



# *Parish Heartbeats: Stories of Faith In Action*

## **No Coincidence**

When you have a conversation with Gail Krema, you are speaking with a profound listener who hears your story. That applies to any interaction with her, but it is a skill she has developed as a Spiritual Director and in that role, she also holds your story in confidence.

What is Spiritual Direction all about in the first place? It's companioning (not directing) another on their faith journey, helping them to notice God's presence and direction. Gail says it is a "sacred privilege" to do this work. The Directee shares their story and the Director reflects that story back with a goal of going deeper to find God in that experience. The conversations can be about virtually anything and typically the sharing is held monthly, however meetings can occur more or less frequently as life experiences dictate. A key role is to assist in times of change.



What qualifies Gail for this calling? Through life experience as a nurse, a mother, a wife, as well as many formal credentials. A Master of Arts in Spirituality from Loyola University and a Certificate of Spiritual Direction from the Institute for Spiritual Leadership among them. She is committed to her CRHP group with whom she still meets monthly after 21 years. She has a particular affinity for The Ignatian Volunteer Corps and the Ignatian Spirituality Project and their strategies for finding God in our everyday life experience. The spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius are over 500 years old. Gail was one of the first from SMMP to experience the Ignatian Exercises, she continues to meet with this group as well.

But Gail would tell you her most valuable experience is her 20 years as a Spiritual Directee of Sister Madelyn Gould. "Sister Madelyn has been a great mentor to me" and "it has been a gift of grace" to have been guided by her.

Gail also feels called to be a Spiritual Companion for those who have returned from Military Service. Many soldiers have experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and Gail wants to give back to the people who make the life we enjoy possible. She believes God calls them

to healing and new life through their injuries, and that telling their story can begin their healing process. "They have done so much for us, I want to do more for them", she says. Another significant mentor is Father Bill Creed who began the Ignatian Spirituality Project in Chicago, a Jesuit Ministry offering spiritual retreats to end homelessness. The homeless are

encouraged to participate in recovery programs, and then some are selected to be taught to conduct retreats for other homeless individuals. The Ignatian Spirituality Project is building a national network to continue to offer programs and Gail is passionate about the work.

One of four current Spiritual Directors for our parish, Gail suggests a trial experience to begin Spiritual Direction. "A wonderful introduction to this practice is the Advent-At Home Retreat" she says. It consists of one week with daily Scripture passages, meeting with a Spiritual Director on a daily basis and committing to prayer 30

minutes a day. If you find that experience meeting your needs, you may want to consider contacting SMMP about meeting with a Spiritual Director on a monthly basis.

Gail believes there are no coincidences. A friend--Marge Reilley, once defined that term as "God's tender provisioning meant just for you". It appears that her involvement in this ministry is just that--God at work through her to be a companion for others on their faith journey.

**If this ministry speaks to you, you may contact Gail Krema at 630-988-0338 or [gkrema@aol.com](mailto:gkrema@aol.com) to arrange an appointment or call the Parish office at SMMP at 630-369-0777.**

- by Phil Samuels

**Parish Heartbeats is an occasional bulletin column that celebrates the ways St. Margaret Mary parishioners make a difference in the lives of others.**