

Hi, I'm Wayne Gallenberger, and I would like to talk to you about stewardship as a lector. It's hard to believe, but I've been reading at Mass for almost 40 years. It all started because our Pastor at the time, Father Jerome, was in need of lectors and asked my Dad if I would be interested. My Dad told him I would, and all he needed to do was ask me. He did, and I refused. Father informed my Dad, who told him to keep asking me. Well, my Dad knew me better than I knew myself, because I finally agreed.

After I had been lectoring for awhile, I became fascinated with the passages I was reading at Mass and wanted to know more about them. I began to read the Bible to learn more, and a potent transformation occurred. As I read the passages in context, powerful new meanings emerged. At this point the scriptures, the Mass, and my Catholic faith really came alive for me. My religious life took on more significance and meaning. Faith became something to be lived daily and not relegated to the position of a spectacle on Sundays. For the first time in my life, faith meant action and not passivity. Being a lector created this profound change in my life.

My ministry as lector itself was also elevated to a higher level. I realized that publicly proclaiming the Word of God was a charge with which I have been entrusted; a charge to be an inspiration to everyone listening to me. I might not always achieve that lofty goal, but I am always compelled to try. My words, my actions, or my example just might inspire at least one individual to read the Bible, or moreover, to engage in a Church ministry that one finds especially meaningful. Active stewardship not only serves God and the needs of others, it satisfies our own needs and strengthens our own faith beyond measure. It certainly has for me.

Thank you.

Good Morning: My name is Rita D'arcy.

Did you know that we have a hospitality committee? I would like to share with you a couple of definitions from the dictionary: Webster's Dictionary says that:

HOSPITALITY -is the act, practice or quality of being hospitable, solicitous, entertainment of guests, and **FELLOWSHIP** - friendly association, a mutual sharing, of an experience or activity or interest, a group of people with the same interests, company, brotherhood.

Every first Sunday of the month, except in the summer, we have Hospitality (Coffee and donut) Sunday, an act to be hospitable with a group of our fellow parishioners. Some of the parishioners come down to the gathering room after mass and share their interests with each other, whether it be talking about our children, grandchildren, sports, the vacation we are planning on taking soon or have just come back from or our general and mutual interest in God and St. Joe's parish. Even Jesus was hospitable and shared his interests with a group of people. Two instances come to mind: The Wedding at Cana and his sermon on the mount where he fed all those people with five barley loaves of bread and two fish. I can assure you that we don't serve bread or fish but we do serve coffee and donuts.

I joined the hospitality committee because I love to meet people and share my interests with my fellow parishioners. If your gift of stewardship leads you to our Hospitality Committee, come down to the next coffee and donut Sunday and meet the wonderful people of this parish and join in this special brotherhood we all share.

Thank you.

Growing Mustard Seeds

I know about mustard seeds. We had five growing mustards seeds in our busy household—3 girls and 2 boys.

Young mustard seeds need a lot of nurturing love. Their seeds are planted in the blessed waters of Baptism, where they are made free of original sin and enter the community called the Body of Christ.

During the Baptismal rite godparents are asked, “What do you ask of God’s church?” “Faith,” they respond.

To grow in our faith, our mustard seeds needed cultivating, which meant getting them to Sunday mass.

As a once-upon-a-time, young mom I know what it takes getting mustard seeds ready for Sunday mass. After a busy week, there’re times, you just want to hide your head under the covers and forget about the whole thing.

Those mornings can be bedlam...when your husband’s at work, and part of the time, you’re walking around heavily pregnant, sounding like a like a Drill Sergeant. “Brush your teeth.” “Comb your hair.” “No. Not those pants. They’ve got holes in the knees.” “Change your clothes. It’s church. Not a dance hall.”

Breathless, you pile the kids into the nine passenger wagon, and get to mass, all because of those Baptismal promises.

