persistence of his practical joker. Then, an FBI agent showed up at Mark's door to do a security check. Mark was finally persuaded that the invite was for real. He went to the White House and found himself within whispering distance of the ruler of the one true church, while several grand high pooh-bas and exalted eminences of Church and State leaned in to catch a snatch of Mark's advice. (Meet with victims!)

Speaking of victims, Mark was a local leader for Voice of the Faithful (VOTF), supporting abused persons, putting pressure on institutional church leaders to effectively address the abuse problem, lobbying the state legislature to extend the relevant statute of limitations, obtaining 501(c)3 recognition from the IRS in order to put local VOTF on sounder financial footing.

For his efforts on behalf of victims and church reform, National VOTF accorded Mark its highest honor, naming him "A Priest of Integrity."

Mark's greatest legacy as prison chaplain is the Kairos program. It took time and effort to get it started, lobbying, hoping, praying, leaping through official hoops, cutting red tape, but Mark's sheer persistence and convincing belief in God's power and love won out. He got the Ohio Department of Corrections to permit a Kairos program at LCI, making available to inmates a spiritual program with outsiders coming in to listen, share, counsel. Almost all the state-run prisons in Ohio now have Kairos programs, staffed by many volunteers who give up weekends to interact and counsel with inmates. Good for the inmates, good for the volunteers, thanks to Mark.

Mark never left prison ministry. After he retired from his state prison duties, he volunteered as a chaplain at the Hamilton County Jail until his death.

Mark lived out an awareness that the church was initially not an organization of large parishes and buildings. In the first centuries, Christians met in “house churches,” shared meals, did works of mercy together. Mark lived out this awareness through membership in a small group, a greater Cincinnati lay Marianist group called Anawim, from the Hebrew word meaning the “poor of Yahweh,” or “the faithful remnant.” Members meet to break bread with the Resurrected Lord and each other and support social ministries. Mark worked with Anawim members in the 1980s to rehabilitate housing for the poor. He was celebrant at their Masses.

Mark loved nature and all its creatures, from his canine buddy Champ to the birds at his feeders to the fish he caught. During adventurous fly-in canoe expeditions on remote Canadian rivers used by fur traders in the early 1800s, he and his fishing buddies would build a fire on the shore at the end of the day and clean, cook, and share their daily catch. Breaking bread on the shore with the Resurrected Lord.

One of those canoe expeditions took place in 1980, on the South Nahanni River, in the Northwest Territories near The Yukon and the north border of British Columbia. Along a particularly rough stretch of rapids, Mark and his brother Carl spotted an empty canoe, pinned, bent, wrapped around a boulder by fierce current. It was Gordon Lightfoot’s famous “Canary Yellow Canoe,” immortalized in his song of that name. Lightfoot, his party and packs were marooned on the shore nearby. They weren’t going anywhere without that canoe, unless by foot over interminable miles of rough country. They had been waving an orange tarp at the sound of an aircraft. Nursing hope that another canoe crew would happen by, which is what happened. Mark’s group was prepared for just this situation. They were carrying a small winch and extra rope, which were used to Z-drag Lightfoot’s canoe free. Luckily, the canoe was new tech Kevlar. Unlike older aluminum or wooden canoes, it could be bent back to useable shape. Lightfoot was on his way. [Two years ago, in December 2017, he donated his canary yellow Kevlar canoe to the Canadian National Canoe museum in Ontario, where it is displayed with reference to the story of its rescue.] Mark and his crew had perhaps saved lives, not just a canoe, but to Mark it was no-big-deal. Just what you do. Mark was, literally, a “fisher of men.” For us, this event loosely parallels the story of the Good Samaritan. No robbers, no smug prejudiced passers-by. But close enough. For Mark, you help others in need. You do for others what you would want for yourself. Why else are we here?



Mark was well known at Morgan’s canoe liveries on the Great and Little Miami Rivers. When a Morgan canoe had acquired sufficient dents and gashes to be beyond its commercial value, Mark would be permitted to haul it off. He would refurbish it and pass it on to a friend or person in need of a canoe. (Mark promised this writer one such canoe, quid pro quo for pro bono legal services for Catholic Worker and VOTF. The un-timeliness of his death punctuates the fact that he still owes me that canoe.)

He was known by friends as “Marco,” after that other famous explorer, Marco Polo. He acquired a watercraft that fit the definition of an old leaky raft, put a motor on



it, somehow jerry rigged it into what was charitably called a “houseboat,” christened the “Marco Polo.” It became so notorious amongst the local boating community that it was chosen to lead the parade of boats at the Labor Day weekend WEBN fireworks and granted an up-front berth with a primo view.

The end of Mark’s life on our plane of existence came quickly. A public health nurse regularly visited St. Francis-St. Joseph in a mobile clinic van to give our guests basic health examinations. One day, she remarked to Mark that he was looking a bit jaundiced and might himself need a health check. That began the process that led to his diagnosis of advanced incurable pancreatic cancer. Death was near, a matter of months. He eschewed traditional treatment, which would have greatly diminished his quality of life, in favor of a homeopathic diet approach. He carried on as usual. If you were not told, you wouldn’t know he was seriously ill. Then, suddenly it seemed to many of us, the end came. He spent his last few hours of coherence calling friends to say thanks and good-bye.

