



## Our Parish Prayer Garden

The "Holy Family Prayer Garden," on Ardmore Avenue, just east of the rectory, is a hidden gem on the St. Elizabeth of the Trinity campus. Recently, there've been trees pruned, flowers planted, mulch installed, and landscaping added to our Garden that serve to further enrich its luster.

Our Pastor Emeritus, Father McCarthy, said that the Garden idea was initiated in 2008 when he was Pastor. He recalls that the plan was to transform what was, in effect, the non-descript priests' "backyard" on the east side of the Rectory into a place of quiet prayer and meditation for parishioners. And, he adds, it would be a space for random visitors, too, who might seek to peacefully reflect on God's presence.

Responding to Father McCarthy's proposal to build this haven, a host of "Brick Brigade Volunteers" (as they were dubbed) stepped up to raise funds for what was called a "Parish Enrichment Project," and they moved the garden development forward.

Father McCarthy stated that the selection of the Holy Family theme underscored that we are a family-based parish and the Holy Family is the perfect role model. The actual Holy Family statue was a gift from a parishioner. Likewise, the high fence along the east side of the garden was donated by a parishioner in order to help create a sense of tranquility by separating the noise and traffic of the alley from the serenity of the Prayer Garden.

The fruits of everyone's ardent labor culminated in a celebratory blessing ceremony of the Garden by Bishop Francis Kane on August 24, 2008.

As to the pavers (engraved bricks), Father McCarthy points out that they were quite popular at the time as a permanent way of remembering loved ones while helping to cover the costs of the project. Similar pavers are found at many parishes, schools, and hospitals, as well as a particular location that would not have escaped the notice of Father McCarthy, namely, Wrigley Field.

When our three parishes came together in 2021, the Blessed Mother statue that graced the St. Cornelius Parish prayer garden, was added. Also, those who had purchased brick pavers at the St. Cornelius and St. Thecla prayer gardens were given the opportunity to have them brought to the St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Holy Family Garden.

At first glance, all the brick pavers and benches in the Garden might appear the same except for names. There are, however, bricks with unique messages. Rather than cram on this page a litany of the messages engraved on the bricks, all are invited to go on their own treasure hunt in the Garden, perhaps to discover names of someone they knew, inspiring testimonials, or joyful expressions of love and faith.

Over the years, our parish Garden has blossomed and continues to offer a suitable place for parishioners and passersby to pause for calmness and private prayer. One teacher from our parish school remarked that leading her class to a Garden visit each year provides the students with an opportunity to be still and be with God. She adds that she never needs to tell students to enter quietly as it seems to be understood that the Garden is "a holy place, holy ground."

One regular gathering in the Garden is on Palm Sunday each year when palms are blessed at the 9:00 a.m. Mass. Then the faithful process with their palms into church.

Over the years, the Garden is maintained by a small and dedicated cadre of parish volunteers. One commented that when she works in the Garden, she respectfully thinks about visitors who come to the Garden to make a special connection to a cherished loved one.

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph, bless our families.*

More information and brick paver order forms are available on the parish website:

<https://stelizabethtrinity.org/parish/brick/>. Order forms are also in the vestibule.

Installation of new bricks is currently done on an annual basis.