First Friday Club

Please Join Us

2020-2021 Season Begins October 2nd









CHARLES MATTHEWS

President & CEO of Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas

• October 2, 2020

MARY ANN AHERN & CAROL MARIN

Political Reporters for NBC Chicago

• November 6, 2020

EBOO PATEL Founder of Interfaith Youth Core

December 4, 2020

Welcome!



First and foremost, we hope and pray that you and your loved ones have managed to stay healthy and safe during these difficult times.

Normally, this annual letter recalls the successes of the First Friday Club's recently concluded season, while anticipating future speakers and topics. But as we all know, nothing is normal these days.

So what is the State of the First Friday Club at this moment in time? The foundation of the Club is strong and we have the ability to weather the storm. However, similar to other institutions like schools and sports, our plans for the season will need to change based on guidance recommended by the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, and the CDC.

The First Friday Club has had ongoing discussions with the Union League Club's Management while Covid has forced the city of Chicago to place restrictions on gatherings over 50 people. First Friday has also been in touch with people like you, our members and friends. A big thank you to everyone who participated in First Friday's Survey regarding our speaker luncheons during this pandemic.

Your input was important and quickly told us the majority would not attend an "in-person" speaker luncheon. Instead, only live-streamed or pre-recorded presentations were preferred.

So sadly, the luncheons will not take place at the Union League Club but instead will be virtual. But how will this work? Charles Matthews, CEO of Peoples and North Shore Gas, will kick-off our 35th Season on Friday, October 2, 2020 by way of a pre-recorded presentation. Everyone will have the ability to participate through registration and links via email. All events this season are free but we ask for any donation to help cover our administrative costs.

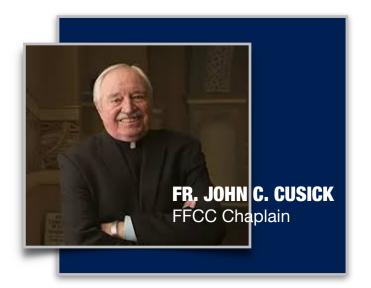
Thank you for your continued support of the mission of the First Friday Club of Chicago. Your membership and support are more critical to our continued operation than ever before. We look forward to another great season of programs and hope you can join us at Noon on Friday, October 2, 2020. Please keep an eye open for our Eblast on how to sign up and listen to our roster of speakers!

Take good care of yourselves,

Rich Beddome

Board President, The First Friday Club of Chicago

A Note from the First Friday Club Chaplain



Everything is different today...or at least it seems that way. Since the middle of March, sometimes dramatic, other times subtly, life as we have known it is so very different today. Will it return to normal sometime (soon)? Or is there a "new normal" that will take hold of our lifestyles, our families, and the routines in life that we took for granted? If I were a betting man, I would bet on the latter, not the former.

Starting Friday October 2 through May 7, 2021, a "new normal" will be set in place for The First Friday Club of Chicago. All of our First Friday speaker events will take place virtually; not at the Union League Club. We will still have some very fine speakers on the first Friday of the month. Their wisdom and insights will be shared with us via computer, laptop, tablet, smart phone, and YouTube.

We made this decision based on the results of the survey from many of you. You told us that for many reasons you are not able to attend even a 50-person First Friday Club lunch at the Union League Club. Hence the decision to present our 2020-2021 programing virtually. In the weeks to come, we will share with you very specific and easy ways to log in to our October 2nd event featuring Charles Matthews, President and CEO of Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas.

In preparation for our new season, can I personally ask a few things of you?

- 1. Please renew your First Friday Club membership
- Even if you have a renewed membership, can you support us with an added contribution? We have unexpected expenses related to the equipment we will be using to bring our speakers to your computer and other devices. We would appreciate any donation!
- 3. Please stay connected to us by tuning into our monthly speakers virtually!

Personally, I will miss greeting you and saying good-bye to you each month. I will also miss the "rush" seeing the Union League's ballroom filled to capacity with over 200 people each first Friday. But in time, and God willing, those moments and feelings will return.

Lastly, In my first sentence above I mentioned that "everything is different today." Well, it really is. However, one thing has not changed: the purpose of the First Friday Club of Chicago. We are still committed to making connections between our faith, our work, and the issues of the day. I know of no other club or organization committed to that purpose.

I hope to "see" you on October 2nd!

