



Parish Heartbeats: Stories of Faith In Action

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

Patti McGehee wasn't thinking about this biblical verse while she read the newspaper one morning over 20 years ago, but the article offering training for hospice care volunteers called to her. That one opportunity led her on a journey of sharing her faith with others and over 29 years of service in hospice care and parish bereavement ministry. She hopes that reading her story now will speak to YOUR heart.

“It was a chance meeting that brought me to St. Margaret Mary Parish. While building my house in the neighborhood, I met a young priest out walking. After talking for a bit, the priest asked if I knew that I was now in the boundaries of the “Parish With A Heart”. He invited me to come check it out, and offered to return to bless my home. This welcoming gesture moved me and soon I became a member.”

“At that time, Sr. Madelyn and Deacon Terry were beginning a bereavement ministry here. I was brought to the right place at the right time to help start things up ... and now our core group of 8 could use some more empathetic, active listeners who want to make a real difference in someone's life.”

“Our ministry exists to support people of all ages going through the grieving process. It is all about them. We offer an empathetic ear to listen to their story, a visit, a prayer ... whatever they need. Our ministers meet once a month for a speaker or prayer, planning and fellowship, but our ministry happens whenever we are needed. As our parish ages, there will be more and more demand for the very personal connection that we provide.”

It isn't just the grieving clients who benefit from this ministry. Reaching out to others has had a profound impact on Patti's faith as well. “It is a gift to be an instrument of God's grace to others. I feel closer to Christ when I have people to call and I pray before each call that He guide my words and let me listen so I can say the words that will bring them comfort.”

“We'll train you on how to make the phone calls so there is no need to be nervous. Your personal contact will mean so much to a person in grief. Our only requirement is that it be more than a year since any significant loss that you may have experienced, so that your own healing process is well underway.”

The Bereavement Ministry also runs two parish-wide programs during the year: The Mass of Remembrance in early December and the Motherless Daughter service on the Thursday before Mother's Day. This year, the Mass of Remembrance was attended by more than 225 people! They also provide gift baskets of small snacks and tea to be brought to the families while planning the funeral Mass. “There are many opportunities to connect with people in our ministry,” says Patti. “We reach out to others from our own experiences and faith to bring comfort and to listen. That is so powerful for everyone involved.”



Attendees and Bereavement Ministry Team at the Motherless Daughters Service.

If you see yourself in this article and feel called to share your gifts comforting those who mourn, the Bereavement Ministry team would welcome you to join them. Please contact Patti McGehee (630-305-9038), or Deacon Terry Taylor (630-369-0777) for more information.

- written by Cabrina Attal

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