

Jason and Camie Dickherber

The Day of the Interview, April 23, 2025

Pope Francis passed away on April 21, 2025, on Easter Monday. The Church is currently in nine days of mourning. The Pope will be buried on Saturday. The Pope got to meet his flock on Easter Sunday. Jason stated, "Pope Francis reminds us that we have to reach out to our community."

This is also the third day of the Octave of Easter.

Jason and Camie - Childhoods and College

Jason's ancestors came from Germany to Saint Charles County. His parents are David and Mary Ann. They met at Saint Dominic, got married, and moved to Mexico, Missouri. Jason's dad became a farmer growing row crops, corn and soybeans, and raising livestock. Jason stated, "My dad was a heavy advocate of maximizing the beauty of nature."

Jason has four sisters, two brothers, and many nieces and nephews. His Aunt Patty is actually a parishioner at Saint Peter. He attended Saint Brendan Catholic School for eight years.

Camie grew up in Rolla, MO. Her parents are Doyle and Micheline and she has four brothers. She admitted that her brothers were protective of her but there were many pranks. Camie was homeschooled from third grade through twelfth grade.

Her dad was a math teacher in public schools and a band director. He later got into government relations and marketing for Brewer Science in Rolla. Now he works with her brother at a local company. Camie's mom was a homemaker as a midwife and doula. Those jobs required late hours so her mom also taught child birth classes in the evenings. Her mom homeschooled the children.

Camie attended Saint Patrick parish. Ironically, Jason attended Saint Brendan, who was an Irish saint that came after Saint Patrick in history. Even though they're not Irish, they like to celebrate on Saint Patrick's Day because of their childhood churches.

Jason learned different trades and working with his hands. His brother, who was nine years older, was a Mechanical Engineer. His brother rubbed off on Jason and he learned how things worked from middle school on. Jason became interested in engineering at a young age. He got an Electrical Engineering degree from University of Missouri – Rolla, with an emphasis on electronic design. (Rolla is now the Missouri University of Science and Technology.)

Camie stayed home while attending Drury University in Rolla. She majored in English and Human Services.

Meeting at the Newman Center

Jason and Camie met at the Newman Center at Rolla in 2008. It was the end of Jason's Sophomore year and the end of Camie's Freshman year. There was Mass every Wednesday evening and social events. They were on the Newman Council together; Jason was the Social Justice Chair and Camie was the Retreat Chair. They were surrounded by like minded people. They even reconnected with some of these people when they moved to Saint Charles.

Jason and Camie commented positively on the Lindenwood Newman Catholic Center. They stated that Father Staley does a wonderful job. Jason said, "Students have energy and proximity to Saint Peter." Camie said, "It's nice to have their presence here. It's so nice to see." Their children notice the college kids and call them the "big kids."

Getting Engaged and "The Picture"

Jason has started a beautiful tradition with a picture. When Jason and Camie were first dating and it was her birthday in May, he drew her a self portrait picture with one crayon. There was an empty text box at the bottom. Camie didn't understand everything but didn't know Jason well enough to ask him about it. She put the picture in her binder as they continued dating.

Unbeknownst to Camie, Jason had talked to Camie's parents about marrying her. They made a color copy of the picture and put it in her binder so Camie wouldn't know the picture was missing. On Labor

Day weekend, Jason came down from North Dakota, where he was working, and surprised her at her house. He had doughnuts for Camie's family. They walked to the prayer space on her parent's property. It has a cross and looks across a field. He asked her to marry him. She said, "Are you serious?" She wasn't sure if she was called to the religious life and was still discerning that, even though she had been dating Jason. However, she quickly said, "YES!"

Jason picked her favorite flowers from the field. He then gave her the picture with another color and two people in the picture. In the text box, it said "Will you marry me?" Jason knew from the start that Camie was the one. Camie stated, "Women deserve to be pursued. It shows the leadership of their family life now. It's very comforting."

Their engagement was over a year long because Camie had her heart set on a fall wedding. She stated that it was too long for an engagement. They got married on October 10, 2011 at Saint Patrick in Rolla. They went on a honeymoon for a few days.

Then they drove two cars from Saint Louis to Fargo, North Dakota. Jason had lived in an apartment there but he surprised Camie by buying a house one week before they got married. Camie said that this was all part of the trust of a marriage.

