

Faithful Disciples Continuing to Build God's Kingdom

Several parishioners offered their comments about our parish during the pandemic shutdown and how their involvement at St. Mary's has benefitted them. Please take a few moments to read these testimonies and consider how you might become more involved here at St. Mary's.

How important were the Facebook Live Masses to you during the shutdown?

Barb Y. – Being able to watch the Facebook live masses during the shutdown was very important to me as it kept my faith strong and helped me deal with the separation from family and friends. Although not together physically in church, it provided to me the sense of belonging to others spiritual in church and with Our Lord.

Angel G. – Having the Facebook Live Mass was so important for me during our time away from church. I still felt the need to be in church and would visit once or twice a week. To be able to watch the Mass as it was happening in my own church, with Father Tom and my fellow parishioners was a bright spot in the week. There were other online Masses that were available, but it was very comforting to be able to watch the Mass from my own St. Mary's Church. I am most grateful for the time and effort of those who provided this service. It was an important ministry for our parish.

Katie E. – Thank you from the bottom of my heart for offering Mass online during the pandemic shutdown. Not being able to freely attend Mass was a crushing blow, but being able to connect with our Parish family via online Mass was a true blessing. It kept us rooted in the Word and allowed us to experience Mass during a very uncertain and difficult time. It actually made us yearn to attend Mass in person and receive Holy Communion more than ever!

Pam C. – The FB Masses were my link to normalcy and our parish community. I greatly appreciated the efforts to provide us weekly Masses.

Jeanette W. – Having the Mass available on Facebook Live was a blessing. While there were other options ... being connected to my parish during a time of isolation was important. There was a level of comfort and security. I often felt like I was sitting in "my" pew. I get that same feeling of comfort, security and connection while praying the Mass on the parish website every Sunday morning. I miss attending Mass in-person ... Praying the Mass at home is peaceful and without interruptions. It is a good time to set aside the distractions and focus on prayer. And, I can fast forward to the homily later to listen to it again!

Mary & Emmett H. – The Masses posted online were very important for us ... (and still are) although we could find other Sunday and daily masses online, the Masses from our home parish somehow made us feel that we were still connected with our home church community. We are extremely grateful for those who worked so hard to make it possible. Online services are not the same as in person attendance. But they were uplifting, much appreciated and definitely aided in the void left by the closure of large group gatherings.

Cheryl S. – As the pandemic hit Southeast Ohio, I was stunned by the decision to close churches. I experienced a deep sense of insecurity and grief. After only a few weeks, I was relieved and anxious to prayerfully participate in Mass through social media. Your live Mass via Facebook helped Tim and me regain focus and direction that was diminishing each week we were denied the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. My appreciation was so intense, I often wiped away tears during your live Masses. Thank you, Father Tom, for opening up St. Mary's for private prayer and providing us with a weekly opportunity to celebrate Mass from our homes during the COVID-19 quarantine.

Gail R. – I thought the Facebook Live Mass was something I needed, but as time went by I could hardly wait to attend in a church (people) atmosphere.

How has your life benefitted from a particular ministry and how that has changed your life?

Barb Y. – Being a sacristan has changed my life as it gives me the opportunity to not only serve the Church, but more importantly to have that little bit quiet time after Mass with Our Lord preparing the altar for the next Mass.

Angel G. – I always felt like something was missing from my church experience before I became involved in the ministries that the church has to offer. I was looking for a way to become more involved, thinking that it might fulfill what was missing. This proved to be true, and I am happy to be involved in the community of the church. It makes my experiences at Mass more meaningful, and I feel like I am helping to spread God's message. It seems like the more involved I become, the more that I look for other opportunities to make my faith stronger. Simply going to Mass on the weekend was not enough for me, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve.

Marie C. – After a short time away from the Catholic Church, my husband decided he wanted to become Catholic ... I attended RCIA with him. My faith, which was lukewarm, started to grow in a very deep way. I went back to confession ... I became an active member of St Mary's in many programs and am involved with the Council of Churches and the Food Pantry.

Gail R. – I really miss our *Christlife* ministry and singing in a choir. Although I still cantor, it's not like hearing and singing sectional music.

Pam C. – As an Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, when distributing the Body of Christ, I am filled with the grace of God and the Holy Spirit. I hope this joy shines on my face.

Maggie A. – I am a Eucharistic Minister to the homebound and the nursing homes. Sometimes I don't feel like going because I think I'm "just too busy" but once I get there I'm amazed how eager they are to receive Our Lord. And what a privilege it is for me to bring them Jesus. Those from our parish ask about other parishioners. They want to be connected to our parish family. I always say "Father Tom says hello and sends his blessing." They are elated that they are not forgotten. Most of them want me to wake them if they're napping. When I leave I am refreshed and my faith is strengthened. What a blessing!

Mike E. – I have been involved with the RCIA, Confirmation Preparation, and the *Christlife* programs, and I am impressed with the richness of our Catholic faith as expressed in both the information presented and the quality of the people who direct these activities. I have found, for instance, that the *Christlife* program fosters the best type of fellowship, the kind that is rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus through His Church and the sacraments. I have seen lives transformed and believe that we can transform our culture, families, communities, and schools through the power of the Gospel. Also, the better we know and live our faith, the easier it is to share it with Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Katie E. – We are blessed with amazing ministries in our Parish. I have been blessed to have been serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion since I was 17 years old. It is truly one of the greatest blessings and honors of my life. I am also blessed to serve as a Catechist in our Parish School of Religion preparing second graders to receive the Sacrament of First Holy Communion. It is a wonderful blessing and an honor to be involved in the sacramental life of so many children in our Parish. These two ministries truly strengthen my walk with the Lord! ❤️🙏

Bill F. – Many years I have attended Mass and longed to serve in some way but nothing seemed to fit and thus I was somewhat “incomplete”. As time went on my passion to give back from my talents grew and still a solution was not obvious, but I remained vigilant for a golden opportunity. That moment in time has come. The call for service that I have awaited is here and I have said “Here I am Lord!” and my heart has been rewarded with the joy of service. I can now directly help and utilize my education and experience to benefit everyone. Please find a way. Do something. Start with once and let it grow. Give of yourself. Give from the heart.