

Rose Marie Van Dyke
February 2012 Witness Letter

My name is Rose Marie Van Dyke. I am a widow. My husband, Ted, and I were married in 1952 after a six-month romance. We had a love match the entire 37 years we were married. We really did. I could count on one hand the times we had a fight. We have seven children: Mary, Ted Jr., Ann, Mark (who only lived to be six weeks old as a spina bifida baby), Julie, Dan and Beth. Ted and I had aspirations for 12 children, but Beth was a 10-month baby, and the doctor said seven was enough.

I am a convert; I was born and raised Lutheran. My father was Catholic. I have been a member of Holy Cross Parish since 1952, which is when I got married. When I met Ted, we talked about religion. I decided that I wanted us to be a family, so I thought it was best for me to turn Catholic. It was the best thing I ever did. I really, truly believe that. At the time, though, I wasn't 100 percent sure. It was about three years later that Ted came home for lunch one day from Thilmany. After lunch, he kissed me goodbye and left for work. As I was doing the dishes, something washed over me. I thought, "Oh, my God, I really do believe this!" That was my conversion or, as Father Tom said a few weeks ago at Mass about "getting the call," I believe that was mine.

I was a volunteer librarian at Holy Cross School for 27 years. Father John Bergstadt was the priest here in 1975. He mentioned that he thought we should have a visitors committee, people to go out and visit those who were unable to attend Mass. There were several of us who started that committee, and I've been a part of it ever since. It's been a great ministry. Now I volunteer in the office helping with Scrip. I also write letters to families who are having babies baptized. I send a letter to the parents to welcome the babies into the parish community. From the time my cottage is closed in November through the end of May, I'm also here every Saturday serving as a greeter and usher at 4:30 Mass. I love it because I love to welcome people! My husband, Ted, was a very faithful, strong Catholic. He was such a good example to me. It was easy to follow him. I've been very happy being part of Holy Cross Parish. I believe we have to "walk" our religion. We can't just "say" it.

Both of my parents were killed in a plane crash when I was 21 years old. My dad was the pilot, and he was medicated because he had severe hay fever. He made a wrong decision, and both were killed instantly. They were very much of a love affair. Thankfully, even though I wasn't a Catholic yet, my faith was very strong. I could accept everything. My sister, who was married just three weeks before, couldn't handle it. She committed suicide at the age of 40. She used to say to me, "If I had a teaspoon of the happiness you and Ted have had, that's more than I ever had."

I've live through a lot, but somehow it has made me strong. Marrying my husband was the best thing I ever did. He was my right arm. He kept me close, and I knew I was loved. We were a good pair. My faith has grown stronger through the years because of my loving husband, my kind, loving mother and my church. I've had so many blessings; my family is my number one now!

Rose Marie