Maybe the last facts about Mark are these: his funeral Mass took place January 2, 2010, at St. Francis Seraph church, Vine and Liberty, Over-the-Rhine, packed with persons spilling out the front doors, down the steps, onto the street from all walks of life and economic strata, lawyers, doctors, street people, social workers, nuns, do-gooders, all faiths, the Archbishop presiding, a very large number of fellow priests con-celebrating. Kairos team volunteers were pallbearers.

A key last fact: no one, regardless of their faith, belief, membership, politics, race, ethnicity, orientation, status, clothing apparel, appearance was denied the sacrament of the Eucharist at Mark’s funeral Mass. All broke bread together. This was the church we read about in the Gospel of Mark, the Priest of Integrity.

Then, again, maybe the facts of Mark’s life are not over. Perhaps he is not dead, after all. This could be a feeling, an intuition, wishful thinking rather than fact. But you cannot ignore the facts that VOTF and its members and beneficiaries exist still, the same for the prison Kairos weekends, and the Anawim Community, and St. Francis-St. Joseph Catholic Worker House.

Somewhere in the world, there will always be persons marooned up a remote creek, in need of help. Then a rescue canoe will appear, bouncing and bumping resolutely against prevailing currents. We who knew Mark will recognize the person paddling that canoe.

- Mike Harmon





**STAFF MEMBER TYRONE BROOKS** has reliably toiled weekends at the Catholic Worker House since 2016. Moreover, he has immersed himself into the recovery community since his December 16, 2015 sobriety date. Tyrone is also on staff at Charlie's ¾ House and currently resides there, attending AA meetings and living clean and sober. His dedication forecasts a strong and long recovery.

Life was not always so simple. Tyrone is a mild mannered, easy going fellow from small town Maysville, KY, but he ran into trouble because of drinking in his late teens. The offenses were minor, but, after a probation violation, he ended up logging 24 months in jail over a few years. His family in Maysville wearied of his drinking and he went to Charlie's, living sober from 2008 until a relapse in 2010. Weary again of drinking, Tyrone returned to Charlie's in 2014 and he has achieved some durable sobriety since 2015. Now, in his third term at Charlie's, Tyrone firmly believes in second chances: "I'm giving back. I just like helping the guys." What's different this time? Tyrone explains, "Now, I'm doing this for myself, not because someone is telling me I have to." At 45 years old, Tyrone is most pleased about his improved family relationships, especially with his mother.

Manager John Clark opines that Tyrone's life experiences and dedication to recovery translate to effective connections with our guests. Indeed, Tyrone possesses a calm, serene demeanor that imparts peace to those around him. We hope that Tyrone continues his great work at the House while enjoying a happy recovery.

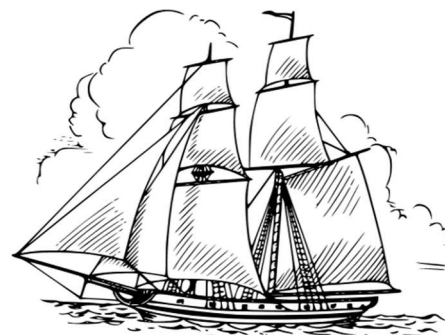
---

### **Marco Polo Circle**

If they have the will, ***we are the way!*** Join the Marco Polo Circle to help us assist these wonderful men in becoming independent. Your monthly pledges will provide us with the means to carry on this important work. Simply go to our website at [www.catholicworkercincinnati.org](http://www.catholicworkercincinnati.org) and click on the 'Donate' button. A recurring monthly contribution of any amount will make you a member!

Your ***monthly*** pledge IMPACTS LIVES daily!

- \$5** = feeds 300 people in our Soup Kitchen
- \$10** = assists with providing job search tools
- \$20** = provides 2 weeks of home cooked dinners for our guests
- \$50** = gives 20 men work boots, a prerequisite for hiring at many jobs
- \$100** = sponsors the cost of a guest's complete 60-day stay at the House



---

### **Note from the Board of Trustees**

Through 2019, with the help of all of you, we continue to operate at the highest level. Through October, 229 homeless men found hospitality at the House. Of the 180 that stayed, 74 were able to find work, save money and move on to independent housing. The others were given food, shelter, clothing and opportunity. No effort is wasted. SFSJ's success rate has once again exceeded 40%! Great work everybody!

- Mary Repaske, Chairman

The St. Francis – St. Joseph Catholic Worker House vigilantly protects its independence and freedom from politics or distracting influences in order to focus on the mission of helping the homeless and the poor.

The House receives no government or diocesan funding and operates with simplicity and frugality.

If you wish to help us continue the good work, please send your tax-deductible donation to:

St. Francis – St. Joseph  
Catholic Worker House  
P.O. Box 14274  
Cincinnati, OH 45250



### **St. Francis – St. Joseph Staff**

John Clark (House Manager)  
Andy Hocter - Gary Finney  
Richard Johnson - Robert Taylor  
Tyrone Brooks - Linn Schneider  
Bob Shearman - Jonathan Fryman

### **St. Francis – St. Joseph Board**

Joyce Kiernan - Mike Harmon  
Michael Dufek - Bob Bertsch  
Mary Repaske - Carolyn West  
Sr. Kay Tardiff - Dan Schmits  
Nancy Feldman - Teresa Stephens  
Dr. John Zerbe

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Cincinnati, OH  
Permit #4039



St. Francis – St. Joseph  
Catholic Worker House  
P.O. Box 14274  
Cincinnati, OH 45250