

Good afternoon. I am Ginny French and I've been a parishioner of Holy Spirit Parish for 15 years. Barry Howard, our Stewardship Chair and Chair of our Capital Campaign asked me to speak to you about my passion for our parish, my personal journey of faith, and where I am on this journey today.

My husband Jack and I have been parishioners of H. S. since 1992 and we sat right over there on the side one of the first times we entered this church. I remember vividly how welcoming and friendly it felt and I was almost uneasy with it since the church of my youth was very serious and very quiet. I remember thinking this parish was unlike any I'd ever attended with the exception of the Air Force Base chapel in Charleston, SC our first duty station with the Navy. I was certain that that experience was truly an anomaly. We'll 15 years later and two children, Holy Spirit is still a welcoming place and we call this home.

I've also come a long way spiritually over these years. I went from being a bystander or an observer, so to speak, to having the privilege of chairing one of our important committees in this parish. This didn't happen overnight, but my journey is one that many of you will identify with today. I was educated in the Catholic schools for 12 years, but all of a sudden at age 30 soon after we arrived here, I didn't feel "equipped" or knowledgeable enough to pass on the faith to this tiny baby girl we brought into this world. Megan was baptized here as was her brother Christopher and the reality that I could no longer step aside or abdicate my role as primary educator of my children in the ways of the faith, hit me like a brick. This parish was here to support Jack and me, but how do we do it? I should know this! Jack and I slowly took those baby steps and became involved in the LIFE of this parish and this parish IS full of life. Those baby steps started in the nursery, Vacation

Bible School, Young Children's program, coffee and donuts, Knights of Columbus, Married Couples Group and now for me, the Catechetical Leadership Committee. This parish is part of our family fiber. What happens here has priority for our family. It is part of our Catholic identity. Now, you know as well as I do, you can't possibly attend everything our parish offers, but we make a commitment to walk the liturgical calendar with this community and be of service where needed. We model this to our children.

So why should this journey of mine matter to you today? It is because this celebration of Eucharist each Sunday, our time spent breaking open the Word, celebrating the seasons, our births and deaths, AND-----
- our move to Parkside-- is a journey we all take together. We need each other to do this--together.

When we as a parish began exploring our spatial issues, I was on it. My role on the CLC, even long before I was chair, saw the cry for space. But I've got to admit I was content to stay put right here. I was certain we could've made it work. I believed I was forward thinking enough to see the future right here. And when we purchased the land, I wasn't on board and that was tough heading the committee I was on. St. Joseph School was still in debt and we are St. Joe parents and so Jack and I decided we could not support this purchase until the school was free and clear—one debt at a time. That's the decision we made. I knew "someday" we'd get to Parkside—hopefully in time for Megan's wedding—she's only 13 today. I was convinced we'd be waiting a long time for someone to buy this property. Just look at the real estate section and the number of homes for sale. Just how many folks out there are looking to buy a church? Call me a doubting Thomas, cynical—I can be, but what I really wanted and still yearn for is to have

a stronger faith and the peace that God will provide and the patience to accept his time line. However, I admit, I am weak—that's my faith challenge.

When the announcement came that there was a contract on this property, I was in disbelief—too good to be true, I said. But then I thought. Our good and gracious God has his finger prints on this. Just open your eyes, Ginny! It can't be anything else. Last week's readings emphasized gratitude and we can certainly apply this gratitude to the many blessings our Parish has received and will continue to receive.

This period of time for our parish has such a significant impact on our future here in Bowling Green. It's exciting, but daunting, full of emotions and anxieties. What a step for this community!! A true leap of faith and as St. Paul tells Timothy today, "Remain faithful".

Wherever you stand on this --our church community----the spirit and faith of this community--- is far greater than just you and me individually. This is about us—collectively. And it is through this week's readings challenging us to embrace God's Word, to pray without ceasing, and to be persistent even when it's tough or inconvenient—that we AS A COMMUNITY will see the future of Holy Spirit Parish at Parkside.

Thank You.