

Some final memories of St. Joseph's-Fr. Jim Hewes

As I write this final column as pastoral leader here, I wanted to write about 10 memories that I was very grateful for in my time at St. Joseph's. There are literally hundreds of memories, but because of space I have picked out these special ones.

1. I'll remember Sr. Alice encouraging me to apply to be the pastoral leader at St. Joseph's. I could see why she encouraged me by the incredibly warm welcome that I received by so many people my first weekend here. I remember the wonderful reception after Mass in the church hall. I also remember asking Jim Aroune where the bathroom was and he told me upstairs. I thought he was kidding, but he wasn't. (Yet we were able to install two handicap accessible bathrooms that enhanced the use of the hall.)
2. My bags weren't yet unpacked and I was asked to anoint three people; Guy Bianco, Mike McGowan, and Dan Merz. Not long after I would be doing their funeral Masses. I felt it was a privilege to have the opportunity not only to anoint them, but to celebrate the Sacrament of the Sick with many other parishioners over these three years, as well as be apart of the funerals of some amazing people that I'll never forget, including family members of almost every staff member, that died during my time here.
3. I remember my first Chicken Barbeque. It was amazing to see so many parishioners helping out in various ways, to make this such a remarkable event a success. It was a wonderful way not only to raise money for the parish, but to work together as a faith community, and offer a time of fun for the whole family. It also was the first time my mom was able to visit here and see our beautiful church.
4. I remember my first Christmas here, including the Christmas pageant and watching the glowing faces of our little ones. I was also impressed by the generous spirit of all those that helped with the "Giving Tree" that helped those who came to the House of Mercy.
5. I recall our first Advent and Lenten penance services, and how these grew each year. It was gratifying to see people receive in this profound way the mercy and forgiveness of God (as well as seeing the generosity of priests coming to the services, including Fr. Dick O' Connell the former pastor here.)
6. I'll remember the installation of our access lift system that was completed on November 8 and on November 9 we held our pasta dinner. I came to the table where John O' Mara was in his wheel chair and he told me that this was the first dinner he had been able to come to in five years. It made the project all worthwhile. It has been wonderful to see how often the elevator has been used, including by my mom who was able to use it this past Christmas when our family had dinner in the hall after Mass.
7. In my time here I'll never forget the closing of Mt. Carmel. It was a heartbreaking experience for me, but out of this came our new social ministry tithing charter. St. Joseph's has been able to generously support and help out many groups in our area that work with the poor.
8. I'll remember fondly the interaction with our children in faith formation, our sacramental programs, and our summer VBC, as well as our teens in our youth group. It was a gift to observe their great energy and thirst for learning about their faith. I'll especially remember the awesome insights that little Faith Jaromin would share with me and the smile & wave of little Allison and other kids at each Mass.
9. One of the most memorable times was watching Nancy and Stephanie (who participated in the R.C.I.A.) not only become Catholic, but become part of our parishes.
10. I will especially remember the wonderful evenings when we recognized and thanked all the faithful and generous volunteers of our parish at the Volunteer & Ministry Appreciation Dinner. I always remember with gratitude the dedicated staff that I worked with day in and day out (Kathy, Colleen, Bernie, Cathy, Tim, Pam, Deacon Jim & Gina). I have truly been blessed with these memories of grace.