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Gail Grawe: *Embracing Faith, Family and Fellowship*

A couple of years ago, Gail Grawe began giving her mother-in-law, Mary Ann Grawe, a ride to Tuesday morning Mass at our parish. Mary Ann's faith ended up being pretty "contagious," and before Gail knew it, she was hooked too.

"I soon started attending Mass along with her," Gail says. "Then, I began to stay for the prayers afterwards, as well as for adoration. Doing that helped me not only grow closer to God, but also get to know some of the ladies at the parish a lot better. In the end, it all brought me a whole new way of life, for which I am so grateful."

Apparently, Mass was not the only important aspect of faith that Mary Ann shared with Gail.

"Before she died, she told all of her children that they needed to start praying the daily Rosary, so I did, and I have ever since," Gail says. "My praying it also brought my daughter, Abby, to pray it as well, along with several of my friends. It has had sort of a really neat 'snowball effect!'"

Last December, Gail's newly revived faith was soon to be put to the test when her husband, Joe, died after



Gail and Joe Grawe and family, May 2017

a long struggle with a neuromuscular-degenerative condition. When he was sick and suffering, however, she discovered just how much our parish community loves her family. Gail and Joe have three children — Tyler, who is married and has one child; Jonathan, who is married and has two children; and Abby, who is single.

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Gail Grawe *continued from front cover*

“It is important to spend time together as a parish family, doing fun things together. The same people you go to Mass with are the same people that have the same beliefs and milieu as you do. Being with other people who are just like you is a good thing! It gives you a lot of support and definitely strengthens you in your faith. You know you are at ‘home’ when you are at St. Anthony’s!” — Gail Grawe

“The church community was really there, praying for us, and helping us get through it all,” Gail says. “There were so many prayers said for us — we could just feel it. Everyone was so supportive. It meant so much to have the parish family there for me, especially because my children didn’t live nearby and couldn’t be with us all the time.”

Ever since Gail began embracing her Catholic faith in a more profound way, she has taken a great interest in serving our parish family. She is currently serving her second term on the Parish Council, and initiated a Bible study at our parish last fall. In January, she started attending

a Grief Share Session support group for people who have lost loved ones.

“It has helped me to know other people who are grieving, so that I haven’t felt like the only one who has suffered a loss,” she says. “I have learned that everyone’s situation is different, and there is no ‘right’ time frame for working through one’s grief.”

Recently, Gail has also been promoting fellowship in our church community in a powerful way.

“It is important to spend time together as a parish family, doing fun things together,” she says. “The same people you go to Mass

with are the same people that have the same beliefs and milieu as you do. Being with other people who are just like you is a good thing! It gives you a lot of support and definitely strengthens you in your faith. You know you are at ‘home’ when you are at St. Anthony’s!”

Gail also feels that sharing fellowship is actually an important aspect of stewardship.

“To me, stewardship is about more than just doing things in church,” she says. “It is also about doing things outside of church, together, as a parish family. Stewardship is about more than just raising funds. It is about ‘raising fun!’”

Gail is currently coordinating a trip for our parishioners to see the St. Louis Cardinals play on July 15. She also hopes to organize a New Year’s party and other fun events. If you have any ideas for parish fellowship activities or you would like to help out with them in any way, please contact Gail Grawe at 217-257-3619.

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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

What Is the Real Purpose of Our Lives?

Dear Parishioners,

Do you ever think about your purpose in life? Even as a priest, I certainly do. There are days and times of frustration when I think, “What am I really supposed to do? What does God want me to do? Why am I here?” For eons, philosophers have considered these very questions and written about them.

But the truth is that we, as Catholics, already know the answers.

When we consider the many facets of life in our parish community, there are numerous activities and endeavors that go beyond attending Mass. From fundraising efforts, to social outreach/service, childcare and more, there are many ways in which we serve our community.

Yet, as we undertake these important pursuits — both within and outside of the parish — we must always remember that our ultimate goal is salvation. After all, the only reason we exist, the only reason our Church exists, is the same as the reason Jesus joined us and became a part of us here on earth — He came to save humanity.

We use the term the “body of Christ” to describe the Church with Christ as the head. We are all parts of that body, and the parts of the body must move in the same direction as the body itself — it simply won’t function if the parts are moving in different directions. We are all in this together.

When our lives are complete, we do not base our success or failure on how much money we have, or whether or not we are famous. Nor does our success or failure depend upon the difference between health and sickness, or pleasure and pain, or even being nice or nasty. Rather, it is the difference between being saved and not being saved.

I often think of my family members who have already crossed the bridge of salvation, and as a priest, I deal with that issue with others on a very regular basis. Sometimes, I wonder if they ever fully realized that salvation was the answer to so many of our questions in life.

