

Stories of Stewardship

A look at stewardship in St. Anne Parish

June 2015: Ruth St. Hilaire: "Small Things with Great Love."



Mother Theresa of Calcutta once said "We don't do great things. We do small things with great love." The same might be said of parishioner Ruth St. Hilaire, who does a variety of small, but valuable, things to help the church and our community run smoothly – most of them behind the scenes. Under the radar. For example, she:

- Cleans the hymnal racks on the back of the pews after the 8 am and 10 am Sunday Masses, removing "the snotty Kleenexes," crumpled bulletins and kids' papers left behind. She does this on her own, though the parish does supply her with plastic gloves to protect her from the Kleenex!
- Pours coffee for funeral receptions and helps clean up. "I'm a behind the scenes person," she says. "That kind of stuff."
- Serves as a sacristan for the Morning Prayer & Communion services.
- Turns all the Morning Prayer books to the appropriate day of the week. Again, a small thing, but useful, since it prevents the congregation from fumbling to find the right page and insuring a smooth start to the liturgy.

- Created a list of hymns familiar to the parish for Fr. Tony when he was new so he could avoid that awkward silence when parishioners are presented with new music.
- Sings beautiful harmony with her lovely alto voice for the hymns sung at Morning Prayer.

Ruth should probably be writing this story as she has a newspaper background. She started her career with a Yakima daily newspaper as a copy girl, then worked five years for the new Catholic newspaper in Yakima. "When the paper started, each parish was to have a correspondent," Ruth explains. She jumped at the chance. "I ran to our pastor and said 'Hey, I'll be the correspondent and he said, 'Sure.' So, each week I'd take my stories to Ray Rupert, the editor, and one day he said 'How'd you like to work here as a reporter.' So I did for five years." Ruth also worked 17 years for *The Seattle Times*, writing real estate ads.

Ruth is a farm girl, one of ten kids from a farm near Yakima. Her parents did not have much time to volunteer in the church. "My dad was busy farming and my mother was raising ten kids." But both parents had strong faith and Ruth was deeply influenced by that. "It was in my genes," she says. Hard work also is natural as breathing to Ruth. In addition to the "small things" she does here at St. Anne, she also volunteers at:

- The Cathedral Kitchen which serves a daily meal to the homeless and poor. Ruth's job is to cut up tomatoes for a green salad. "I love it," she says. "Then I help clean up afterward and wash all the chairs."
- The Ballard Senior Center serving as a receptionist and greeter. She also helps set up for dinners and handles other small administrative tasks.

Many parishioners believe stewardship is only about the Sunday envelopes, the Archdiocesan Appeal and Rice Bowl. Ruth St. Hilaire proves that stewardship is also about giving of your "time and talent."

Ruth is modest and quiet about what she does. "I'm a saint in name only!" she says. Many would disagree. In fact, if the meek will inherit the earth, Ruth St. Hilaire will be a very wealthy woman.

