



Spotlight On Ministry

Holy Family Catholic Parish Council of Catholic Women

In May of 1957, seventy-five women of Holy Family Parish formed what was then known as the Holy Family Women's Guild. Their objectives were to promote the spiritual welfare of the women of the parish; to sponsor and promote social activities for the entire parish; to cooperate and work with the pastor on all matters related to the school and parish; and to contribute financially to the obligations of the parish. They carried out their objectives zealously. At lunchtime they relieved the sisters in the school so that they could return to the convent for lunch. They made school uniforms for the children who couldn't afford the cost of store-bought. The money that they earned from various fundraisers was donated for the school library and PA system when the new school was built. They hosted receptions for First Communion, Confirmation, and Graduation and whenever a priest was transferred or newly assigned. They sponsored picnics in conjunction with the Men's Club. But most of all, they supported each other. They shared recipes and make-up tips; taught each other flower arranging, gardening and sewing. They offered child-rearing advice. Some of these women still remain active members of that organization which is now known as the Holy Family Council of Catholic Women. Their proudest moment came when the Guild was able to donate a substantial sum of money to the Building Fund for the construction of the kitchen in the newly renovated Diffley Hall. The newer members have great respect and admiration for the foundation that the core group developed.

The Holy Family Women's Guild became the Holy Family Council of Catholic Women (CCW) in 2002. The officers believed that the new name more clearly defined the organization's affiliation with the state and national organizations. If there is truly strength in numbers, the Holy Family CCW wants everyone to know that they are bonded together not only on the Diocesan level but also statewide and nationally with all Catholic women. The National Council of Catholic Women was founded in 1920 by a group of 200 women who answered the call of the bishops in the United States asking them to unite their efforts. It is now a federation of more than 5,000 women's organizations in parishes and dioceses throughout the U.S. representing hundreds of thousands of Catholic women.

Today's Holy Family CCW membership includes mothers, daughters and grandmothers. They work in the corporate world, and in religious life; some grandmothers often provide day-care for their grandchildren. The women of Holy Family CCW serve their church and community. They serve in many church ministries such as: Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, Readers, Greeters, Sacristan, Music, Grief Support/Bereavement, Adult Faith Formation and Education, and the Samaritans who provide transportation for the elderly and disabled to doctors' appointments, pharmacy, and the supermarket. A member spearheaded the collection of used eyeglasses and also religious articles for distribution to the missions. Another member formed Spirited Singles for the 60+ age group. They are members of the Pastoral Council and the Stewardship Council.

Community-wide, our members assumed leadership positions in the Holy Family Food Pantry, and the social justice ministry, F.A.S.T. (Faith and Strength through Action Together). One member gives her time and talent to the Prison Ministry and is a Guardian Ad Litem.

Internationally, members are involved in the "Hand in Hand with Haiti" twinning program. One member has traveled to Haiti on two occasions to visit our sister parish of St. Gabriel.

Sick members are remembered with cards and phone calls. When one of our own dies, members form an Honor Guard at her Funeral Mass. A book is then donated to the Holy Family School library in the name of the deceased member. A Mass is said each month in memory of all deceased members.

Each woman different ---- each sharing the bond of her Catholic faith. Last year the ladies of the Holy Family CCW donated over 32,000 volunteer hours to both the parish and local community organizations.

The CCW established a scholarship award to assist a Holy Family Parish schoolgirl in her first year of Catholic high school education. CCW and its members individually make donations to the Annual School Auction, the St. Vincent DePaul Society, Benedict Haven, which is a local residence for mentally challenged men, and the Immaculate Conception Pre-school Center in St. Joseph's Parish. They continue to sponsor fundraisers such as the Annual Fashion Show and Luncheon, Christmas Bake Sale, Used Book Bonanza, Trunk Sale and Shopping Spree. Once again the CCW hosts receptions for Holy Family children's First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. They remain "on-call" to the pastor for special events such as hosting the reception in celebration of Sister Jamesann's 50th anniversary as a Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the Holy Family 50th Anniversary Committee during the two year planning and implementation of events for the parish.

CCW members participate in the Annual Time and Talent Fair hosted by the Stewardship Council, the International Food Festival, and Holy Family School's Annual Auction and Gala. They work with the parish Generations of Faith program and sponsor projects and events together with the Knights of Columbus.

Bishop Lynch's letter to the St. Petersburg Diocesan Council of Catholic Women on the occasion of their 34th Annual Convention in Tampa says in part.....

"The Diocese of St. Petersburg is truly blessed to have such a group of dedicated and hard working women as those involved with the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. Your commitment to unite Catholic women in so many areas and your willingness to meet the many challenges in our Diocese is deeply appreciated by everyone, the clergy, religious and laity, and especially by me. Let us work together as we carry on the mission of Jesus Christ."

The Holy Family Council of Catholic Women's Mission Statement says:

"As Catholic women and ever mindful that we are here to serve the Lord, we will strive to follow in the footsteps of Mary and say, "YES!" We will attend to the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of our members. We will support the Holy Family Vision Statement and assist our Pastor and our Bishop in the Church's mission on earth."

The CCW extends an invitation to all the ladies (Confirmation age and above) of the parish to join them. We encourage you to use the gifts of your time and talent to reinforce the works that have already been established and help to develop others for the benefit of our church, school and parish community.

For additional information on HFCCW, go to www.holyfamilystpete.com or email us at ccw@holyfamilystpete.com.