

Stewardship has been a regular part of my life for many years. I attribute this to my family, especially my father and grandfather who were actively involved at church. From the time I was young, they encouraged *me* to be involved as well, by letting me help the ushers at Mass and by assisting me in proclaiming readings as a lector. These relatively small tasks put me in the habit of accepting God's call to stewardship and challenging myself to serve in new ways when given the opportunity. There have been times when I have felt like the challenge was too great or that I was not good enough to rise up to it, but at these times, I do the best I can and let God take care of the rest. Even though stewardship may be challenging, with God's help everyone has the ability to be involved and serve in some way. All it takes is a little bit of effort. Any service, whether large or small, will make St. Joseph Parish a better place, while helping expand the Kingdom of God.

Michael Gallenberger

Stewardship Letter/Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion

Good morning, I'm Yvonne Weaver a member of St. Joseph Parish and involved in stewardship here at St. Joseph as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, the name given to lay people who distribute Holy Communion during Mass or taken to the sick outside of Mass. This ministry is a blessed source of life-filled graces that has leads me to a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Gift of Eucharist.

Five pastors ago in a parish far far away the pastor asked me to consider becoming more involved in the Liturgy by helping distribute Holy Communion at our Sunday Mass; I said, "Thank you I'll let you know". (I was thinking "me"?); but because of class I had taken I had just became aware that Vatican Council II had issued a document stating the wish of the church for all the faithful take a more conscious and active part in Liturgical celebrations by the very nature of Liturgy to which the faithful have a right and bound to by reason of Baptism. Now I needed to ponder what the council fathers meant and just how I would be involved in all this. After all, being a product of pre Vatican Council Catholic School I had to sort out some things.

As a child I was taught by the very serious sisters that nobody touched the Host except priests period and only boys could serve at Mass (even though I knew all the prayers because I listened in to the instructions given by Sister). After thinking about growth and changes I had experienced with the passage of time and education; I was ready to buy into the church's invitation to this particular service of distributing Holy Communion to my fellow parishioners. I received instructions about what to do and what to say and where to stand. That first time gave cause for some raised eyebrows at the prospect of a layperson distributing Holy Communion, but the passage of time and more lay people coming forward eased the environment. Now came a time for me to consider what I believed as a Catholic about the Eucharist. I had come to the Table of the Lord in the 2nd grade so many years ago; I knew what was taught to me then – I was receiving Jesus and that's where my faith stood for many years – me and Jesus and I was content with that ...But the Spirit would lead me to take a deeper and more profound look at Holy Communion and God's love for us.

Our First Eucharist Class had assembled a banner about having each child write their name on a paper host and place it on banner that read, "We are one in the Lord". So 1 Cor: 12-13 states we are all one Body with many parts – for in one Spirit we are baptized into one Body of Christ. So I'm beginning to understand it's the unifying power of the Body of Christ building the church and creating community. So it's me and Jesus and you and you and you ...okay St Paul I think am beginning to get it. I am not alone, but integrated into the Body of Christ at Baptism and profess this at every Holy Communion with every single person who professes the same gift of faith.

Oh the depth of the riches of God and wisdom and knowledge of God (Rm. 11:33) who has chosen humble food elements as bread and wine to celebrate our oneness with Christ and each other. As the people come forward, I communicate with the one saying, "Yes" to the Body of Christ. I say, too "Yes" you are my brother and sister in Christ. The young, the old, the in between all longing for God's saving love brought about through the Lord's suffering, death and resurrection. I am so blessed and privileged to be God's witness to this precious treasure – the Body, Blood, Soul, Divinity of Jesus Christ saving presence in the community of faithful.

My Spiritual journey continues to lead me into the mysteries of God and being an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion continues to illuminate the Father's loving mercy, through Christ, in the Spirit toward the final union with God. Do consider, do pray that you may come forward and to say, "Yes, I am willing to serve."

I will be pleased to answer any questions you might have concerning the duties and responsibilities of this ministry.

