

Parishioners' Corner

By Patricia (Pat) Summins

Here's how it all began. I was 17 when I sought to find out more about my Catholic faith. My siblings and I had been baptized as infants. My sister made her First Communion, but I never was offered the Sacraments or any education in the faith. I knew I was Catholic, but I didn't know anything about it. My parents were too busy raising a family and paying the bills. My mother once told me: "I can't help you because all my prayers are in Polish." My mother went to Church every Sunday and I often went with her, but I didn't know what was happening.

When I was 17, I saw a big ad: *"If you want to know more about the Catholic faith..."* in a secular newspaper. Something prompted me, and I enrolled. We went back and forth by mail until they said they could not help me anymore, and that I should go to my Catholic priest.

That's what I did. I walked to the rectory for regular lessons. I found out that it was a mortal sin to miss Sunday Mass. Before long, I was ready to make my First Communion. One Sunday, I was with my mother and she asked a woman in church to be my sponsor for Confirmation, and she said "yes." So, I was confirmed. This same priest said my wedding Mass at a parish in Wicker Park.

I became a real believer and met Maureen, who became my longtime friend. She was a wonderful example of a Christian woman – always kind and giving, and I wanted to be like that. She had nine children and I had four boys. She never yelled at the kids. She was so lovely and still is.

My husband and I joined the Christian Family Movement at our local parish. We helped people find jobs, and I got my doctor involved. People didn't always have to pay him. A priest would come to the house where we would meet every two weeks. We met people from other countries--all different colors. Soon, they voted my husband and myself to lead the group.

We moved into St. Cornelius parish and became involved in school sports teams and the Holy Name Society. My husband saved the Holy Name from being disbanded because there was no interest or leadership. My husband stepped up to be President and asked people to join. It worked out pretty well. One event we planned together was a Moonlight Sonata Night with candles and tables for two for married couples. Then, I became an extraordinary minister of Communion.

Also, I enjoyed Bible study classes offered at the parish. You can never know too much about the Church and its development. I had a lot to catch up on--2,000 years!

I am a newbie and I always will be. Now, I talk to Jesus like He is my best friend.