I am surrounded by memories of those who have gone before, as are almost all of you. We are apt to use the term “the communion of saints” in many ways in our Church. Someday, we will know more about the “communion of saints” and how it all works. In the meantime, we pray for everyone who has gone before us, hoping they have made it home.

Pray for me as I pray for you!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Tom Donovan
Pastor



Using Their Skills to Serve: Faith Community Nursing



Julie Peter and Rose Ludgering are nurses who serve our parish community as part of our new Faith Community Nursing program.

“I love getting to know the parishioners better, just being present in their life and letting them know they have somebody they can call on. I treat them the way I would treat family.”

— Julie Peter

We often discuss the importance of caring for one another as the family of God, the body of Christ. Unfortunately, we don't always know how to put those words into action, especially for those who may be suffering due to illness or age.

However, over the past year, that has begun to change, through the

work of the nurses who volunteer to serve our parish through our new Faith Community Nursing program.

“The goal of a parish nurse is to help incorporate holistic care for the parishioners,” says Julie Peter, a nurse and St. Anthony's parishioner who began the program. “It's to keep the Church involved with [people who

are ill or homebound] and form that community bond. A parish nurse is someone they can go to and trust.”

Just last year, after realizing a need in the community, Julie attended 38 hours of training in Springfield to learn about the role of Faith Community Nursing — often formerly known as “parish nursing.”

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“I thought, ‘How many neighbors who belong to our church do I help out anyway?’” Julie says. “How can I do this for everybody in our church?”

Currently, the main way that our nurses serve our community is by visiting our parishioners who are ill or elderly in the hospital, nursing homes or their own homes.

“We take turns seeing patients up at the hospital each day,” says Julie, who volunteers along with several other nurses in the parish.

Not only do our nurses serve to provide a friendly face and support in a difficult time, but they may also play an important role in helping to connect people to the parish and other services that are offered. Perhaps someone wants to be added to the prayer list, or needs a prayer shawl — our nurses can help with that. When a patient wants to be anointed by a priest or receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, our nurses ensure that they’re able to receive a visit. When visiting someone in their home, they can also provide services such as blood pressure checks or help coordinating medications.

“I want them to know that they’re not alone,” Julie says. “You don’t

realize how many people don’t have someone checking in on them every day. I hope they realize we’re there for them.”

In addition to visiting parishioners, Julie and the other nurses seek to provide other valuable services to the parish community. From our monthly blood pressure checks, which take place on the first full weekend of every month, to a flu clinic set for this fall, to upcoming health education series, our nurses hope to encourage parishioners to be good stewards of their health.

For Julie, who has been a nurse for the past 14 years and served in several different capacities — from school nursing, to homecare, office and hospital nursing — she is happy to have the opportunity to combine her faith and nursing skills.

“I think my faith is the foundation of my profession,” Julie says. “This is very fulfilling and rewarding.”

Although Julie has been active in many different ways in the parish over the years, she loves being able to serve using her particular talents and training.

“We’ve always been very involved the church, but I never really felt that

connection that really made me feel like ‘this is where I need to be’ in my church until now,” she says.

Julie hopes that other nurses in the parish community will consider using their gifts to serve their fellow parishioners.

“Any help or any amount a nurse would want to do is welcomed — they can do as little or as much as they want to do,” Julie says. “We welcome any nurse. There is always need for additional help.”

Above all, Julie loves the opportunity to get to know and serve her fellow parishioners.

“I love getting to know the parishioners better, just being present in their life and letting them know they have somebody they can call on,” Julie says. “I treat them the way I would treat family.”



For more information about our Faith Community Nursing program here at St. Anthony of Padua, or if you are a nurse who would like to become involved serving in this way, please contact the parish office at 217-222-5996. If you or a loved one is hospitalized, in a nursing home or homebound, and could benefit from a visit from one of our nurses, please contact the parish office.

Hospitality:

The Cornerstone of Stewardship

Matthew's Gospel tells of Christ as He reveals a profound truth about hospitality: "When I was a stranger, you welcomed me." That is, "I used to be a stranger, but you fixed that when you welcomed me." It's a classic example of before-and-after. All it took was a change of heart.

The dictionary defines "hospitality" as "the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way."

A Christian worldview can refer to hospitality as "Christian kindness."

We see the effects of hospitality – or the lack thereof – time and time again throughout the Bible. Christ speaks of hospitality in Matthew's Gospel when He says, "When I was a stranger, you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). The Old Testament told of the Israelites, as they wandered the desert for 40 years in search of hospitable environs. Even the Holy Family spent ample time searching for shelter before the birth of Our Lord.

