

The Soul of Seton

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Marilyn Ramsey



Editors Note:

The Catholic Church teaches that some actions are so important to the well being of the community that when they are done, God embraces the giver with special grace. Those actions are known as the Corporal Works of Mercy. They include:

- To feed the hungry*
- To give drink to the thirsty*
- To clothe the naked*
- To visit the imprisoned*
- To shelter the homeless*
- To visit the sick*
- To bury the dead*

Each of the baptized is called to enter into some aspect of these works. Because these works imitate the life of Christ and his own actions, it is a privilege for us to share in them. Marilyn is an excellent example of the ordinary actions that bring extraordinary grace. We are grateful to Marilyn for all that she has given in the name of our Church. If you would like more information on how you can share your gifts with the community, please call our Pastoral Ministries office at 972-596-5505.

Each of us brings to our parish our gifts through service, talent and treasure. Each has a unique path that expresses our faith. Here, Marilyn Ramsey shares how service has become her primary gift to our parish.

Marilyn, like many, has been transplanted from the northern climes, having spent the first 37 years of her life in Michigan. She grew up in a family as the only daughter with five brothers, all younger. As she notes, as a cradle Catholic, she attended Catholic schools with Dominican sisters throughout elementary and high school. She extended her association with church-run education when she was trained as a nurse by the Sisters of Mercy, receiving a diploma allowing her to pursue nursing positions.

Although Marilyn considered other professions, nursing was natural for her. Her parents, generous people, taught her early to be a nurturing soul. She remembers particularly hearing stories about her grandmother who would buy a ton of coal for a family that needed it or was feeding people during the depression. "I sorta grew up with the idea that you were supposed to help your fellow man."

Once she earned her nursing diploma, Marilyn held a number of nursing positions, "I've been everything—a staff nurse, head nurse, intensive care nurse, and post-operative surgical nurse. During this time she was not as active in her parish because of her nursing schedule but did as much as she could, primarily to help at a funeral luncheon, bringing food, or other tasks.

For 16 years Marilyn worked at St. Joseph's Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and thoroughly enjoyed her career. However, at 33 she realized that health care was changing and she needed better credentials, so she earned her BS in nursing degree. This success spurred her to go on for her MS in Nursing Health Services Administration from the University of Michigan's School of Nursing. The MS opened many more career paths for her.

In 1979 Marilyn met Larry, whom she would marry in 1981 when she was 37. Larry's

two teenage sons, Scott and Todd, have become more than stepsons to Marilyn. They both live close by, so Marilyn can see them and her two granddaughters, Carolyn, eight and Sarah, six. Unfortunately, Marilyn lost Larry unexpectedly in 1995, but she remembers how his sons rallied around her and how generous and caring the parishioners of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton were during this most difficult time.

Plano became Marilyn's home in 1988 when Larry took a position at EDS. Marilyn says in the first weeks after moving, she attended Mass and felt so welcomed that she announced she had found her church. One memory she has is every Sunday, she pulled out of the garage going one way, while Larry—a non-Catholic—pulled out to go the other, which must have confused the neighbors greatly.

With working and taking care of her ailing mother the previous year, Marilyn and Larry had decided she should take a year off to recuperate. This gave Marilyn time to become involved, an effort which has grown since then. Her first venture occurred with an announcement that the Women's Club needed volunteers for their Fall Bazaar. She thought "Well, my boxes are unpacked," volunteered, and hasn't stopped saying "I can help" since. Now, she's active in many of their projects, enjoying particularly organizing the RCIA reception following the Easter Vigil to welcome the new members of our faith community. "I think I've only missed two over the years. It's such a joyful event and we want to extend the joy of Easter to them." Then in January 1988, she joined the Women's Scripture Study group; "I'd say it's one of the high points of my involvement here at Seton. It's full of wonderful, supportive women and I've learned so much about the scriptures and my faith."

Over twelve years ago, a bible study group member invited Marilyn to become an Extraordinary Minister of Communion. "My involvement at Seton goes from the sublime of being an EM to tidying up the church kitchen when no one does it and washing the dishtowels. I run the whole gamut of things to do." Marilyn has also visited homebound prisoners. She still sees one semi-homebound

lady she met in 1993. Marilyn says that "The people in my Michigan parish were so good to both my parents, and I feel that being down here, I should help out in some way those in the same situation. This gives me a way to do that."

Marilyn, besides holding a number of positions in the Women's Club and the bible study group, is also active in the Council of Catholic Women (CCW). As President of the Women's Club, she attended the North Texas Deanery Council (NTDC), a subgroup of the CCW. The NTDC gathers women from parishes about three times a year for fellowship, spirituality, and learning. Marilyn served as President in 1995-1997. Besides attending CCW national conventions and meetings, Marilyn is also active in CCW programs at the cathedral where she serves as a docent, guiding groups around the church. The CCW also recently provided greeters for the installment of our new bishop. In addition, she has drawn on her nursing experience to provide training for the CCW's Respite Program, which trains people to provide "get-away" time to allow caretakers to run errands, see friends, or shop—"just to give them a respite from taking care of a loved one."

In addition to Co-Chair of the Friends of the Bereaved with Ann Moczygemba, Marilyn was the first lay commissioner for outreach services (now Commission for Peace and Social Justice). Marilyn is now active in the Giving Tree program where she at first helped on distribution day, worked as co-chair this last year and is looking forward to doing it again beginning in September. "I like knowing the children will have a happy Christmas. When I think of outreach at Christmas, I believe people shouldn't have to think about being poor. They don't have to be reminded that they're poor. It's what Christ told us to do for others."

Why does Marilyn do all this work within the parish? She says: "I try to take advantage for my own faith formation of the various retreats and programs that the parish and diocese offer. That's been instilled in me"