About two years ago, Kathy Hansen approached me saying, she needed assistance with Catechism Dismissal at the Sunday 10 a.m. mass. Her idea being: if one of us was unable to be here, the other could take the class.

Her request occurred during a transition period of my life. Our married children were raising their own set of mustard seeds; also, six months prior, my husband had passed away, and I was trying to grasp this new life I was living, searching life’s useful purpose and meaning. So, I accepted.

As a young mom, I remembered Sundays in the Crying Room, coping with fidgety kids; distractions making it difficult to concentrate on mass, and I wish there had been a program, like this, available to me.

I learned it’s a good program. We use lessons plans approved by the church. Each Sunday, classes begin with the Sign of the Cross and a short, easy prayer.

On Palm Sunday, our theme was: “We Welcome Jesus.” The children heard a simple story about Matt, how he runs, arms outstretched to welcome his grandmother; this story parallels the gospel of how Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem. Then, we read a simplified version of that day’s gospel and discussed it in terms they can understand. We cut pictures of palms; showed and explained the real palms to them, and sang Hosanna. As always, the class ended with a prayer.

The classes fill their young minds about Jesus—that the disciples were His friends and helpers. They learn about Goodness, Kindness, Caring, Sharing, and Forgiveness.

And, for our growing mustard seeds, positive roots which can be the first steps in their faith journey.

Around the same, I began serving in Religious Ed. Department. “Seek and find,” says the Lord. Well, as I was “seeking” I was found after a weekday mass through an invite

for a cup of coffee from Yvonne Weaver, our R.E. director. Little did I know what it would lead to?

During coffee and conversation, I noted piles of papers lying about her desk and learned she had no “assistant.”

Before I knew it, I was serving about 12 hours a week organizing files; keeping track of registrations, receipts, Baptismal certificates; post office chores, printing tons of information for catechists, students and G.O.F.—which meant learning to use the stubborn copy machine, something as a former I.C.U. nurse I never had to use in my line of work.

But by doing the mundane chores, our director and catechists can devote more of their creative energies to making a better program for our students. Yvonne thanks me often. I laugh and say, “I’m just collecting points for heaven.”

F.Y.I.: Last year we had: 137 students from 87 families; 16 dedicated catechists: stay-at-home-moms, working moms and dads, some with Chicago jobs, a grandmother, a nurse who arrive faithfully every Tuesday to teach our growing mustard seeds about their faith.

Father Terry takes an active role. He visits one class per week—both sessions, so by the end of the semester he has met with every grade, then, repeats this schedule in the second semester.

Our mustard seeds begin their sacramental preparations in the second grade when they make their first sacrament of Reconciliation; in the third grade they make their First Eucharist, and in the eighth receive the sacrament of Confirmation from our bishop.

To prepare their children for the sacraments, parents are required to attend 2 meetings with Yvonne Weaver and Father Terry.

Other religious activities include: 4 G.O.F. programs, Advent and Lenten Penance services; retreat for the Confirmation class; potluck supper for families of First Eucharist children; May Crowning and a Mass of Thanksgiving at the end of the year.

I want to remind parents that registration for the present school year is being held this weekend after all masses. As last year classes will be on Tuesdays with an A and B sessions; also classes begin on a historic day: September 11 with a G.O.F. program held in the gym.

Publishers have deadlines for book orders and we need to purchase correct amounts of supplies and we advise parents to register their children so we can plan accordingly.

And parents while you’re signing up your kids we’d love to have you share your time and talent with us in the Religious Ed. Department. You have to drop the kids off, so you might as well stay a while and save yourself a return trip back to the school.

Most importantly, we need catechists and substitute catechists. When our regular catechists or their child become ill, we need substitutes on hand to teach a class.

As parents know, there are weeds out there, smothering the spiritual growth of our mustard seeds. What better way is there then to fill their growing minds about our Faith? For on some future day, they will be alone, in a situation unsure of what to do, without you to guide them, and it will their faith that will lead them to making the right choices.

Lillian Smith