Fr. John Cusick Chaplain, First Friday Club of Chicago

2019-2020 Highlights from our 34th Season

Alan Krashesky | October 4, 2019



On October 4, 1981, 21 year old Alan Krashesky walked through

the doors of ABC7 Chicago News Studios for the first time. Thirty-seven years later, he is the dean of broadcast journalists in the Chicago television market. He has been praised for his coverage of the Catholic Church and has covered the international travels of Cardinals Bernardin, George, and Cupich of Chicago.

Personal Back Story

Krashesky began his talk by inferring, "I was meant not to be here." First, he was a last minute replacement for Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who two weeks before the luncheon, had to reschedule to March because of a calendar conflict. Alan had been scheduled to speak later in the season, but was persuaded by Fr. Cusick to move up his talk to be our new season's kick-off speaker. Fr. Cusick somehow reached Alan between his 5:00 pm and 6:00 pm broadcast to confirm it.)

From Fatherless Child to Anchor: A Story of Love, Faith & Family

Second, Alan's life took a tragic turn at about 4 months, when his father, a bread delivery truck driver in Philadelphia, was robbed and fatally by two teenage boys.

Alan remarked that the impact of violence tears apart families – emotionally and financially. The impact is deep, permanent and does not heal. In reporting on violent crimes, Alan described how he is always acutely aware of his own pain, with each and every violent crime story increasing his awareness of the impact of the violence on others.

Important Biblical Scripture for Krashesky from *Genesis 50:20: What you meant for evil, God meant for good.*

As a single parent, Kraskesky's mother was left alone to raise four children – struggling emotionally and financially. Alan was sent away to the Milton Hershey School, a residential school established for impoverished, healthy, male orphans. The school continues its mission today, but now serves students of all backgrounds.

Alan Krashesky | Continued

The school was founded and funded by Hershey's Candy and Chocolate Industrialist Milton Hershey and his wife. Krashesky maintains that this one man's efforts contributed to turning something evil into something good for Krashesky and many other forgotten children.

Krashesky displayed a Hershey Milk Chocolate Bar wrapper and noted that on the back appears the following:

"Your support of Hershey's is an opportunity to share happiness and educate children in need through Milton Hershey School. Thank you for making a difference!"

Alan joined the school's choir and while on summer tour, he met a young woman, Colleen. She eventually became his wife. They've been married for 37 years and have raised three children.

Getting through college was a challenge for Alan. It took a combination of scholarships, student loans, and part-time odd jobs. He attended Ithaca College in Ithaca, N.Y., where he graduated with a B.S degree in Communications Management in 1981. His experiences at Milton Hershey School kept him grounded and moving forward. In 2005, Krashesky was named the Milton Hershey Alumnus of the Year. The Q&A Session was robust. Alan allotted the same amount of time for discussion and interaction with the audience as he did for his personal story.

What gets reported:

As a journalist and reporter, what is truth is paramount. Alan approaches the search in this way: what is being said, the facts, credible sources, and the time to search available resources (other people involved in the case, validations of what is known, objective viewpoints, and seeing the parts within the whole).

In prioritizing what gets the focus of a news broadcast, Alan and his team sort through the day's file, determine what gets top attention and in what order; always remaining open to what may have occurred prior to the broadcast. It is a fluid and on-going process. As journalists, they struggle to balance the "breaking story" with ensuring that they can verify and corroborate the facts before reporting the news.

There are many evenings when they are frustrated that they have a great story to report, but they don't have all of the facts before air-time and therefore their report is cut, or limited to just the basic overview.

Alan Krashesky | Continued

Reporting crime and covering bad news is a legitimate criticism. To counter this, the station and Kraskesky added features such as *Chicago Proud and Building a Better Chicago* that highlight the good news stories. Alan contends that his personal back story formed and shaped his life's story, work, and trajectory.

Afterthought: Alan Kraskesky's discussion, even with short notice as a stand-in, was engaging, insightful and now timely. Alan's discussion occurred prior to our time of COVID-19. Yet, ever more, we search for and want the truth in the midst of our two ongoing tragedies, the Coronavirus and protests sparked by the death of George Floyd and others. We are inundated with misinformation, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and at the same time, the unfolding of new information and facts. Benefitting from Kraskesky's investigative journalism skills gives us a way into finding what is the truth.

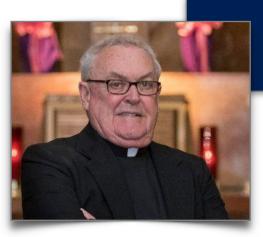
Whether listening again, or for the first time, Alan Kraskesky's podcast, "A Story of Love, Faith & Family" is more than worthwhile – it is a must. (www.ffcc.org, then select podcasts)

Submitted by FFCC Board Member Terrill L. Stumpf, PhD, MDiv



2019-2020 Highlights continued

Fr. Charles Rubey | January 10, 2020



One of our tasks as B o a r d Members of the First Friday Club

of Chicago is to contact potential speakers to address our lunch gathering. I gladly accepted the opportunity to contact Fr. Charles Rubey.

