



Parish Heartbeats: Stories of Faith In Action

Buddy can you spare a job?

Are you unemployed or under-employed? More likely, do you know someone who is? St. Margaret Mary Parish is the home of St. Joseph the Worker Employment Ministry on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm and they provide a service that you can use to help find your next job. There are also 7:00 pm meetings on the third Wednesday of each month at Southminster Presbyterian Church, 680 South Park Avenue in Glen Ellyn.

St. Joseph the Worker Employment Ministry has a six member Board of Directors including St. Margaret Mary's own Larry Lewis. As Larry recalls, "I was out of work when I joined our parish. It was a terrible feeling. I felt broken down and worthless. It was the parish job club that provided me with support and encouragement. Eventually after I got a job I decided to stay involved in the group. In 1998 our parish joined forces with the St. Joseph the Worker Employment Ministry in order to have a wider outreach and provide better services."



In order to participate, you just have to show up at a meeting. There are no financial obligations and the door is open to everyone irrespective of religion, gender, or any other classification.

Speaking from personal experience Larry points out that "Often the unemployed get overwhelmed by all the negativity in their lives; the constant rejection and feelings of inadequacy. Losing a job can be difficult. Often you feel isolated and alone. One of the most important things we

do is help unemployed people overcome their isolation. We let them know they are not alone."

In order for the cycle of compassion to continue, graduates are asked to continue networking with meeting attendees. The reason for Larry's continued involvement arises from his deep faith commitment, "I have learned the importance of giving back. It is important to help others in need. The employment group is very important to me because it not only supports those looking for work but also includes faith in God as a core element. We let them know that God is with them even in those times when God seems distant and silent."

The Employment Ministry teaches practical skills like effective networking and resume writing that can help people find work. The Ministry helps attendees come up with an employment plan and provides resources and networking opportunities. The group exists to get information to people that they may not have access to on their own.

Guest speakers are often a major part of the meetings. Experts are available to discuss other job groups, hints on interviewing, resume evaluation, personal finance/budgeting and dealing with COBRA and health insurance from your old employer. You can go online and see the schedule for upcoming speakers at www.stjosephministry.org and you can find the schedule periodically in your parish bulletin.

If you would like to volunteer with the St. Joseph the Worker Employment Ministry you can contact Larry Lewis at 630-527-8643. You don't need to be an expert; you just need to have a desire to help those who are struggling to maintain their dignity and self-worth during difficult times of unemployment.

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