

Terry Van Zeeland – July 2013 Witness Letter

My name is Terry Van Zeeland. I have been a member at Holy Cross for almost 36 years. My husband, Rob, and I have three children: Ruth, 32, Rachel, 29, and Ryan, 26. We have one brand new granddaughter, Veronica. I have five brothers and five sisters and grew up in Little Chute. I attended St. John grade school and high school. I met Rob in high school. My mother died very suddenly at age 60, when I was 19. Her death totally affected my faith. Mom had depression all of her life. She had a nervous breakdown when she was pregnant with my sister who was above me. That was a difficult thing. Rob and I were engaged at the time. Getting through mom's death was terrible. My faith grew the most at that point. I always say that her death was my first "real" faith experience. My dad lived until 90, so I got to be the daughter that I always wanted to be to him.

My main ministry at Holy Cross is Compassionate Friends, which has been here for about nine years. After meeting a man in our parish who had lost a loved one, another woman and I were very saddened by how our parish dealt with death. We come to church in our faith lives, and church is here for us, but at the hardest time in his life, nobody was there for him. That encouraged us to start Compassionate Friends, so we could reach out to people who have lost loved ones. There are 10 people on the team, and it's very powerful. I think we're touching lives, which is what we want. The people on the team are touched in return. It's a beautiful thing. I was involved with confirmation in the past, and I'm also the "shirt lady" at Holy Cross. If you want some apparel, just call the office or fill out a form in the vestibule.

I also had a full-time job as KCSS hot lunch director. I loved raising my kids that way. It was awesome because I could be where my kids were. I love volunteering. I love helping people. I have a sister who's ill, and I help her on Wednesdays. I work at St. Vincent DePaul one afternoon a week. I'm kind of silly, too, in that I like to clean and organize. I get calls here and there from Holy Cross, which I love.

I got involved in the Holy Cross pilgrimage the first year it began, and that was awesome. Rob and I have also made a mission trip for the past eight years to St. Lucia in the West Indies. That's a year-round mission of mine. I'm always gathering items and trying to fill somebody's wish list in St. Lucia. It totally changed the lives of our whole family. We were blessed to go three years with the five of us. It really taught us "needs" and "wants" and gave us a whole different viewpoint on life. We go for two weeks each year and hold it in our hearts the rest of the year. Those people have touched our hearts like you can't believe. Rob and I would both say that our faith has grown mountains since we started those missions. When I watch people who have nothing—they have the Lord. We have it all and sometimes forget about the Lord.

I like to read. I like Karen Kingsbury. She's fiction but very spiritual. I just finished my first angel books and I really liked that. I'm trying to learn more about angels at this point in my life. It's a whole spectrum that's very interesting.

Holy Cross Parish is home to me. It's community. There's a lot of love, a lot of support. I love how we're growing in leaps and bounds. That makes me ecstatic. I also really love "Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP). CRHP was a really great tool in our parish life and in our couple life. Yes, Holy Cross is home to me.

Terry