When they bought their house, Jason added a third color to the picture. They add another color every time a child is born. The picture is hanging on a wall of their house.

Living in Fargo, North Dakota

Jason got a job in Fargo, North Dakota at the electronics division of a small agricultural equipment manufacturer – John Deere. The company was making hybrid diesel electric construction equipment.

Camie did her last year of school online there. She wasn't too sure about the winters there and driving in the snow. However, winter in Fargo lasts from September until May so she would have to drive in the snow. She ended up getting a job two blocks away at the church, Saint Anthony of Padua. She could walk there if she didn't want to drive in the snow.

Father asked if she could help with PSR. She thought he meant as a teacher. He actually meant as the Director of Education, a full time job. Camie couldn't work full time so the church changed the position to be thirty hours per week. She eventually worked forty hours. She taught Preschool through 12th

grade. She prepared the children for their Confirmation and First Communion, which were in third grade there. She had parent classes and started an Easter egg hunt, which they're still doing.

In Fargo, there's always a layer of snow on the ground. They experienced air temperatures as cold as minus 40 degrees. There would be that week in January when the temperature didn't get above zero. Camie stated that she didn't know that eyelashes could freeze.

However, because it can be such a critical life or death issue if someone is by themselves, the community is very warm. Winter is harsh and people need to work together. People reach out to neighbors to make sure they're okay. Jason and Camie lived on a busy street. Anyone helped if a car broke down. At some time, you will be the person needing help. It was a connected community and it was joyful.

The neighbors were amazing. The next door neighbor let them use all his yard equipment and helped move couches in. Neighbors would babysit. Camie stated, "It was good to not be in the same town as family. It taught us how to rely on each other and others, and how to build a community."

Jason and Camie described the summers as amazing. Their summers were like our springs. Camie found a journal entry that described a July day with a high of 67 degrees. They were close to lakes in Minnesota. They could stay in lake cabins and go fishing and ice fishing in the winter.

Joining Saint Peter

Jason had worked for John Deere for nine years and they now had three children. It was getting harder to make the trip back to see the grandparents and relatives. They prayed about moving closer to family. Saint Louis was halfway between Mexico and Rolla. Within two weeks, Jason had job offers.

They moved to Saint Charles in May 2019. Jason got a great job at Boeing designing avionics at the Phantom Works in Saint Charles. He's a mission system lead. He said that it was similar to designing tractors – tractors move left and right and planes move left and right and also up and down.

They were initially staying at a hotel. They were looking for a parish among the 175 in the Archdiocese. Jason and Camie were familiar with Saint Charles and visited a few churches in Saint Charles. People introduced themselves and were welcoming. Jason and Camie wanted a parish community that was open and welcome.

Their first Sunday at Saint Peter in 2019, the church was working through the restoration of the sacristy. They had just removed the scaffolding from the altar. Jason and Camie could see that the beautiful painting and wood work were being restored. They saw an early 1900's picture that showed the beauty and rich history of the church. The church wasn't being modernized. Jason stated, "The current congregation recognized that they needed to put the time and resources into restoration to keep the parish thriving. The parish is alive and focused on continuing the beautiful traditions. The church is a physical representation of what a parish community does. The Saint Peter sanctuary lifts our eyes to God. Architecture can orient our minds and spirit to God."

They met Father Seper after Mass and he asked them where they were going to church. They told him that they were just looking around. He said, "This is the place to be. It's settled." Sometimes people just need an invitation.

At that time, Saint Peter School had just closed and there was some concern about the lack of children in the church. Jason didn't believe it was a dying parish. Jason said that it was apparent that this was the right church. They could see that the love and prayer showed with the clergy, priests, and community.

They bought a house here with trees and a river behind it. Jason stated, "It's a peaceful little valley. It shows the beauty God has given us." Even now, they rely on the church community and neighbors for help. Neighbors, Ann and Dave Stahlschmidt, and Lindsey and Dan Schmidt, have helped them feel welcomed.

Homeschooling Support from Saint Peter

Jason and Camie have nine children, three in heaven and six on earth. God said to be fruitful. Jessie, Innocent, and Faustina are in heaven. Ephraim is 9, Silas is 8, Miriam is 6, Remy is 4, Alena is 2, and Gertrude is 8 months. Silas will receive his First Communion this Sunday on Divine Mercy Sunday. Remy, Alena, and Gertrude were baptized at Saint Peter.

