

December 2011 Witness Letter
Leslie Marquardt Vidas

My name is Leslie Marquardt Vidas. I am married to James and have four children: Justin, Barry, Tracy and Steven. I have been a member of Holy Cross Parish for 20 years. Early on, I worked with the Martha Ministry. I was president of The Ladies of Holy Cross for 10 years and also a member of the Music Ministry as cantor and choir member for almost 17 years. I've been a Eucharistic minister during that time and also fill in as a lector when needed. I worked with the youth choir and with the religious ed program.

When I was very young and in Chicago schools at St. Francis of Assisi and Notre Dame High School, I took care of my invalid mother and grandparents.

I started singing in the choir and really enjoyed being in church. Sometimes being in school or church was an escape for me because I rarely got out of the house. I enjoyed singing in the church. I was hanging onto my faith for dear life, a faith which I had created myself. When my family became sick, I was only 15 or 16, so I had to learn to hang onto something. I could have easily fallen into drugs or a wrong crowd, but I felt better when I was in church or reading scripture. It helped me get through life when things got tough. I tell my children to hang on to their faith with both hands because "you will not know when you'll need it. When you need it, you're going to be desperate."

I moved to Wittenberg in 1982 and to Kaukauna in 1990. I felt welcomed by everyone here. I immediately joined Holy Cross because I wanted to connect with the church. It was very difficult to move from another state.

One thing the Lord blessed me with is resilience. I have to say that He boosts my courage often. I paint, draw and dance, as well as write, when I have the quiet time to do it, which is rare. I think my greatest gift is the ability to be empathetic and to re-examine myself when I think I'm not being empathetic.

In 2000, my son Barry was run over by a truck. During his recovery time, I saw one miracle after another. When I got to St. E's to meet the ambulance, I thought he had a minor accident by the Kaukauna Pool, but it turned out to be very serious and life-threatening.

My faith has grown so much during these 10 years. I have a completely different outlook on my faith. I believe Barry was spared to do something, but I don't know what. He's a very caring young man. I had a vision repeatedly for three weeks before Barry was hit. It felt like a message to me that I needed to continue to give my time to the people who matter most because it could disappear in seconds. Fr. Jack told me that I, as a mother, would feel 10 times over each "Ow" that Barry uttered and every pain he felt. That was the truth.

I feel like Holy Cross Parish is my home. Everyone in the church is my family, as much as those who live under my roof. I see a glimmer of God in everyone. I want to be the kind of person to my friends and neighbors that He wants me to be. I'm absolutely grateful for the people of my parish because they've done so much for us, often unwittingly. Thank you.

Leslie