

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

One recent day right before Christmas, while working in the office, I was particularly inspired by a generous act of one of our parishioners. I was going on and on to Father Seigel about what a great place we have here at St. Catherine's. It is filled with so many beautiful, giving, generous people doing incredible things. He asked me to write this letter to share my thoughts on our parish family.

When I decided to go back to work a few years ago after my youngest child started school, I thought that working for the church would be convenient and close to home. It was on this recent day that I realized the greatest reward of my position is getting to know so many amazing people and to experience what a true parish family is all about.

The career I had before coming to work at St. Catherine's Parish was in the corporate world. While I enjoyed my career, it was a drastically different environment than what I have grown to love here at our parish. While my previous work environment was serious, demanding and sometimes quite stressful, it was rewarding in a very professional, businesslike way. While I also enjoy my work here at our parish, the environment is as different as night and day. The lifeblood and activity of this parish is like that in a large extended family.

I am in awe of our generous parishioners who graciously serve our parish. Some do so in a scheduled, organized fashion, such as in an organization or as a catechist. Others will call me to volunteer their services to help without even being approached. Our members never cease to amaze me with their propensity to give. It is very humbling.

At a recent stewardship conference, I listened to a presentation about how a parish can be the third place in the life of its members. The first place for us all is our home: the foundation and heartbeat of our existence. The second place is our place of employment. This is a necessity in order to pay the bills for our families. The third place is the

one to which we are drawn, the one where we desire to be when not at the other two. It is the one where we are comfortable, where we enjoy ourselves, where we take solace in being alone, and where we cherish the company of others.

This third place is St. Catherine of Genoa Parish for many of our members. I have the privilege of being in the front office of our parish facility. I get to witness the desire of our members to do something to help, and their sincere thank you's to me for letting them do so. I get to witness people's requests of how they can help the less fortunate in a financial way. I get the pleasure of hearing a thank you for directing them to whom they can help. I witness people coming in, needing comfort and an open ear to help them through a problem. I get to watch them walk out feeling soothed and guided through their pain. I experience people sharing their joys and feeling very proud to do so. Members of our parish absolutely love to make this spiritual house their third place - the place where they want to share, live, and experience the very best of what they have to offer.

While in the corporate world I may have received the occasional thank you, what I hear at our parish are sincere, loving comments and compliments thanking me for all that I do for our parish. The members of our parish love this third place. They take it into their hearts as their own special place and thank me for my caretaking of and giving to it.

It was on this recent day in the middle of December that I discovered how the people of our parish breathe life into it. It is the people of the parish that make it such an incredible place to worship and to call our own. It is the people of the parish that make me truly blessed to work here and call it my parish too.

Sincerely,
Jill Hansen
St. Catherine of Genoa
Parish Secretary & Business Manager