Jason and Camie have prayed and decided that homeschooling is the best model to educate their children. They stressed that it's a very personal decision for families. Camie was homeschooled through high school so she has that experience. They constantly re-evaluate every year whether this is the right decision. The dynamics of the family change as the children get older and as new babies are born. Some children might have different needs as time progresses.

During the “All Things New Listening Sessions”, Father Seper and Deacon Larry had a special session for homeschoolers. They asked, “What can we do for homeschoolers? We want to accommodate you to raise your children in the faith. Do you need space, Adoration, prayers, Mass?” Jason and Camie described it as beautiful.

The parish is very supportive of homeschoolers. They provide guidance, materials, and socialization. The pastoral team is supportive of sacramental teaching by the parents. PSR is an option for homeschoolers but not a requirement. The clergy let them use the PSR sacramental textbooks if they choose.

Camie and Jason moved here shortly after Saint Peter School closed. It was challenging but they believe it was an opportunity. Many church schools use the facilities and don’t always have space for homeschoolers.

JPII (John Paul II) Homeschool, grades 1-8, formed after the school at Saint Robert closed. JPII is a hybrid, with students attending classes several times per week and being homeschooled on the other days. Several families in Saint Peter parish send their children there.

The Early Learning Center shares the playground on Sundays. This started during the pandemic when everything was closed down. Father, transitional deacons, and seminarians join the families at the playground after Sunday Mass after people have left. It gives the children a chance to ask questions, such as “Why do you wear that cassock?” Camie stated, “They see strong authority figures with love.”

Jason stated, “Regular interactions with clergy have been wonderful. They have more exposure to interacting with adults. You understand who you’re talking to. It’s not just to friends. You’re talking to an adult who is accomplished. There are things you should respect of them and things you can learn from them, so you can be integrated with the community.” He continued, “Priests have special authority during Mass and sacraments. But beyond that, they’re still human. You get to engage with them.”

Homeschoolers can participate at the 8:00 weekday school Mass at Saint Charles Borromeo. They get to answer the question during the priests’ homilies, just like the Saint Charles Borromeo children.

Parents do not have to go through the PSR system or the Catholic school system to have their children receive First Reconciliation, First Communion, or the sacrament of Confirmation. Most other Catholic churches require homeschool and or JPII students to go through PSR of the Catholic parish. Saint Peter

recognizes the parents as the first educator of their children with their own schooling. So they have a “Homeschool / JP II First Communion class.”

When Jason and Camie moved here, there weren’t many young families. Now the majority of families in the pews homeschool or attend JP II. It’s convenient that Saint Robert, a hub of homeschoolers, is so close to Saint Peter. Camie estimated that there are 60 homeschool children at Saint Peter. Saint Peter is easy to get to with the highways. Many parishioners live outside the boundaries.

There are more homeschoolers everywhere. There was an explosion of homeschooling during the pandemic because families realized they could be home with the children. The Missouri Conference for Homeschoolers was held in Saint Charles. Camie stated, “Families value their faith and passing it on to their children. It’s beautiful to be a part of for the last few years.”

Homeschooling Logistics

Children are constantly learning the faith informally by observing their families and by going to Mass. Camie stated, “Kids catch more than they’re taught and that actions speak louder than words.”

Jason stated that parents are the primary educators of their children. It starts at home, such as showing love for a newborn. It continues with crawling, giggling, and laughing. Parents teach “Yes” and “No”. The kids have fun games with chalk and just playing. They experience the environment. For example, Jason walked on the trail in the park with his children. They saw deer, birds, found a snake and turtles along the pond, and discovered plants.

For more formal education, Jason and Camie use the structures and curriculum that are available. One size doesn’t fit all. Camie records hours for each child spent on each subject. Catholic companies put out curriculum that incorporate the faith. In Math, for example, the word problems incorporate the faith. Children learn that the word, “decade”, means ten. Catholic Social Studies are not worldly. Camie stated, “It gives a good foundation first before they’re exposed to that.”

