

SPIRIT LINK

St. Gerald Catholic Church † SpiritLink Newsletter † Volume 25 - Number 3 † Fall 2021

The Murtaughs – Living Their Faith

By Bonni Pulte

The idea of evangelizing can sound overwhelming at times and uncomfortable to a Catholic. Some excuses for not sharing our faith might be; I am not worthy, I don't know enough, no one will listen to me, I'm not talented or gifted enough, or I don't want to. But as Christians, we are not here just to get ourselves to heaven, but to get others there as well. Jesus told us "go make disciples" not just be disciples.

Jerry and Carol Murtaugh made the decision several years ago to step out of their comfort zone with their faith. First they wanted to be more open about why they attended Mass and how important their Catholic faith is to them. They began to focus on sharing their faith with others and learning how to meet them where they were in their faith journey. They became aware that everyone is in a different place with their faith, including members of their own family.

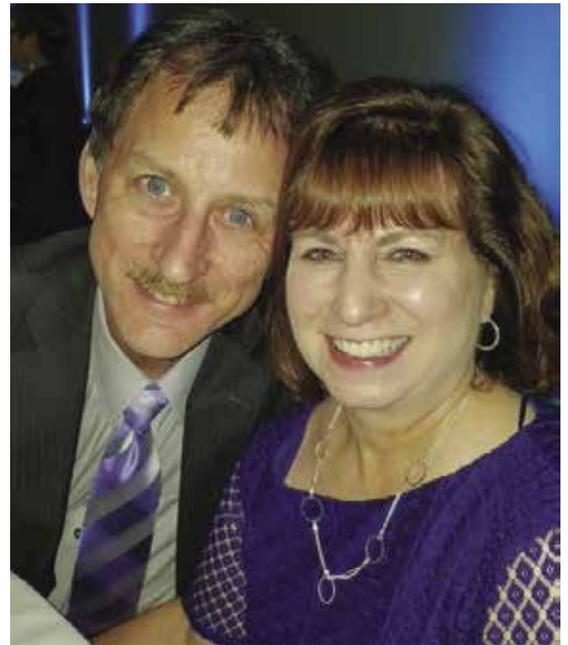
The Murtaugh's have been members of St. Gerald since 1984. They have two adult daughters, Amanda lives in Omaha and Emily lives in New York City. Jerry enjoyed attending masses at Boys Town where he developed a good relationship with Monsignor Dunne (founder of KVSS). That period helped to strengthen his faith and left him wanting even more. Carol attended Alpha where she was able to make connections with other participants to help them feel accepted in the group sessions.

To help them reach out to others, Jerry and Carol attended Intro to Discipleship. They have also taken advantage of other programs at St. Gerald and the Omaha/Ralston community: Lectio Divina small group, Alpha, Ablaze Worship, OASIS, KVSS & EWTN programming, Seeking Truth Bible Study Series and parish missions.

Jerry worked as a manufacturing engineer for 35 years and for a faith-based charitable foundation for the past five years. During his engineering career, he was able to interact with a wide range of people sharing his faith by words and deeds. He said that "Living my faith by example and sharing that God was the priority in my life, warmed my heart and strengthened my faith. This sharing of my faith made me happy and encouraged me to do more for God's glory."

Carol, a Registered Nurse, worked for 26 years providing care for patients with cancer and blood disorders. 12 years ago she moved to her current position as an administrator for five cancer centers. She said that caring for patients and their families inspires her every day to bring joy to others and spread God's positive message of hope. Carol finds that being in a demanding position can limit her energy and time to spend on her faith. By growing in her spiritual faith over the past three years, Carol has felt more at peace.