Fr. Rubey is the Founder and Director of the **LOSS (Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide)** program, a division of Catholic Charities. His unique ministry brings individuals together to support each other when they feel the most broken due to suicide.

Fr. Rubey joined Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago in 1972. LOSS is one of his greatest contributions to Catholic Charities. Thousands of people have participated in LOSS since he started it in 1979 at the request of three families who lost loved ones due to suicide. Today, there are twelve meeting sites across Cook, Lake and McHenry Counties and the Diocese of Joliet.

Fr. Rubey graciously accepted our invitation to speak on January 10, 2020. Not only was I pleased he would be our speaker, but I never knew how important his message would be to me until that day.

LOSS offers a safe, nonjudgmental environment where survivors of suicide can openly talk about feelings and experiences. They help you to find community, direction and resources for healing.

Suicide: the Aftermath "Nothing is ever the same once one has experienced the death of a loved one from suicide."

> Tragically, a dear friend, just a week before our January luncheon, successfully completed suicide. I did

not know what to do with my grief, anger and confusion surrounding my friend's death. Fr. Rubey assured me that my friend is engulfed by God. This was such a comforting message for me to hear. Thank you, Fr. Rubey for your compassion during a very dark time.

For more information regarding the LOSS program please call: 312-655-728

Submitted by FFCC Board Member Catherine Brokenshire

Mayor Lori Lightfoot | March 6, 2020



Chicagoans of a certain age might remember the quote "Chicago ain't ready

for reform," a classic from Paddy Bauler, Chicago saloonkeeper and political boss who was alderman of the city's 43rd ward for three decades.

Even Chicagoans who never heard of Bauler, however, might nod their heads at his claim.

But Lori Lightfoot begs to differ.

"Get ready," Chicago's 56th mayor told a standing-room-only crowd at the First Friday Club of Chicago on March 6, 2020, shortly before the Covid-19 lockdown took effect, "because change is happening."

Lightfoot, Chicago's first female black mayor and also the city's first openly gay mayor, became the third of Chicago's mayors to address the First Friday Club, following Mayors Eugene Sawyer and Richard M. Daley.

Integrity ... Accept No Substitution

First Friday Board member Mike Cahill, while introducing Lightfoot, noted her commitment to inclusion, transparency, and accountability. "Once again we have a mayor who both promotes inclusion and embodies it in her person," he said. "You offer Chicagoans hope."

In her talk, entitled "Integrity: Accept No Substitute," Lightfoot made clear her firm commitment to bringing integrity to city government. "I campaigned on change," she said, "and Chicagoans overwhelmingly voted for it."

"As a city, as you know, we face many challenges," she said. "But we will never be able to face them and solve them if people don't believe that their leaders and elected officials stand for integrity, putting people first, not trying to profit from our positions. That is critically important to the lifeblood of our city. "

Some aldermen, said the mayor, "believe that by their election they have been elected to preside over a fiefdom, where they have unchecked power."

Mayor Lori Lightfoot | Continued

"My principles on this are simple: No city official, elected or appointed, should ever profit from his or her work or office. No resident should ever have to kiss the ring of any elected official just to get access to basic city services."

If people don't have a government they can trust, said Lightfoot, "then we will never be able to move forward. The people in our communities need to believe in us."

The mayor explained the purpose of her practice of visiting communities all over the city. "I want people to understand that I want to hear from them. I want to listen to what their daily struggle is ... the things that are vexing them ... that they need from government. You can only do that by being out and present in an unfiltered way to hear from folks. As you well know, Chicagoans are not shy about expressing their opinions." Since the arrival of the pandemic, Chicagoans have experienced a Covid-19 version of Lightfoot's surprise visiting: Covid scofflaws gathering in unauthorized groups across the city have occasionally looked over their shoulders to find Mayor Lightfoot driving up unannounced to bawl them out and send them home.

"People in our community need to believe in us.... That's why we will keep disrupting the status quo unabashedly, unapologetically, because that is the right thing to do for our people."

"So get ready, folks," said the mayor, " 'cause there's more to come."

