

SAID ED August 6, 2017

Thoughts from Cathy...

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As I look back over my 34 years of staff presence at COTA, I wonder how those years passed so quickly.

My family became members of Assumption when we moved to Fairport 47 years ago. It didn't take long for one of the Mission Helper sisters, Sister Alma, to recruit me to teach a religion class. In my mind, I can still see her standing in front of me, pointing her finger at me and telling me, "We need a Kindergarten religion teacher, and I think you're it!" The minute I stepped into that class, I was hooked.

The Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart played a very big role in the establishment of our School of Religion as a prototype for parish religious education programs throughout the country. Fr. Leonard Kelly brought them to Fairport from Baltimore to serve as catechists in the School of Religion he founded in the 1950's. They served at our parish as teachers and missionaries for 29 years. On the day the sisters left Fairport, that same Mission Helper who introduced me to catechetical ministry told me not to be anxious about what would come next for our School of Religion...not to be afraid or concerned about its future. She said that their mission in Fairport had been completed. They taught us so that we could teach others...that now it was our time to nurture the seeds of faith in the hearts of our little ones. And that's what we did. Led and inspired by two Sisters of Saint Joseph—first, Sr. Janice Morgan and succeeding her, Sr. Catherine Judge, the SoR continued to help form the faith of the young people in our parish by supporting the faith formation efforts of their parents. Together, we helped our kids come to know and love Jesus. When Sister Janice, and then Sister Catherine, left Assumption, our SoR became a mission for lay ministers.

Through each of these transitions, the Holy Spirit provided the gifts needed to keep this ministry vibrant and positive for our families...always keeping the vision and passion of Fr. Kelly in our hearts and minds.

It makes me smile to remember the children who have passed through the halls of the SoR under my tenure. So many First Communions, First Confessions, and Confirmations. So many little ones growing their own faith, and helping to grow mine...so many times my heart was touched and my faith made stronger by their trust and belief in Jesus and the simple prayers that came from their hearts.

It makes me smile, too, as I think about the children who will continue to pass through those halls...the ones who will lift their little hands as they struggle to master the Sign of the Cross...the ones who will stretch out those same little hands as they invite Jesus into their hearts at their First Holy Communion...the ones who will extend their not-so-little hands to the Bishop on their Confirmation night as he congratulates them.

I smile because I know that our kids will continue to learn and grow in their faith under the guidance of their parents and the teachers and staff at the Father Kelly School of Religion. I smile because like the Mission Helpers and the Sisters of Saint Joseph, I leave the SoR in capable hands and hearts.

I am truly grateful for the gift of these years with our children. It has been a great blessing in my life. Thank you to Fr. Ed and all of the other pastors I have served with, for always allowing me to listen to the Holy Spirit. Thank you to my co-workers for their support, to the many amazing volunteer teachers for sharing their faith with our kids, to the Holy Spirit for guiding me in this ministry...and to you, my parish family, for trusting me with the faith formation of our precious little ones. My years at the SoR have truly been filled with joy.

See you in church!

~Cathy Tocci