The Murtaugh's were able to make a trip to the Holy Land that became one of the most inspiring times of their lives. By physically touching, hearing, smelling and seeing the places where Jesus taught and the miracles that the Apostles experienced, brought a whole new level of



Jerry and Carol Murtaugh

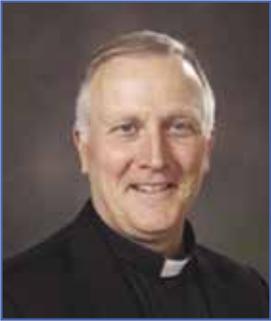
understanding and energy to their faith and desire to share these truths and excitement with others.

Jerry and Carol plan to continue their ministry of evangelizing by continuing to learn about their faith and practice how to approach people where they are at in their faith. Most importantly, they want to share God's love and become more involved in supporting ministries around the city that are faith based and help others. They truly believe that we all need to share the truth and our love of Jesus with others, because only with this faith and action can we and our country gain grace and salvation through God.

Carol says; "The idea of evangelizing can be overwhelming. But if you start by thinking about what you already do, like helping a neighbor or volunteering or taking time to ask the grocery clerk about their day, then build on that using the gifts God gave you. Think about how you can be Jesus to others."

The final message that Jerry wants to leave with everyone is, "With your heart ... listen to the Holy Spirit and let Him guide you."

School of Prayer by Fr. Mark Nolte, Pastor



Jesus' call to follow Him is a call to discipleship. Discipleship is first and foremost a call to prayer... to relationship. It is a call to "be with Him" (Mk. 3:14). And the call to prayer is a call to a deep and personal intimacy with our Father through Jesus Christ. So prayer is all about RELATIONSHIP. Without this intimate relationship with the indwelling presence of the Holy Trinity,

our Christian religion can easily become merely legalistic, the following of rules. For many Catholics, what is missing in their life, especially their prayer life, is real intimacy with God. Perhaps they haven't really learned how to pray in such a way that will bring them to a deeper experience of their heavenly Father's unconditional love. Perhaps they haven't yet had a real life-changing and life-giving encounter with Jesus!

In a class on Christian spirituality in seminary, our professor told us that most Catholics will probably go to their graves never getting beyond what he called "adolescent spirituality". In other words, many will never get beyond just "saying prayers". There is certainly nothing wrong with saying formula prayers (i.e. Rosary,

etc.), but if we are not really sharing what is truly in our hearts with God in prayer then we will miss out on so much more that our Father desires to give us. In Isaiah 29:13, God says that His people "honor Him with their lips but their hearts are far from Him." If our prayer is merely "lip service" then our prayer can easily become dry and empty. And as a result, God may seem cold and distant to us.

In their time with Jesus, the disciples personally witnessed the intimacy Jesus had with His Father in prayer. It was an intimacy so deep and personal, that they were moved to say "Lord, teach us [how] to pray just as John taught his disciples" (Lk. 11:1). If you would like to experience a deeper intimacy with the Father through Jesus, then please join us every First Saturday of the month, beginning October 2nd, at the Lakeview chapel from 9:00 to 10:00 AM for our "School of Prayer". Each month, I will cover different aspects of Christian prayer and of the interior life. In addition to the interactive presentations, there will also be opportunities for silence, prayer, guided meditation, and journaling. So please bring a pen and prayer journal with you. I look forward to seeing you there!



St. Gerald Catholic School

14th Annual Walk of Pride Fundraiser

**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN
NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1st**

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Donation Amount: _____



Kick off: September 7, 2021

Walk of Pride: October 1, 2021



Home and School Association Supports Co-Curricular Activities for Students and Staff Not Covered with Tuition Including:

- Educational Opportunities, Scholarships,
- Bus Transportation, Field Trip Activities,
- Sacrament Celebrations,
- Catholic Schools Week Events,
- Enrichment and Educational Programs for Students and Teachers, Classroom Technology and Materials and Much More!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION!

