

Memory From Barb Pollock (Miss Barbara)

St. Clement is FAMILY! I went to school there and then taught at the school for 43 years (five as co-principal) until we merged into LCA, where I stayed for one year.

St. Clement supported me when Mom died, allowed me to volunteer when needed and be a Eucharistic Minister. Now that I'm homebound, they're still here. Mrs. Caja brings me Communion and Sue Simmons keeps me up to date. I have been blessed with special friends from this spiritual family.

This parish family is unique in so many ways! What a blessing they are in my life!

Jean Smith's Story: Salutations Are the Best Invitations

None of us is on an island unto ourselves. We have all received much to be grateful for, and each of us has the capacity to give to others our time, talents, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, my experiences as a parishioner at St. Clement have given me many blessings, for which I am grateful.

Our family moved to Lakewood in 1979, and I returned to the parish where I grew up. On occasion, I would attend Mass at St. Clement.

At the same time, my sister was the housekeeper of the rectory, and her mother-in-law was the cook. Both always spoke of the uplifting community at St. Clement. So, when my family and I moved to Brown Road, we became members in 1981.

My nieces attended the school, and, with that, I came to see them make their First Communion with Fr. Sweeney and Fr. Bednar. Fr. Sweeney was a great priest, who always looked out for his parishioners, especially the children who went to school here. He made sure every child had a place in the school, and if there was a financial issue regarding tuition payments, he always worked with the parents who were struggling. He was like the good shepherd attending his flock. Fr. Bednar was a jovial priest who always had a smile on his face and shared his love of God with us.

When we moved into our rental home on Brown Road, I was introduced to Fr. Bednar's family, who lived downstairs. I came to know Fr. Bednar and his family; they supported me during a pregnancy where I lost our baby. Fr. Bednar was there for me and prayed with us during this sad time in our lives. This really impressed me, and I began to go to weekly Sunday Mass and found the community to be so welcoming.

Most of the parishioners did not know me personally, nor that my sister worked in the rectory. When my family walked into the church, we were immediately welcomed by a greeter who said, "Welcome to St. Clement's. We are so glad you are here." The greeter introduced herself and asked us our names, and then guided us into the church. Before Mass started, we were introduced to one of the ushers, who helped us get our kids into a pew. I remember him well: Frank Hoban who was involved in many parish ministries, including the St. Vincent de Paul Society. As we sat down, Frank invited my family to bring the gifts to the altar. I was amazed we were asked to do this, since we were new to this parish, and I felt filled with welcoming grace.

Many people helped us acclimate to our new church home. Our children were young, and we enrolled them in the PSR program; we found it to be a great program for them to learn about the love of Jesus. I was a preschooler teacher and was asked if I'd be interested in teaching in the program. It was a wonderful opportunity to become acquainted with others and to share my gift of teaching with our community.

In so many ways, the people of St. Clement became my second family. Over the years I have come to know people through participation in ministries, including PSR, Catechist of the Good Shepherd, Confirmation Prep, School Board, Eucharistic Ministry, Parish Council and our Music Ministry. In these ministries, I learned from others and also shared the gifts I have with others as God calls us to do.

Jean Smith's Story - cont'd

The outreach in this community has always amazed me. Not only do we attend Mass together, we pray together and for one another. When we had financial issues, my children's school tuition was paid by an anonymous parishioner. On another occasion, my husband had emergency surgery, and a few days later, I was diagnosed with a blood clot. We were both immobile. The response from the St. Clement community was tremendous. People brought us food; others did our laundry and helped get our children to school. They brought Christmas gifts for our children to open on Christmas Day, since we were unable to shop.

On a lighter note, my first son was a lively toddler and liked to talk at Mass. During the homily, he blurted out and a parishioner in front of us promptly took her missal and wacked him in the head. Fr. Sweeney saw this and immediately said, "Here we welcome the wee ones to make a joyful noise unto the Lord, not reprimanding them." Fr. Sweeney opened my heart to the fullness of understanding that we are all God's children and in our human weakness, we make mistakes.

This parish community has been a part of my life and remains vibrant, welcoming, and helpful to those in need. I am so grateful to be a part of the St. Clement Parish community. We have many different ministries that I have participated in because someone took the time to live out the teachings of Christ in welcoming me into this wonderful parish. I am ever grateful for these experiences that have helped me come to know how to be a model of Christ to others.

Mary Hanna's Story

When I was in 8th grade (1955-56) we had a girls' club that met on Monday nights in the church hall. We played games and danced; usually the boys hung around outside until we left.

In high school, we had the Madonna Club. Fr. Hackman was the moderator. He was great. I remember painting scenery for a play during the summer. We went on a trip to Deerfield Village in Michigan. I also played CYO girls' basketball in the high school. Then we played girls' basketball with 3 girls on defense and 3 girls on offense - we couldn't cross the center line. We played all over at different schools. I remember going to West Tech to play.

From Clair (Abe) and Dorothy Abel

Our three children, Mary Lou, Scott, and Rosemary, attended St. Clement School. After retiring from hospital nursing in 1988, Dorothy worked with Sr. Mary Ann and the school luncheon program and volunteered at Lakewood Christian Service Center, giving food to the needy.

Spending time in the adoration chapel, as a member of St. Vincent DePaul Society and as a Clementine's member were gratifying. Helping with church Christmas decorations and donut Sundays with other faithful parishioners was enjoyable. Dorothy was also active in trying to save Lakewood Hospital!

Many years ago, we volunteered at CYO basketball games at Cleveland Cudell Recreation Center. Abe was happy to donate craft items to St. Clement Church raffles. He surely enjoyed making many crafts in his big garage!

On April 4th we will celebrate a blessed 63 years of marriage. After leaving our Alger Road home of 50 years, we are thankful we can make monthly trips to St. Clement Church from our Avon Lake Senior Living Apartment, though beautiful St. Joseph Church is also very friendly.

It sure is nice to see old friends and neighbors!

Memory Shared by Bernardine Caja

I am grateful to have been a member of St. Clement Parish for 62 years. I consider it home. It has been a place of learning, growth, support, healing and all else a home offers. It has been a source of three major areas of growth in my spiritual and temporal life.

In the 70s, under Fr. Sweeney's direction, St. Clement school started THE FAMILY THAT PRAYS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER HOME PROGRAM. Until then, we had taught our sons prayers, the rosary, Mass, etc, but this program taught us a new way to pray as a family and from our hearts. It encouraged us and our sons to share whatever we wanted our Father to hear.

In the 80s, I was asked by Fr. Rogers to teach in the CCD program and, despite sending our sons to Catholic school because we did not feel qualified to instruct them, I, with some hesitation, agreed (It was hard to say no to a priest). This forced me to study, take some diocese-required courses and to grow in the knowledge of our faith. A huge step for a timid, stay-at-home mom.

But for me, the greatest of all gifts was to be granted the privilege of lector. It was way back in the 60s when women were not allowed in the sanctuary except to clean. A youth Mass was offered on Sunday evening. At this Mass, women and girls were often doing the readings. At the 6:30 a.m. weekday Mass, there was no reader, so when I heard about the youth Mass, I dared to ask Fr. Sweeney if I could read at the 6:30 a.m. Mass. It was not an easy thing for me to do, and it took some effort to convince Father that, with the help of a mic, I would be heard in spite of my not-too-powerful voice. And so I became the reader at the 6:30 a.m. Mass. That meant more growth, as I had to prepare by reading and rereading daily "The Word of the Lord". What a blessing. Amazing how God works to help us grow, know and love Him more and more!



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