



Parish Heartbeats: Stories of Faith In Action

There, but for the grace of God, go I.

John Beaty along with his wife Jane have been members of St. Margaret Mary parish from the beginning. Immediately John became involved in our parish St. Vincent de Paul Society and, upon retirement, he joined the Ignatian Volunteer Corps which provides men and women, most age 50 or better, opportunities to serve others and to transform lives. (<http://www.ivcusa.org>)

Volunteering to help the poor and marginalized has always been a central part of John's faith. "I was educated by Dominican nuns, Christian Brothers, and Jesuits," John recalls, "and they made quite an impression on me by the example they set as activists in matters of social justice and service to the poor. Their message was loud and clear - You must go beyond yourself to serve the less fortunate where they are in a meaningful way."

For John, direct service and social justice are at the core of Catholic teaching and the Gospel message. Talking about the requirements of his faith John points out, "The Church delivers the same message as the Gospel, but it's too easy to write a check or say a prayer and feel that your obligation is accomplished. What is required is an expenditure of your most valuable assets - time and talent."

And John has invested a lot of himself in service to the poor and as an advocate for justice. He has served on our parish peace and justice committee, volunteered as a chaplain assistant at the DuPage County Jail; he has worked as a volunteer at the Catholic Charities homeless shelter and has served as an immigrant advocate at an Aurora social service agency. Currently John works with street people at an agency in LaGrange.

Reflecting upon his volunteer experiences John stated, "When I spend time with the marginalized I am struck with the feeling - there but for the grace of God go I. It cultivates a deep appreciation of the many gifts that God has provided and motivates me to express appreciation through prayer and action."

Working with the poor is not always easy. As John points out, "Most of the homeless folks I deal with these days have mental health issues and/or alcohol or drug dependency problems. There are very few success stories, but I find the words of Brother Geoff of the Missionaries of Charity inspiring - 'Often with the poorest people you cannot completely alleviate their problems but, by being with them, whatever you can do for them makes a difference.'"



For retired people who have a desire to serve the poor John encourages them to explore the Ignatian Volunteer Corps. The commitment is substantial but so are the rewards. As John explains, "As an Ignatian Volunteer you agree to serve two days a week for ten months a year." Volunteers also receive monthly spiritual direction and meet together with other volunteers for formation and support

If you are interested in finding out more about the Ignatian Volunteer Corps contact Christine Curran at (773) 975-6871 or at ccurran@ivcusa.org.

By Tom Cordaro

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