



Parish Heartbeats: Stories of Faith In Action

Living with Open Arms: Sharing the Body of Christ

“Pastoral Care” sounds like something that someone very important and very well-trained should take care of as a full-time job. It seems far from the average parishioner’s comfort level as a volunteer ... at least until you meet someone like Regina Collura.

Regina and her family were founding members of St. Margaret Mary Parish. Over the years, she has engaged in a wide variety of ministries within the parish – from helping to start a food pantry, to Religious Education teacher for Confirmation groups, to working with the Bereavement Ministry. She lived her faith actively in these ministries while working as a nurse and raising three daughters (who have blessed her with 5 grandchildren to dote on!). And life was good. Until it wasn’t.

In 2001, Regina faced a serious health crisis that put her into the hospital. A fellow parishioner and friend brought her the Eucharist while she was unable to attend Mass. These weekly visits were of great comfort to her and Regina vowed to bring this same gift to others when she was able. After her recovery, Regina joined the Pastoral Care ministry and has served in various settings ever since.

St. Margaret Mary parishioners serve as pastoral care ministers in three locations: Edward Hospital, Sunrise Nursing Home, and at the home of any parishioner who requests their services. Pastoral care ministers are responsible for bringing Communion, prayer, and fellowship to individuals at these locations on a weekly basis. Ministers who go to Edward Hospital visit one day a week and are assigned a floor to serve. They visit any patients who identify themselves as Catholic and would like to receive the Eucharist.

On Sundays, two pastoral care ministers go to Sunrise Nursing Home to lead a prayer service for the residents that includes readings, prayers, songs, and Communion distribution. They also stop by the Alzheimer’s floor for a shorter prayer with Communion distribution and visit any resident who cannot leave their room but wishes to receive the Eucharist.

There are also pastoral care ministers who go to visit our homebound parishioners on a weekly basis. In these visits, the minister truly represents a link to our community and may bring a bulletin and news of parish happenings in addition to prayer and Communion. Fair warning: This ministry may result in long-term relationships that feed both the minister and the parishioner!

No matter where you choose to serve, pastoral care ministers are well trained. There is an initial one-day training session at the Carmelite Center and then a 1-2 hour refresher course every 3 years.



Regina believes that this ministry, like so many others, is truly an opportunity to receive so much more than you give. “You don’t know what type of relationship you will have with each person,” says Regina, “but you can be sure that you are used as an instrument of God’s grace and goodness in their lives. Pastoral care has helped me to be more prayerful and humble in my own life. I am not an outgoing person but I think sometimes we need to step out of our comfort zones and hear God calling us to take care of His people.”

A good pastoral minister would be an empathetic listener with a strong grounding in their faith life. Regina looks at it this way: “The Eucharist is such a central part of our Catholic experience and is so very special. If it only takes an hour of your time a week to share that gift with others ... why not?”

Deacon Fred Straub leads the Pastoral Care Ministry at St. Margaret Mary. New ministers are desperately needed! If you are interested in more information, please contact Deacon Fred by email at fred@smp.com or contact the parish office at 630-369-0777.

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.