My pursuit of the journey of Stewardship has evolved over the course of the last ten years as my understanding of how I should live out my life has changed. Previous to this, I was caught up in the every day grind of secular life, pursuing my selfish goals and reveling in a world in which I attempted to satisfy my personal whims and desires. My Wife, Susan, and I joined St. Joseph Parish in 1986 and we considered ourselves good and faithful Catholics because we attended weekly Mass, contributed sparingly to the weekly collection and received the Sacrament of Reconciliation once a year. Our Stewardship consisted of annually volunteering to bartend at the School's yearly Oktoberfest. I was very comfortable! As I reflect upon Fr. Terry's homily of several weeks ago- I was very content sitting on the beach with my feet in the sand.

Things began to change for me approximately ten years ago. A change of mind and heart that resulted in a dramatic transformation in the way I was living my life. As I began finding Jesus Christ in my prayer life; I began finding Him in the world also. I began a deep awareness of God's love for me which moved me to respond by attempting to direct my life to the service of God. This was the beginning of my conversion. This was my decision to get out of the beach chair and enter the water. This is a decision that I face daily- to enter into the water and allow the Holy Spirit to work within me- or to sit on the beach and rest in comfort. It becomes a battle at times, but the journey continues as I pray for an openness to the Holy Spirit's prompting to a further response to God's call.

Learning and becoming aware of the gifts I have been blessed with has led me to the Homebound Ministry. This is a ministry which sends Lay ministers out on mission, to extend out to the Homebound (those who suffer from illness or aging), the Sunday Liturgy of the Word and the Holy Eucharist. This ministry was a bit scary to me at first. Initially, after taking a step into the water, I retreated back to the beach. The Ministry made me uncomfortable and I was very unsure of myself. I continued to prayerfully discern the Homebound Ministry as I entered into Hospital Ministry as my third year practicum in Diocese' Lay Ministry Program. This experience help me greatly and I was moved to coming back to the Home bound ministry. When I began the Home bound Ministry on a regular basis it was a bit overwhelming. The twelve to fifteen visits one Sunday per month would take the majority of my Sunday afternoon. It was taking a huge part of a day that my Family and I would set aside to be with each other. This prompted me to invite other Parishioners to get involved. I was successful in adding two lay ministers to the team which has allowed each of us to spend more time with the people we visit and more time with our Families.

I love this ministry and find it spiritually rewarding but acknowledge that it is a difficult one. It is one that needs prayerful preparation and one that requires thoughtful reflection afterward. It is one that needs the openness to the direction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I have experienced the sorrow at the passing of fellow parishioners and I have experienced the joy at welcoming back those parishioners who returned to Mass after an illness or injury. Through this ministry I have formed interpersonal relationships with not only those I minister to but also their Families. It is through this Ministry that I am discovering that we are the Community called the Body of Christ. May God bless you.

Gary Blue

Sunday, July 15 8:00 A.M. Mass
Noel Cusick – Nursing Home Steward

Good Morning, parishioners and friends of St. Joseph Parish. My name is Noel. My family and I have been parishioners of St. Joseph's parish since May 11th 1974, our daughter's 5th birthday. I am pursuing the journey of stewardship because I, at an advanced age, have received the gift of good health. In a small way I would like to give back to others who are dealing with serious health issues. The ministry that I find most rewarding is that of Nursing Home steward. On Thursdays, at approximately 9:30 A.M., I join a few other parishioners and friends and meet at Kindred, also known as, Regency Nursing Home, which is located here in Dyer, east of the church near the post office. We assemble the ambulatory residents in the dining room at the facility for a Mass offered by Father Terry. Most of us have a specific function. I act as the lector and do the reading during the mass and help to gather the residents who attend. Other stewards lead the residents in the rosary or act as extraordinary ministers, taking the Eucharist to those who are unable to attend the Mass. I have been doing this for 9 or 10 years. I am one of the rookies. Most of the others have been doing this longer than me. There are times when nursing home stewards have other personal obligations, and have to miss a week, but we attend as regularly as we can. Even though some residents appear to not know what is going on during the Mass, on occasion they will surprise us by whispering the Our Father. Our visit to Kindred lasts approximately an hour and a half.

The thought of stewardship to me is logical and acceptable. It seems to make sense that if you want to be a disciple of Christ, you should be willing to share your time and talent to benefit others. The time I spend with the residents is as much a blessing to me as it is to them.