



Parish Couple of the Month

Dan & Janice McElroy

October 2021

Gracious and Holy Father, give us the wisdom to discover You, the intelligence to understand You, the diligence to seek after You, the patience to wait for You, eyes to behold You, a heart to meditate upon You, and a life to proclaim You, through the power of the Spirit of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

This is a prayer by Saint Benedict and it tends to express the stages of life for Dan and Janice McElroy. Their journey together starts out with *the wisdom to discover You*. Dan a Colorado native grew up as a cradle Catholic. The son of a third generation ranching family, with four siblings and a Mother who honored the Virgin Mary; prayerful to the rosary. He left home for college, playing football and having dreams of being a drummer in a rock band. You may remember the band called “The Posse”, well Dan was the drummer. His band would play at different venues throughout the Gunnison Valley. Dan came to Gunnison as a freshman to Western State College where he met Janice. Dan grew up on the downhill ski slopes and was no stranger to an adventure, But Janice came from Southern California so Gunnison was a brand new experience. She remembers the first time arriving in Gunnison, stepping out to take a breath of fresh mountain air and thinking to herself, “it smells good here.” Finding simple pleasure in this mountain town. Janice was born and raised as a Christian Protestant in Oklahoma until the age of 8 when her family moved to Southern California. After attending one year at Ventura Junior College and prompted by her cousin who was a professor at WSC, she headed off to college in Gunnison.

Dan and Janice were married in Queen of All Saints Church in 1967, after Janice was confirmed in the Catholic Church. In the fall of that year, Dan was still going to school at Western, but Janice had completed her student teaching and they looked forward to the arrival of their first child. In the fall of 1969, they made the move to Crested Butte and Janice got her first teaching job as the new kindergarten teacher at the Crested Butte School. The school had 40 kids and 3 teachers! She taught there for 13 years before they moved back to Gunnison because there was no high school in Crested Butte. Over time, the schedule of 5 children in sports and a myriad of activities, it was time for Janice to temporarily move away from teaching. Their children; Joe, Matt, Patrick and twins Christopher and Letitia were all very involved in sports and very active. During this time, Dan and Janice also owned a Commercial Laundry business in downtown Gunnison (now All Sports Replay), in addition to finding time to teach catechism and support all the youth activities their children were involved in. These busy-but wonderful times gave Dan and Janice *the diligence to seek after You, the patience to wait for You*.

Eventually, the McElroy’s found themselves with a quiet house and time to move in another direction. It 2000, the Great Year of Jubilee for the Catholic Church. Dan and Janice decided to get involved in Level 2 Ministry, which is a series of courses on Catholic traditions and doctrines seeking - *the intelligence to understand You*. This was a turning point for Dan and Janice. They felt they were not able to answer questions about their faith and defend it, so this course was the beginning of a new journey. In their adventurous fashion, they jumped in with both feet! Taking classes together, going on retreats, and becoming disciples of Christ. A weekend cursio with Fr. Jim Koensfield this path forward for them both. Dan found a new world of programs and was encouraged by people involved in their faith. Janice

continued on a steady path, walking with God through adoration and admiration of creation of God's great beauty.

In the McElroy home you will find a library full of religious books. At night Dan turns off the television and uses this time to steadily grow in knowledge and faith, contemplating and meditating and cherishing every word. Janice takes her time outside, listening to spiritual and educational podcasts as she walks on the paths of God's creation, they use their *eyes to behold You, a heart to meditate upon You*.

Their gifts of time and talent go in many directions; study groups, teaching, volunteer work, committees, mentoring, listening, and just being there. They may be retired (sort of), but their ambition and mission continue onward towards *a life to proclaim You*, reciting and recognizing their favorite Saints and passages from the Bible.

For Janice, St. Anthony comes first to mind – she says because she is always losing things - he is the Patron Saint for the recovery of lost items. Mother Teresa, St. John Paul II, St. Benedict and Saint Padre Pio also come to mind. As a child Janice would have to memorize bible verses and Psalm 23 still sticks with her to this day. *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me; he refreshes my soul. He guides me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side. With your rod and your staff that give me courage.* Still finding comfort in these words.

For Dan, Padre Pio comes to mind, amazed at his calling from God, as a 5 year old child, and receiving the stigmata. He also thinks of St. Lawrence for his commitment, courage, and acceptance of martyrdom; his last words being: "**Assum est. Versa et manduca.**" "This side's done. Turn me over and take a bite. But one of his favorite passages is, Romans 7:19-25. *What happens is that I do, not the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend. But if I do what is against my will, it is not I who do it, but sin which dwells in me. This means that even though I want to do what is right, a law that leads to wrongdoing is always ready at hand. My inner self agrees with the law of God, but I see in my body's members another law at war with the law of my mind; this makes me the prisoner of the law of sin in my members. What a wretched man I am!* Dan finds humility in these words.

Dan and Janice complete each other, ever since they were young college kids. They seek *a life to proclaim You* - sharing and growing in their faith together through retreats, cursios education, praying, teaching and even a trip to Fatima in Portugal. What I found most interesting about Dan and Janice is that they share their love for St. Peter. Both describe him as being a bit of a "bumbling dufus" and yet somehow his faith grew and grew, performing many miracles of healing and in time, becoming the right-hand man of Jesus himself, the leader of the early church and a father of the faith. Yes, he had many mishaps and mistakes – which is what makes him so relatable - human. Yet, St. Peter became a fisher of men and the rock upon which Jesus would build his Church.

So, like the story of St. Benedict, Dan and Janice McElroy continue to ask our Holy Father for wisdom to discover, intelligence to understand, diligence to see, patience to wait, eyes to behold, heart to meditate and life to proclaim You. *All through the power of the Spirit of Jesus, our Lord.*

Thank you Dan and Janice for being leaders, teachers, and disciples of our faith through your prayer and actions. Like Peter walking on the water towards Jesus, you keep your focus on the Lord. Amen.