

JOSH PARR BRIEF BIO

Josh Parr is a recent convert to Catholicism, who overcame a seven-year struggle with gender dysphoria through work, community, and grace.

Josh is now a professor at Lafayette College in Easton, PA. He is the new manager of food and farm, overseeing operations at [LaFarm](#), the College's 3-acre working farm that grows produce for campus and the local community while providing experiential learning opportunities for students.

What brings Josh to speak at our Festival is an interview that he gave to the Endow group in which he spoke of his journey through the gender dysphoria world and how he found his way back to acknowledging the way he was created: a male. Josh will share the story of this journey with us and how he overcame gender dysphoria, grateful for never having tried any surgical or drug therapies along that path. What follows is the description of how he came to be the new manager of food and farm at Lafayette, taken from a February 1, 2022, article on Lafayette College's website, and written by By Katie Neitz.

After studying classics as an undergrad and master's student, Parr wanted to pursue a career as an archeologist. That ambition led him overseas for more than a year. He worked on excavation sites in Greece and Italy—including Pompeii—as well as on the island of Crete. When he returned to the U.S., he began his Ph.D. in archeology at University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. However, a semester in, he realized his heart wasn't in it. The things that initially sparked his interest in archeology—working outdoors, connecting to cultures of the past, collecting data—now fuel his passion for farming.

At Penn, Parr realized that social justice and environmental issues, which were always important to him, started to feel more urgent. A few years earlier, Parr had spent time working on a farm supporting community-supported agriculture—first as a volunteer, then as an employee. “For the first time I had this direct connection to where my food was coming from,” he says. “I was harvesting my own food, bringing it home, and cooking it. It's a process that is so basic to our lives, but it's something so many people are completely out of touch with.”

He recognized that working in farming would enable him to help others connect with their food, as he had done, which could then spur impactful, meaningful changes in communities.

The change of heart led him to a farmer position at Weavers Way Farms, located on the grounds of a high school campus in northwest Philadelphia. This provided Parr the opportunity to work closely with students, who came to the farm as part of science and culinary classes. It was especially rewarding watching kids—some who initially didn't want to get their hands dirty, some who had zero interest in agriculture—roll up their sleeves and get into digging a garden bed.

While growing your own food fulfills practical matters of self-sufficiency and reducing your carbon footprint, Parr also values the link it gives us to our culture and traditions of the past.

“I think that food culture is something that historically has been incredibly important for people's happiness and sense of meaning and identity—like the Lumper potato your Irish ancestors grew, or the kale that my Portuguese

family grew, or the okra that was spread through the African diaspora. But it's been something that many Americans have been separated from," he says.

"I think that cultural identity is usually expressed through art, food, and faith. Producing your own food creates opportunities to find real meaning and value, and incredible satisfaction from watching a plant grow and eating it and understanding that reciprocal relationship. There's this whole other layer of meaning that's added to life when you appreciate where your food comes from."