- Donate online at <http://stgerald.weshareonline.org>
- Please make checks payable to: St. Gerald Home and School
Attn: Home & School - Walk of Pride
7857 Lakeview Street
Omaha, NE 68127

Cathy Lemek, Sharing Her Faith

By Joan Squire

Cathy Lemek believes that family is important and lives it. Her personal family is important and her St. Gerald family is important. She shares her home with her mother Jan. Until 3 years ago her mother lived next door to her and Cathy found herself caring for two homes. The solution was for her mom to move in with her. Her mother's home was sold to a nephew keeping it in the family. Cathy and her mom usually attend the Sunday noon Mass and her mom sometimes accompanies Cathy to her Thursday hour of adoration.

Several years ago Cathy and her sister Cindy Long volunteered as classroom aids for Family Formation. When an additional classroom teacher was needed they stepped up and continuing as a team taught 1st grade. Cathy believes in the Family Formation model. In the home, parents are the first and best teachers of their family's faith. Cathy says that Family Formation last year during Covid was a real challenge. Month to month they were not sure how many children would come to class. Ten children were registered and sometimes seven would come. When the kindergarten teacher had health problems those children were added to Cathy's class.

Cathy has worked for 18 years as a production operator in the yogurt department at LaLa Dairy. She started there when it was Blue Bunny. At the end of January she and her mom contracted Covid. Thankfully, they were not very ill. Cathy says the most obvious symptom for her was a loss of smell. She continues to keep all of the production people at LaLa in her prayers as we are not past Covid yet.

Cathy is planning to take a year off from Family Formation and have more time for other opportunities at St. Gerald. She loves the Ablaze experience. She is



Cathy Lemek and her mother Jan Lemek

excited to have the tabernacle moved front and center at the church. When she comes to Mass to worship Jesus, she is pleased that he will be right there in front for all to see. One of the ways Cathy has shown her love for the Eucharist is by decorating an altar for the Annual Corpus Christi Procession at St. Gerald. She, her sister and her mom make it a family project. The processional altars were not needed for this summer's restructured procession, but Cathy was pleased to see the large number of people who participated. Cathy says, "There is a real love of the Eucharist at St. Gerald."



St. Gerald School Alumni Spotlight

Emily Mendick is a St. Gerald graduate and daughter of Rob and Andrea Mendick. This fall she is a student teacher of PE at St. Gerald School. She will be graduating from Bellevue University this January with a major in Health and Human Performance, an endorsement in coaching, and will be certified to teach PE and Health pre-kindergarten through high school.

Emily says, "I wanted to come back to St. Gerald because it feels like home and this experience will help me be endorsed in both elementary and secondary education. So far, I have loved getting to know every student. They are so well behaved and they love coming to PE. I'm trying my best to learn all their names! When I finish this experience and I am graduated, my goal is to be certified to substitute. This will help prepare me for when I begin to look for my first teaching job by the start of the next academic school year."



St. Gerald School offers boys and girls soccer and girls volleyball for all school and family formation students. 3rd grade volleyball is coached by Mrs. Kathy Yochum and Mrs. Katie Digilio. Mrs. Yochum is pictured with the girls after their first game against St. Columbkille.



Each year, St. Gerald School puts yard signs in each kindergarten family's yard welcoming them to the school. This year St. Gerald welcomed the class of 2030. Clare Erspamer is pictured with her 5th grade brother Gideon.



Garden "Power Hour" was held on July 31st at the St. Gerald School Learning Garden. Parents and students helped coordinator Kendra Sullivan harvest produce and clean up the garden.



Submit your photographs and story ideas for the newsletter to stgeraldspiritlink@gmail.com

Szczepaniaks are Right at Home at St. Gerald

By Sherry Wachtler

Ray and Paula Szczepaniak's name may not have been easy to learn, but in five short years, it has become a familiar one at St. Gerald. Just in case you don't know the couple, their name is pronounced "Chu-pon-yuk," all short vowels.