It is safe to say that hospitality is, and most likely has always been, of great importance to people everywhere. Modern hotels and hostels often use the image of a pineapple to advertise their special brand of hospitality. There is no doubt that in ancient times, the distant lights of an inn or tavern struck a chord of hope within weary travelers' hearts.

Indeed, hospitality's meaning has not diminished at all over the years, decades and millennia.

Christians view the presence of hospitality as meaning the difference between calling others "guests" and "strangers." Guests are welcomed with open arms and warm smiles, but strangers aren't. Guests feel the genuine love present in a

hearty welcome, but strangers don't. Guests often return for second or third visits, while strangers don't.

As a parish, do we find ourselves surrounded by guests, or burdened by strangers?

Hospitality is, in many respects, a mindset. The same person may be treated as guest at the church just down the road, but as a stranger here.

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Stewardship holds hospitality as an immensely important concept. Remember the "three Ts" of stewardship – Time, Talent, and Treasure? Well, there are also "four Ps," the Four Pillars of Stewardship – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. Hospitality is mentioned first. Why? If not for hospitality, none of the other pillars will ever take hold. Hospitality is the cornerstone of stewardship, because it opens the door to a person's heart and allows them to receive joy, grace, and love.

Hospitality must become second nature, if stewardship is to truly take hold within a parish. So, when a stranger visits our parish, welcome them as a guest. Perhaps one day, they'll pay us a second visit.

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A Unique Opportunity to Encounter Christ through TEC Retreats



TEC Retreats are an opportunity for young people to encounter Christ in a new and deeper way.

For Connie Vermeire, seeing the youth of our community as they encountered Christ through the TEC — Teens Encounter Christ — retreat was an awesome experience, and it's an opportunity that she wishes she could have had at their age.

"To see these kids encounter Jesus Christ on this retreat and become on fire for our Lord, it was amazing," says Connie, who has

been involved in this ministry for over 30 years, serving as a retreat director, musician and also on the board.

Designed for high school and college students ages 16-21, the three-day TEC retreat focuses on the themes of "Die, Rise and Go."

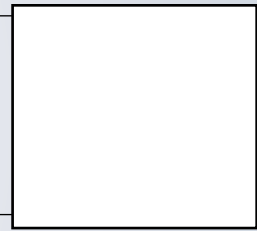
"On 'Die Day,' they really encourage people to reflect on where they've been, who they are, and then you're given the opportunity to let go of

those things through Reconciliation," Connie says. "On the second day, 'Rise Day,' you've left everything at the altar and they encourage you to rise and put everything behind you and learn how to be the Christian that God calls us to be in today's world. The third day, 'Go Day,' encourages you to become involved with your church."

The retreat includes dynamic talks in which team members share

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DAILY MASS: MON, TUE, & THU - 7:30 A.M.

SATURDAY: 4:00 P.M. & 6:30 P.M.

SUNDAY: 8:00 A.M. & 10:30 A.M.

CONFESSIONS: SATURDAY 5:15 - 6:15 P.M.

TEC Retreats *continued from page 7*

their own faith journey and experience, small-group discussions, times of prayer, and opportunities to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

"It helps people to reflect on their ideas, their hopes and dreams, and discover God in a personal way, and it allows and encourages them to share that with other people," Connie says. "There's a lot of laughing and a lot of eating. It's a neat experience and it really teaches you how to have a true deep encounter with Jesus."

A TEC retreat is also a chance for people to experience support and fellowship with other young Catholics who share their love for God. Young people from all around the area travel to attend this event, which takes place in Quincy, six times each year.

"It builds a friendship with these kids," Connie says. "You have a jock who, in school, might never talk to this other kid, but they're both on this weekend and they come to really see each

other in a whole different light and deep friendships have been created on TEC weekends. [It's important] to know you're not alone — other people have felt these things."

Connie hopes that those who have been blessed by experiencing a TEC weekend in the past will come back to serve the community as part of the team, and that young people who have never experienced a TEC retreat will consider attending.

"A TEC weekend is for everyone, it will bless each person in their own way," Connie says. "It's encountering God in a special way. Just to take that chance and spend a weekend — it's an experience that you don't want to pass up.

"For me, it's just bringing people to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ," she adds. "TEC allows them to find that deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, that Person they go to church and hear about every Sunday. It really helps them create that deeper relationship with Him."

For more information on TEC, or to register for an upcoming event, please visit www.greatrivertec.org.

The next local TEC retreat will take place July 21-23 at the Franciscan Retreat Center of Quincy University. The cost of the retreat for participants ages 16-21 is \$50.

To learn more about stewardship at St. Anthony of Padua, please contact the Stewardship Committee at stanthonystewardship2015@gmail.com.