

Interview with Mary Toot, interim Multi-Parish Faith Formation Director for Holy Cross, Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Charles Borromeo and St. Lawrence

When did you begin thinking about working in the Church?

When my three children were young, I was asked to volunteer as a Religious Education teacher (catechist) at Holy Cross. My oldest son was in 6th grade, and the program needed a teacher for his class, so that was where I started volunteering my time. After being employed as a Catholic School teacher, I worked for the University of Rochester as a teacher mentor and was training teachers to bring children up to language norms. I enjoyed working for the U of R, but I missed teaching children about our Catholic faith!

Who was involved in your considering lay ecclesial ministry?

At a Family Gathering Day, my pastor, Fr. Wheeland, asked if I would be interested in becoming the Faith Formation Director at Holy Cross. I felt this was a good combination of my skills as an educator, a mentor, and as a faith-filled person who wants to share the Catholic faith with the younger generation and their parents!

How did you prepare for your role? What training did you receive—from where? From whom?

My experience started immediately with Vacation Bible School for approximately 100 children. The person whose job I was taking stayed on to mentor me for the first few months, and I followed closely what she had done before me. Also, the Diocese of Rochester has a department of Evangelization and Catechesis that offered workshops, training, and monthly meetings to help catechetical leaders to stay current with curriculum and sacramental preparation programs that the Bishop endorsed.

I also matriculated at St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry and received certification in Catechetical Leadership.

What is your title and what do you do?

I am the Interim Multi-Parish Director of Faith Formation. The Multi-Parish Director of Faith Formation works closely with each pastor to direct all aspects of four parish faith formation programs at St. Charles Borromeo, Holy Cross, Our Mother of Sorrows, and St. Lawrence. Specifically responsible for: elementary age faith formation which includes a family faith formation program, two summer religious education programs, First Penance, and First Communion programs, some baptismal preparation, overseeing the OCIA team, and working with multiple parish ministers, staff, and volunteers to carry out an effective and dynamic catechetical program.

What is your advice to others thinking about a similar path?

If you ever think to yourself "I bet I could do that," you should listen because it's probably the Holy Spirit whispering in your ear! Also, if someone says to you, "I bet you would be good at that job," again you should really consider it! Working to help children learn about Jesus, to help the children's families learn more about their faith is a wonderful way to spend your life!