They have become familiar faces around St. Gerald because they are very involved in many ministries. It all started a few years ago, when Ray's brother Tom invited him to attend St. Gerald's Saturday "That Man is You" sessions. Ray was so comfortable in the faith-sharing group that he rarely missed any sessions. Those early morning prayer gatherings changed the course of Ray and Paula's faith life. Ray encouraged Paula to attend St. Gerald's Mass and once she did, she felt very much at home.

"St. Gerald is a dynamic parish," Paula said. "We love Father Michael's Ablaze Praise and Worship sessions and his Magnificat Prayer ministry." They loved Father Mark's homilies and learned that Father Knecht is a member of the Pro-Sanctity Movement, of which Paula is a member. That wasn't all. They signed up as helpers at Alpha, "Seeking Truth" Bible Studies and pretty soon, they were greeters at Oasis and the Patriotic Rosary. And yes, Paula, joined the music ministry at the Sunday noon Mass.

The two, both cradle Catholics, were raised in strong Catholic homes. Ray grew up in south Omaha where his parents owned the Parkvale Bakery and they attended St. Stan's Church. His parents were active in the charismatic movement. Paula, who grew up in Duluth, Minn., came to Omaha when her parents were transferred with the Air Force Civil Service. "We learned faith by watching them (our parents)" Paula said. "We always went to Mass and participated in things going on in the church."

They attended UNL and UNO and met on a blind date. In their 31 years of marriage, they loved parenting their five children, Nick, 30; Nate, 28; Annie, 27; Blase, 25 and Bethany, 21, and their five foster children. Paula home-schooled the children for several years. "And now I'm blessed over and over because I get to spend two to three days a week with our grandson, Nolan, 4," Paula said.

Through the ups and downs of raising five children and foster children as Ray worked as an accountant and Paula an Omaha Public Schools early childhood teacher, their faith remained rock solid.

Even when Paula was diagnosed in January with treatable non-Hodgkins lymphoma and endured surgery and chemotherapy, their faith remained strong. Paula stepped away from some of her ministries for a short hiatus and intends to come back when she is completely well. "I felt like the Lord was not going to abandon us and He didn't," Paula said. She is healing and looking forward to returning.

"We love our faith," the Szczepaniaks, said. "There are other churches, and truth in other religions, but our Catholic Church has a fullness of the Christian faith because of the Eucharist," Paula said. About St. Gerald Parish, Paula has this to say: "The Lord put us where he wanted us to be and we can't imagine being anywhere else."



Ray and Paula Szczepaniak



A Missionary Discipleship Retreat at St. Gerald was led by Deacon Ralph Poyo of New Evangelization Ministries. On August 6 and 7 participants learned to focus on the Lord, learned to hear and recognize His promptings, and gained confidence in sharing their faith with others.



Representing St. Gerald parish during the annual Ralston Independence Day Parade are the Knights of Columbus and students and parents of St. Gerald School.



4th Degree Knights of Columbus hosted an informal get together at the Surfside Club on August 1. Pictured are Sir Knight Tom and Vicky Hegarty, Sir Knight Bob Ryba, Sir Knight Mike Holmgren, guests Joan Kowal and Mary Ann Versaw. Sir Knight Brian Munchrath is not pictured.



This issue is dedicated to Lou Sobczyk who shared his love of photography by taking photos for the SpiritLink for 12 years.

May he rest in peace.

Welcomed by the spirit of St. Gerald



**Deacon Rick and
Debby Melrose**

Since becoming a part of St. Gerald parish Deacon Rick and his wife Debby have been impressed by the warm, welcoming spirit of everyone they encounter and by the number and variety of faith formation/growth programs that are offered and encouraged by parish leadership.

Deacon Rick is a native of Southern California, his wife Debby is a native of Illinois. Rick was in the Navy for 22 years and met Debby during his first assignment to the Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Illinois. They were married in 1973 and have 4 children, 11 grandchildren, and are currently guardians of their nephew, Nick, after the death of Debby's sister in 2018.