Jason plans his vacations around feast days and the school calendar. For example, he’ll take off the Feast of Saint Monica. He takes vacation on the Feast of Saint Joseph. The family goes to the Shrine of Saint Joseph downtown. He’ll take off during the children’s spring break, which can be whenever Jason and Camie want it to be.

There are different co-ops which will teach the core subjects. The kids go on field trips and also can have art and music classes. Parents bring their skills to the co-op and teach the children. There is a homeschooling co-op that meets at Saint Peter but the Dickherber's are not part of that. Homeschoolers support each other. One homeschool dad was a math teacher. He can advise the parents about the different math curriculums.

The Dickherber's participate in sports with the Catholic Homeschoolers' League. This counts as PE but also is a chance for socialization. It also doesn't take the focus from the family. For example, Jason and Camie always eat dinner between 5:00 to 6:00 every day. It gives them a chance to talk at the same table. Their two year old even begins one line of the meal prayer.

There are about fifty families from all over Saint Louis. The children play baseball and soccer. On Mondays, there's dance, ballet and tap. The kids will also play board games. There's a Lego First League on Tuesday's.

Volunteering

Camie listens to the Holy Spirit and feels a stirring to get involved. She likes to start new ministries and activities.

People noticed that they needed someone to lead Sunday School. Father Seper found out about Camie's experience. She expressed to Father Seper and Deacon Larry that she didn't want to take the children out during Mass and bring them back. Camie has now been involved with the Sunday Pre-school after Mass for six years. This is the first year she's not teaching in the classroom. She lays out the curriculum and sets up a plan. Other people teach and bring supplies. She catches people with children and invites them. This year has been smaller with only 25 to 30 kids. Mass times have changed and they have been trying to figure out the best time for the school.

Camie saw a need for a walking Stations of the Cross during Lent. Stations at noon are hard for working people. Children get the wiggles and it's easier to do it outside. She noticed in her neighborhood how many statues of Mary there were and also fish fry signs. She started knocking on doors. It also became a great way to get to know her neighborhood faith community.

The Stations start at their house and 14 of their neighbors have stations. It's 1.5 miles long. People see the yard signs and pray and meditate. For the first two years, there were black and white images on yard signs. People can scan a QR code. Families and young moms can walk at their own pace. Children

can scoot or ride in a stroller. It's taken off and grown. Now other families, including non-Catholics, are doing it in their neighborhoods.

Camie started a Mom's Group, which is now in its fourth year. Any mom of any age is welcome. They can be new moms or moms with older children. These moms can provide their experience and encouragement. There are generally eight to ten moms per meeting. The group itself has 25 – 40 moms.

Camie started the Advent by Candlelight again. They've had two events so far. She connected others with the parish which resulted in events like the Young Families' Holy Hour. She was on the 175th Anniversary Committee. She faithfully came every month and brought little Trudy with her. Trudy was also a part of this interview.

Camie is currently getting ready for Theology on Tap, which she is planning. Father Staley will be at Chicken and Pickle to answer theology questions from the participants. It should be amazing.

Jason and some of the children help out with the fish fries. The children help seat people, serve the fish, and bus tables. They help put the condiments into containers. Ephraim helped out with the ice cream machine. Jason and Camie feel like their children need to be willing to volunteer and be invested.

Jason started a Men's Group Bible Study. It's at home with other men. The men aren't necessarily the husbands of the mom's in the Moms' Group. Jason became a Fourth Degree Knight in Fargo. He is involved with the Honor Guard and Color Guard.

Jason and Camie describe volunteering as creating community.

Meaning of Saint Peter

Jason and Camie love the tradition of Saint Peter. They're happy that the kneeler was brought back. They also love all the homeschoolers. Camie stated, "We're blessed to have a very Catholic community with families all over."

Jason and Camie are very grateful for the Saint Peter community. They said that they came at the right time. They listened to God's calling. It's a 175 year old parish with a rich heritage. Jason stated, "It

takes everyone to be involved and engaged with people around them. Lots of parishioners have been very dedicated to the parish for years and decades. We're eternally grateful for their commitment and outpouring of gifts to make Saint Peter where it is for 175 years. Camie stated, "Continue to build relationships with peers and neighbors, whether they're next to us in the pew or in the neighborhood. Reach out and say Hi. Such a welcoming community