

STEWARDSHIP LAY WITNESS TALK
November 6/7, 2018

My name is Nancy Mathena and that's my husband Kevin sitting over there.



I grew up in Preston, Iowa and attended St. Joseph Catholic Church with my parents and siblings. Because I attended public school, my catholic education consisted of going to Saturday morning catechism class when I was in grade school, then Thursday evening classes when I enter high school. The standard teaching tool at that time was the Baltimore Catechism. I moved to Clinton in 1980, but never supported a parish in Clinton. I would attend weekly mass, because it was what my parents taught me to do. But that was the extent of my catholic life.

Kevin was born and raised in Milan Illinois. As a child his family practiced the Presbyterian faith. They attended Sunday worship and he and his siblings would go to Sunday School every week. It was his

parent's belief that their children would decide when to be baptized and into which faith.

We were married April 16, 2005. Because Kevin had been previously married we were married by a minister I found on the internet. I knew at the time that I would no longer be able to receive the Sacraments, but I was alright with that. I clearly hadn't been practicing my faith for many years anyway. I would still attend weekly mass, but never received the Holy Eucharist. Kevin would attend mass with me from time to time, holidays, family weddings or whenever I invited him to join me. I never considered asking him to join the Church because I knew he would have to go through the Annulment process first. And to be honest, it was not that important to me.

Then in 2010, I had a minor health scare, and when I say minor I mean very very minor. But it scared me enough to examine my life and how I had been living it. To this day I believe it was the Holy Spirit guiding me through those days.

I knew at that point I was going to have to ask Kevin to seek an annulment so I could fully practice my faith again. It seemed so unfair that he would have to be the one doing all the work that went into getting an annulment for my benefit, but I had to ask. So I did.

His response OK!

We started the process my meeting with Father Ken and we joined the Parish in the fall of 2010.

Father Ken explained to us that if Kevin had any plans on joining the church after his annulment, he would have to attend RCIA classes. They were about to start a new session, but since it would take up to 14 months for the annulment, he could wait until the following year.

Kevin knew very little about the Catholic religion, so he decided to use that first year of RCIA as a fact finding mission and would make his decision about becoming Catholic after that year. He had been asking me questions about my faith and I'm ashamed to admit

that I could not answer many of them, so I decided to attend the classes with him.

That RCIA ministry and the people that volunteered their time and talent was the first real experience we had with parish stewardship. It was through that ministry, we learned about the Catholic faith, how to live the faith and the importance of passing our faith onto others. We also formed life long friendships along the way.

We spent 2 years attending RCIA and on October 4th, 2011, Kevin was granted his annulment. On November 19th, 2011, we were married in the Church by Father Ken and I received my first Holy Eucharist in years.

Kevin was baptized, confirmed, and received his first Holy Eucharist at the Easter Vigil on April 7th, 2012. If you were to ask Kevin today about his experience, he will tell you that he got the annulment for me, but became Catholic for himself. And for we, he has made me a better Catholic.

Practicing stewardship started small for us. We became gift bearers, greeters and started contributing to the weekly offertory. I became a reader, Eucharist minister and helped a group clean Church on Thursday morning once a month. Kevin joined the Knights of Columbus and enjoys volunteering for the Tootsie Roll drive each year and serving the Special Olympians at the Coalition for the Disabled Banquet in October. He also became a member of the landscaping ministry for awhile, until our work schedules made it hard to do. It was during one of his many trips to the dump disposing of yard waste that a fellow member offered some advice. There is more to being Catholic than going to church. He repeats this conversation often.

Through the years, as our lives have changed along with our growing understanding and love for our faith, so has our stewardship.

We like to tell people the easiest way to practice stewardship, is to find something you enjoy doing. As many of you know, I enjoy

baking. So I donate to as many bake sales and funeral lunches as I can. One of my greatest joys is the planning, the preparation and the hosting of the reception for the newly baptized after the Easter Vigil. It's such a perfect time to celebrate together as a spiritual family.

During the summer months you can find Kevin and I at St. Irenaeus cemetery, weed eating around the headstones. It is hard work, but for us it is some of our most rewarding work. I once read, that all growth comes through some pain and sacrifice . I do my best reflecting and praying on my days out there. Another blessing, no complaints.

I attended my first CEW weekend this past February and have already committed to next years weekend. It is my hope that with all our prayers, Kevin will commit to making his first experience next year also.

As a way of passing our faith onto others, we buy script and donate to STO every year, in support the students of Prince of Peace Academy. It's important to us that these students continue to learn

and practice their faith on a daily basis, something that I lacked in my school years.

In the past several years, we have been practicing tithing. Giving to God first. 5 % of our income goes to the parish, 1% to the diocese, and the other 4% gets split between the School, the L Arch, the Victory Center, or whoever is in need at any given time. And of course we contribute to our monthly blue bucket collection.

But being honest, there is a hidden benefit we receive for our giving. All our charitable contributions are tax deductible. We claim them each year and each year we receive a nice tax refund.. Now don't get me wrong. That's not the reason we give, it's only a benefit of giving. We give because we are asked to give. And we give because we want to give. After all we have 40 plus years of giving nothing to make up for.

When we started on this journey 8 years ago, we were happy. We had good jobs, a nice home, family, friend and two dogs that loved us. As we reflect back on those day, we see how selfish and

hollow we were. Everything we did was to benefit us. Today we still have all the things we had before, but through Stewardship and giving to God first, we have found true happiness along with a new family, our parish family. We have found Gods grace and we are at peace. Life is really good.

When you receive your stewardship packet, read through all the ministries. See what interests you or will fit into you life.

Remember starting small is still starting. Let the Holy Spirt guide you..

Corinthians 9:6-7

Remember this: the person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should do as he had decided in his heart not reluctantly or out of necessity, for God love a cheerful giver.

Thank you and God Bless.