Their time in the Navy took them overseas and to postings in the continental US. Following retirement from the Navy, the couple and their children remained in San Diego, CA. After a civilian career they retired a second time in 2017 and relocated to Bellevue to be closer to family in Nebraska and Chicago.

Following a very powerful Men's Cursillo experience in 1994, Rick and Debby got involved with the Cursillo movement for the next 22 years. During this period, Rick discerned a call to ordained life. After completing formation for the Permanent Diaconate Program in the Diocese of San Diego Rick was ordained in 2008. During his formation he discovered a special fondness for serving the incarcerated and following his ordination served as a Catholic Chaplain for the San Diego County Woman's Detention and Reentry Facility as well as the Boys Juvenile Detention Facility and the San Diego County Men's jail.

Rick and Debby were also involved in parish life with Debby starting and leading a MOMS (Mothers of Ministry Sharing) for 5 years in their home parish of Guardian Angels in Santee, CA. They also taught classes together including Baptism Prep, High School Confirmation and Theology of the Body for Teens. Deacon Rick is also a Third Degree Knights of Columbus member.

Their initial contact with St. Gerald was the result of a recommendation from their daughter-in-law. They attended St. Gerald over the years as they were in Nebraska visiting their kids/grandkids. Since joining the parish Deacon Rick says, "We have participated in several programs nurturing our faith and will continue to do so going forward. There is a very special spirit at St. Gerald that is palpable from long time parishioners who happily share their experiences and that of their families who are following them, to the genuine warm greetings of the ushers and clergy. I've met and chatted with parishioners who've moved away but gladly travel back because St. Gerald is their home and there's no place like home."

Welcome

St. Gerald School welcomes Ms. Shauna Owens as Administrative Assistant. Ms. Owens is from north Omaha and went to St. Pius X/St. Leo, Roncalli Catholic, and then on to Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln for a Bachelor of Arts in History and Education. She loves spending time with her pet dog and a pet cat. She also loves to read, hike, travel, and just be outdoors. She says, "Nature is my happy place. My favorite place to vacation is in Colorado and the Rocky Mountains because it is so much fun and such a beautiful place that takes my breath away each time.

"My favorite thing about St. Gerald so far is getting to see the kiddos. I love getting to hear their funny stories and I learn all of my best jokes from them. I also love how every day is something different and you never know what is going to come into the office each day; it keeps me on my toes. I am so excited to continue to get to know the families and staff here at St. Gerald and have felt so very welcome into this amazing community."



Shauna Owens

www.StGerald.org/give - Make your one-time or recurring donation using your debit or credit card, checking, or savings account.



Cathy Lemek
Page 3

Szczepaniaks
Page 5



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ST. GERALD CATHOLIC CHURCH

www.StGerald.org

MASS TIMES

Church - 96th and Q Street

Saturday: 5:00pm

Sunday: 8:00am, 10:00 am, 12:00pm

Daily: 12:15pm (M-F), Rosary begins at 11:45am

Holy Days: check the bulletin and online

Chapel - 78th and Lakeview

Sunday: 7:00am

Daily: 6:45am (M, T, Th, F), Rosary at 7:45am

Saturday: 8:15am

Holy Days: check the bulletin and online

RECONCILIATION TIMES

Church - 96th and Q Street

Saturday: 3:00-4:30pm

Monday-Friday: 12:00-12:15pm

Chapel - 78th and Lakeview

M, T, Th, F: 6:30-6:45am

Saturday: 8:00-8:15am

LIVE STREAM IS AVAILABLE DURING THE SATURDAY 5:00PM AND SUNDAY 10:00AM MASSES

Our Vision: Encountering Jesus • Making Disciples • Transforming Lives

St. Gerald Parish Mission Statement: Led by the Holy Spirit, we are a Catholic community of faith whose primary purpose is to know Jesus, to love Him, and to serve Him in serving others. Sent to make disciples, we invite and welcome everyone to come and share our Master's joy.