Submitted by FFCC Board Member Catherine O'Connell-Cahill



Father John Cusick | A Half Century of Service

Father John Cusick, FFC founder and chaplain, reflects on 50 years as a priest



Thirty-six years guiding the First Friday Club. Thirty-three years creating and leading the country's best Young Adult Ministry program. Fifty years of touching people's lives through his preaching.

Father John Cusick, founder and chaplain of the First Friday Club, celebrated his 50th anniversary as a priest in May of 2020. During his years as a priest, Father Cusick served at Mary Seat of Wisdom Parish in Park Ridge, on the faculty of Niles College, and as director of Young Adult Ministry for the archdiocese.

The First Friday Club sat down with Father Cusick for a brief interview about his life as a priest.

Why did the First Friday Club become part of your ministry as a priest?

I had spoken to the director of the First Friday Club in Cleveland, and I came home saying, we've got to do this in Chicago. It was the mid-1980s, and most parishes here were not doing any kind of adult formation. I was looking for a way to gather people to make connections between our faith, our work, and the current issues, because I really believe that gospel values permeate every moment of society.

The First Friday Club is not just another luncheon. We stick to speakers who can address our faith, our work, and our values. We've got to hold ourselves to the value that makes the Frist Friday Club different and effective in people's lives.

What are some of the primary messages you've tried to give people during your priesthood? Back in the 1980s with Young Adult Ministry, for example, you would often tell young adults, "You are more than your job."

That was certainly one of my messages, but there were others in my 33 years with Young Adult Ministry. One, for example, is that I tried to sell the value and the meaning of the church for them. Back in the early '90s, the attrition rate among people under 40 was getting pretty high, and nobody in diocese would even think about doing anything about it. So I tried to address that directly.

Second, I wanted to show how divine activity is found in the routine, the everyday, the ordinary. Consequently, it's your life that reveals the activity of God and it's your life that finds the activity of God.

It was through Father Leo Mahon, one of my mentors, that I uncovered a pragmatic reason for faith rather than a theological or cerebral reason for faith. That's been the foundation of my priesthood for 50 years. I wasn't much of a theologian, and I just that theology from the eyebrows up, as important as it was, wasn't where I needed to be. I needed to be down in the ditch.

Would you say more about the pragmatic reason for faith?

Let me just use baptism as an example. How many times have people said, Why should I bother to baptize my kid? You can give new parents a nice theology and all that, but I've always tried to ask, What dreams do you have for your child as you hold them in your arms? I'm not asking *what* do you want your child to be, but *who* do you want them to be? And then what is the value system that can help you pass that along to that child, to help those dreams take root in that next generation?

There's a practical value in faith. I've always believed that's really important. You can say a lot of things, but families need an actual support system that does two things when you're raising your kids. First, it tells them that they're not crazy (or that you're not crazy), and second, it shows them that there are other people who are chasing the same thing, the same dream, the same beliefs. They know they're not alone, they're part of something bigger.

I imagine you also try to convey what faith brings to end of life and in weddings, too?

Sure I do. I've always wondered about people who chuck the whole faith thing. I'm seeing more of that today particularly when it comes to, of all things, funerals. The adult kids don't know what to do when their parent dies. So they say, Well, let's put Dad in a box and maybe we'll get around to doing something. But that takes away the dignity of a human being. There's no closure. You're denying memory, you're not allowing yourself to grieve. It's just so utilitarian. I've told more and more people today, if you have a will, spell out exactly how you want the end of life to be celebrated. Do not leave it to your agnostic children. Because as loving as they are, if they've not been in a religious system in 25 years, they don't know what do to. They have no relationship with clergy, and they're afraid of most of them because they've heard such horror stories.

As for marriages, there's a syllogism that drives me. It's from the first letter of John, "Little children, God is love." And if you're in love, then you're in God. So this is not a legal thing you're going through--it's a powerful spiritual reality, one of the most transforming experiences in human life. To love and be loved can bring you to realize that that might be the highest way of living and the most challenging virtue we all have. So why wouldn't we want to celebrate that? You'd better have a spiritual dimension to your wedding because you are in a spiritually sacred moment in your life. I really believe that, and you cannot convince me otherwise.

Do you ever think about your legacy?

Not really, because it's never been about me. I will say I am proud that we created the most significant ministry to young adults in the United States.

I enjoy preaching. I've worked very, very hard at it. I've learned a lot of things from a lot of people. When I lived in Park Ridge, I followed Leo Mahon around every day for four months. I had to learn an operative theology. I was always amazed how what he preached could inspire, and I wanted to learn how to do that. How do you inspire people to live the gospel? How do you inspire people on what the scripture says that morning, to go and do the same? I enjoy preaching to this day. And when I do that, I'm having fun.

