

Dear St. James Family,

We are a young Vietnamese family who recently joined St. James. Our family includes Dzung, Loan, and our two children, Keily (6 yo) and Tony (2 yo). We are preparing to welcome our third child, a baby girl, this month. Dzung joined the choir in August 2025 after he arrived in Kansas City to go to graduate school at UMKC. With the help of your Immigration Committee, Loan, Keily and Tony were able to join Dzung in Kansas City in November 2025 and become part of the parish as well.

When we first arrived in Kansas City, life felt very uncertain. We had no relatives and no friends nearby, and everything around us was new. Being in a different country so far from home is not easy. Things slowly became easier after we started meeting people at St. James.

So many of you have helped our family adjust to our new life. The choir led by Robert Basolo has been a place where Dzung feels welcomed and at ease, and where music brings joy in the middle of everyday life. Bob and Connie Anderson and Marilyn Mahoney kindly drove us to Mass every week (and still do!) and helped our family with many of the practical things we needed as we were getting settled. Bonnie and Chris D. helped Loan and the children become part of the children's liturgy. Linda, Vivian, Patrick, Jill, and Sally, as teachers, and the other children who participate opened their arms to help Keily and Tony adjust more quickly. For our children who are still growing in language and social skills, having a place to learn and talk with others has meant a lot. Recently Tony felt confident to say "Hello!" to Father Garry during the Ash Wednesday Mass. Moments like that show how comfortable our family has begun to feel here.

On the First Sunday of Lent, you organized the Baby Shower for our family as we prepare to welcome our third child. We were deeply touched. Even before the gathering itself, seeing people busily preparing already meant a great deal to us. In Vietnam we do not have this tradition, so it was a completely new experience for our family. Your kind words and thoughtful gifts mean a lot to us, and they help ease some of the financial pressure our family is facing during this time. We are so deeply grateful to all of you for this celebration.

After the shower, many people such as Marilyn, Bonnie, Martha, Michaela, Linda, Mike, Peter, Jill, and others have continued to check on us, looking for resources that will help our family, planning meals for Loan after the baby arrives, and sending messages to ask how she is feeling and whether the baby is ready to come. Sometimes we say to each other that you care for us the way parents would care for their children. Our parents in Vietnam, who live on the other side of the globe, feel at peace knowing that our family is surrounded by such kindness.

Thank you to Father Garry, the choir, the Immigration Committee, the children's liturgy teachers, and all the members of the parish who have welcomed our family and helped us along the way. So many of you have helped us in ways both big and small, all of which have helped us adjust to our new life in Kansas City. If we have not mentioned every name here, please know that we are still very grateful to all of you.

We wish everyone a meaningful Lenten season.

With gratitude,

Dzung, Loan, Keily, Tony, and our baby arriving soon