

## View From the Pew

By Meredith Mackin Rilley

“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love.” *1 Thessalonians i.*

3

At St. Edward’s church, there is an abundance of works of faith and labors of love, as well as a long tradition of family life. When Msgr. Ryan joined the parish in 1991, he saw that, although there were existing ministries helping families, the parish was missing a committee on family life. Broadening the perspective of family, he created the organization within the church that is now known as Family Life, which serves as an umbrella for existing and future family-related ministries. Working upon the groundwork of Sr. Margaret Kane and different parishioners, he gave new direction to many of the fifteen different ministries under that umbrella. Under the leadership of Family Life Minister, Jan Obarowski, Family life now helps to organize and schedule a multitude of events throughout the calendar year, as well as throughout the life of a family. Jan is also the liaison with Diocesan and National programs, which is a ministry in itself. “These ministries follow the life of a family, dealing with every aspect of it, from the young to the elderly.” They are also born from a need of a parishioner, whether it is a young mother seeking spiritual direction in child rearing or a group of women looking to reach out to new mothers. Following is a brief description of these ministries.

**Marriage Prep** — A program that specifically works with young couples who are engaged to be married. The program ties engaged couples with married mentor couples who have gone through training to be qualified to counsel them. Margaret and Martin Wusik run this ministry, which prepares an average of 15 -20 couples per year. “This program was developed by Msgr. Ryan and is a fabulous and incredible opportunity, because [the relationship between engaged and married couples] becomes very intimate. It’s not your parents’ Pre-Cana.” The program takes place in the home of the married couple over four meetings, during which an elaborate profile is taken on the engaged couple and an individualized program is created specifically for them. One of the intentions of the program, aside from the obvious preparation for married life by priming them to talk about topics like finances, children, faith, how they fight, etc., is to keep the couple thinking spiritually and to help them become involved in the church.

**Elizabeth Ministry** — A group of women who connect with pregnant women, parents who have recently adopted a baby or given birth, or even new grandparents. The ladies usually visit the home with a small gift bag from Family Life as a way to reach out to the parishioner, letting them know that St. Edward’s is there for them if the need arises.

**Pre-Baptismal Program** — Not simply a run-through of a child’s baptism ceremony, this program introduces the parents to the baptizing priest or deacon, who teaches them the exact meaning of baptism. The couples are encouraged to re-visit the program with each subsequent child, for renewed understanding and focus of this meaning for that child’s important day.

**1<sup>st</sup> Birthday Celebration** — The hands, hearts and minds behind the semi-annual Mass that celebrates the first birthdays of the children of the parish, followed by a celebration of cake and refreshments in the church hall.

**Toddler Tea** — A purely social ministry enabling caregivers of young children to gather together to both play with their children as a group and to socialize with each other while the children play with other children their age.

**MOMS (Ministry of Moms Sharing)**— Geared toward mothers of all ages, meetings aim for spiritual growth, companionship, support, and social interaction. Meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month from September to June in the church hall.

**Terrific Twos** — Run by certified teacher, Donna Lasco, this is a pre-nursery school program specifically designed to meet the educational needs of children from 20 to 36 months.

**Babysitting Ministry** — A service for parents involved in any ministry, allowing them to focus on the program and knowing their children will be cared for and happy.

**Women's Contemplative Prayer Group** — This gathering is a spiritual journey of faith for women of the Parish who wish to deepen their relationship with the Lord.

**Ladies Guild** — A functioning group for more than 50 years, this group of women's main mission is to pray and help the parish in any way they can. Serving in many different capacities, including sharing in each other's lives through God and simply being present for one another, these ladies hold retreats, Masses, welcoming teas, the annual Communion breakfast, the Birthright Baby Shower, Installation Dinners, and monthly readings, as well as fund-raising events, including bake sales, whose profits are donated to the parish. Many of these women also generously serve in other ministries.

**Crafting Ministry** — A mini-umbrella, which includes three different crafting ministries:

*Rosary Hill Society* — A sewing group whose members make cancer pads for the Rosary Hill Nursing Home in Hawthorne, NY. Many of the members have lost their husbands to illness and join as a way of healing and giving back. This ministry is self-funded, operating solely on donations.

*Prayer Shawl Ministry* — A knitting group who gathers to make prayer shawls which are obtained by parishioners for a modest donation. Prayer intentions are kept in a journal while these beautiful shawls are being created and prayed over. They are often given as gifts of congratulations, to someone in need of prayers or to a child leaving for college as a "hug from home". Sometimes they are given by the church to parishioners in need to let them know that Saint Edward's is thinking of them.

*Quilt Ministry* — A quilting group who creates one beautifully crafted patchwork style quilt per year that is raffled off to parishioners. Proceeds from this raffle help the parish in different ways.

**Family Events** — A group of people who create the social festivities of the church, including the Marriage Jubilee Celebration, the Advent Wreath Workshop, the summer events (i.e., Picnic Hoedown) all dinner dances, trips to Westchester Dinner Theater, Movie Night for the kids, etc.

The Oxford American Dictionary defines a ministry as the spiritual work or service of any Christian or a group of Christians. It is remarkable and inspiring that these works of faith are sustained by the sheer goodness of Christians willing to reach out to others in need, in Jesus' name. In its attempt to reach out to parishioners and beyond, St. Edward's achieves its desire of being more than a church for Mass. It is a family whose strength is in its capacity to continually give to each other, bound together by a faith in God and Jesus Christ, but also by a faith in the presence of Jesus Christ in each other.

For information on these or other ministries, please contact the Jan Obarowski at 746-2200.