

Stewardship in Action at St. Bernard



EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS DO EXTRAORDINARY WORK

At the center of our Catholic lives stands the Eucharist, and for the elderly in our community, the work of the Eucharistic Ministers at St. Bernard, who bring communion to homebound Catholics, is vital. This team of twenty ministers and two deacons visits the Green Knoll, Centerbridge II and Avalon residences here in Bridgewater every week to share the Word of God and distribute the Holy Eucharist.

At the Green Knoll facility, EMs visit residents in their rooms, pray with them, and bring communion. According to Green Knoll team captain Judy Spadone, the Catholic residents that they visit present a wide range of

needs. Some are able to participate in a group prayer service and receive communion; however, the EMs also minister to dementia patients, and to “prayer only” patients who have dietary restrictions or who may not be able to swallow. Despite their personal challenges, Judy reports that the elderly residents are “always appreciative and look forward to receiving the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.”

At Centerbridge and Avalon, approximately 20 to 25 residents attend a group service every week, facilitated by a St. Bernard EM, and then receive communion.

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PROUD TO SERVE

Sharon Anuario
Ann Armstrong
Margaret Batkowski
Bruny Carlo
Deacon Pat Cline
Maryann Crilly
Eileen Funkhouser
Marie Harwanko
Hugh Johnson
Irene Johnson
Laura Kelly
Tom Kelly
Monique McKeon
Elbaliz Mendez
Jeannette Merritt
Vince Riello
Anna Rooney
Tom Schaller
Deacon Gerry Sims
Judy Spadone
Judy Wisniewski
Tom Wisniewski



Eucharistic Ministers receive a blessing at the end of Mass as they depart for senior residences.



EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS DO EXTRAORDINARY WORK (CONTINUED)

Parishioner Monique McKeon, who has served in the ministry for 20 years and currently coordinates the ministry at these two facilities, is extremely gratified by be able to bring communion to those that might not be able to receive it. But, she also reports being personally enriched by her participation, as she gains new insights into the Gospel and readings through preparation of the reflections she shares with residents at the weekly services.

Monique's most memorable experiences serving in the ministry go back to when her children were young, and they would accompany her to the senior facilities. She originally joined the ministry because she could bring along her children, and she remembers residents enjoying her son Connor reading and her daughter Kendall singing at the services. She recently brought her daughter, now in college, to a service and several residents not only remembered her, but greeted her like a member of the family. This is truly a testament to the impact that the ministry has had over the years.

Another EM at Centerbridge and Avalon is Vince Riello, who has been involved with the program for over 30 years and is also inspired by participating. He recounts a story in which he brought communion to a dying woman. Vince recalls that "her faith was so strong that when she received the Eucharist, she kept it in her mouth because she wanted to hold on to Jesus for as long as she could. I can still envision this today." Vince reflects that he "is truly moved by witnessing the strong faith that people have."

The rewards of serving are echoed by 15 year volunteer Marie Harwanko, who answered an invitation from a fellow parishioner to join the Homebound Ministry. She says the invitation "was an opportunity to bring Jesus to people who need our support. One of the most gratifying parts is experiencing the deeply committed faith of the elderly. Every time I look into their eyes and see them light up with joy when they see the Body of Christ, I am filled with gratitude for their lives and wisdom."

The Visitors to the Homebound Ministry is currently in need of additional EMs to carry out their very important work.

To serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, individuals must be fully initiated Catholics over the age of 18 and must meet other requirements as set forth by the parish and diocese.

Interested parishioners can contact Monique McKeon at MIlmckeon@yahoo.com or Judy Spadone at j_spadone@verizon.net.



Monique McKeon leads a prayer service at Centerbridge.

Interested in learning more about the Stewardship Council?

Please contact Mark Dransfield (dransfam@gmail.com or by calling 908-526-6649)