I always saw myself as the scripture guy Jesus talked about, "A man went out sowing seed." And he just sort of threw the seed any old place. We would laugh at that today and say, what a stupid way to farm. But that's how they did it. They didn't know that you could plant it every 3 inches apart and fertilize it--they just threw seed around. And that's all I've done. Fifty years of just scattering seed. That's all you can do.

Submitted by FFCC Board Member Catherine O'Connell-Cahill

"I enjoy preaching to this day. And when I do that, I'm having fun."

2020-2021 Meet the Board!

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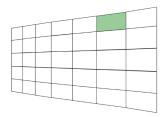
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Go To <u>www.firstfridayclubchicago.org/</u> <u>podcast</u>

Tune In!

Get Connected & Stay Connected with FFCC



The Mission of the First Friday Club of Chicago is to provide a forum for men and women to make connections between work, faith, values and issues that

affect their daily lives. First Friday will be connecting again this season with its members and friends but with a virtual forum still delivering thought provoking presentations.

The 2020-2021 season, which kicks-off on Friday, October 2, will deliver its **Virtual Speaker Series** directly into your home.

But first a little history: FFCC was founded in 1986 by Father John Cusick, and today he continues his service as Club Chaplain. Joseph

Cardinal Bernardin was FFCC's first speaker.

Our members and friends of First Friday receive all communications via Eblasts which c o n t a i n



people. And once again, if there is any change in the status of our presentations, you will be notified via First Friday's Eblasts.

For more information on First Friday, one can go to FFCC's website at <u>https://</u> <u>www.firstfridayclubchicago.org</u> to view the latest Annual Report, a current list of Board members, contact information and all Podcast links.

You can also stay connected with FFCC on Facebook. FFCC's Facebook account has photos, announcements, quotes from luncheon speakers, links, and comments. Go to <u>www.facebook.com/FirstFridayClubChicago</u> to view and post your own comments.

Last but not least, you can become a member

of FFCC. The club, which relies heavily on its dues-paying members, provides a variety of membership levels: Member, Patron, Supporter, Benefactor or Sponsor. Go to the FFCC website and click on *Membership* and then click on *Become a Member* to select the membership level which best fits your budget.

Follow the prompts to avment online.

information on and links to our speakers, along with information and links on how one can donate to First Friday. Because of the uncertainty surrounding Covid 19, all eight speaker presentations this season will be virtual until further notice. A vaccine and approval from the mayor of Chicago and governor are needed before the Union League Club can provide gatherings greater than 50

complete payment online.

The FFCC operates on an extremely tight budget with all donations needed to cover our administrative costs. Through the support of individuals like you, the club continues to thrive.

Get connected and stay connected to FFCC!

Welcome &

Hospitality | Cara Program



Last Season, as the Union League dining room began to fill with First Friday attendees, a Cara Program participant may have joined your table. The Cara Program is a non-profit social

service agency which provides job training to people who are affected by poverty and connects with businesses to get participants back to work.

Since 1991, Cara has placed more than 6,500 individuals into more than 10,000 quality jobs with a "one-year, same-firm" retention rate of 70% or better. This helps families to stop the transfer of poverty from one generation to the next. Cara participants, who are individuals affected by poverty and often the challenges of recovery, domestic violence, episodic homelessness, and incarceration, are able to k e e p q u a l i t y j o b s a n d m o r e importantly, rebuild hope, self-esteem, and

opportunity for themselves and their families in the process. The Cara Program is a full-time participant experience lasting 12 months.

Under normal circumstances, Cara selects three different participants each month to attend an FFCC luncheon where they can mix with other attendees and participate with the current speaker. The generosity of Members and friends of First Friday help underwrite these Cara seats.

This year is not normal. Covid has affected all of us, especially those who struggled before this pandemic. Cara Training, job opportunities, and self esteem have been greatly compromised.

Because First Friday understands the critical role Cara plays in Chicago, we ask for your prayers for the Cara organization and all its participants during these uncertain times. Pray for healing, strength, and peace.

To Learn more about Cara, please visit their website at <u>https://carachicago.org</u>

THE MISSION OF THE FIRST FRIDAY CLUB OF CHICAGO



To Provide a Forum for Men & Women to Make Connections between Work, Faith, Values & Issues that Affect Their Daily Lives.

Please Join First Friday's 2020-2021 Virtual Season

On the first Friday of the month, October through May, a virtual **speaker presentation** will be available online. Keep your eyes open for future *First Friday Eblasts* with information on how to tune in.

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