

Being Christ

Newman family shares gifts in service to larger community

to others

When Barbara Newman attended Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore more than 20 years ago, she was unexpectedly convicted by meaningful service work at a local shelter.

“I was raised Catholic,” she says, but adds, “I didn’t really do service” before college. Then, one experience changed her and launched a lifelong commitment to service-focused stewardship.

“I remember being so annoyed that I had to go,” she shares, candidly telling how she complained incessantly before a stunning moment of grace. She joined hands with her peers and prayed the Our Father.

“I looked around and thought, ‘How silly I am that I was thinking that way,’” Barbara says. “I wasn’t really living out my Catholic faith, and I didn’t live the component of being Christ to others.” She realized the community, likewise, was Christ to her.

Since that fateful day, which she credits as the driving force behind her commitment to serve, she plays and replays one question: “How would I treat him or her if that person were Christ?”

IN JUSTICE AND LOVE FOR OTHERS

Barbara and Dan Newman, parishioners at Holy Trinity Parish in El Dorado Hills, with their three daughters Abby, 17, Kathryn, 14, and Ava Rose, 10, respond to God as his collaborators — stewards — in renewing communities near and far.

First, they gaze through a lens of justice and love for others, and then decide how best each can use their personal gifts from God to make a difference.

“Each of our kids has different talents,” Dan explains, acknowledging their varying ages and abilities and stressing the importance of helping each daughter find “the things they excel in.”

He highlights his daughters’ personal gifts and discusses how, as parents, the Newmans worked to instill

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■ Dan, Kathryn, Abby, Barbara and Ava Rose Newman are members of Holy Trinity Parish in El Dorado Hills.





■ Ava Rose, Kathryn and Abby share their unique gifts as a way to benefit others.

a give-back-to-God mindset from their earliest ages, even as they pushed a baby stroller in the “Walk for Life.”

Barbara and Dan, both attorneys, mentor their daughters by rolling up their own sleeves in service and involving their children where possible. Dan enjoyed helping with fundraising for the parish community garden and often offers legal guidance. Barbara serves the Holy Trinity School Ministry in various capacities, including coordinating community service projects for the confirmation program.

“There are different projects every month that are focused on Catholic social teaching,” Barbara says.

Her research provides a range of opportunities for her girls to help, too, as they align with established nonprofit agencies to help those in need or advocate for a cause. From planning, to purchasing supplies, to making the necessary materials for each monthly project, the entire family finds ways to contribute.

One project entails visiting local memory care homes. It

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- KATIE NEWMAN

came about because Barbara’s father serves as an ombudsman for the area homes. The need for outreach was an ideal match project specific to the life and dignity of the human person. Formally, students prepare “art” bags for residents, but informally, the Newmans and friends visit the elderly, play cards and encounter Christ.

“One year I got a call from a freshman,” Barbara remembers, recounting how a former confirmation candidate exemplified the fruits of stewardship. She wanted to start a club at her high school — Sunshine for Seniors — modeled after the service project.

Outside of parish and school stewardship, the Newmans are drawn to volunteer with New Morning Youth Shelter in Placerville. “It’s a homeless shelter for teens,” Abby says, describing

the eye-opener of teens “right down the street who are struggling.”

“There are a surprising number of teens who are couch surfing and don’t really have a solid and safe place to live,” Abby explains, suggesting that service — stewardship — means uncovering and loving people through injustice and hardship.

The Newman family has traveled to Honduras many times, adding a global dimension to their commitment to serve. Barbara’s physician sister encouraged them to join her in bringing medical supplies, hope and help to families in need.

The girls participate in Vacation Bible School and help in building or repairing homes. Creating awareness at home, the Newmans sought approval for a Holy Trinity School Ministry “free dress” fundraiser. Money raised equated to feeding 420 Honduran families for one week.

Near and far, service stewards the peace and love of Christ.



■ Stewardship is a way of life for the Newman family.

STEWARDSHIP WOVEN INTO LIFE

Abby, Kathryn, who goes by Katie, and Ava already understand stewardship is not something you do, but something you live. The pillars of “time, talent and treasure” are so woven in their days as individuals and a family they hardly think about the abstract words.

Katie, a freshman at St. Francis High School, understands the importance of time as the critical link.

“When I’m taking time out of my day to help others and volunteer,” Katie says “it’s connecting me directly to Jesus and to God...giving me time to be with him.” She believes giving time to others is spending time with God because “Jesus, truly, is in everyone.”

No doubt Katie’s insight comes from the family’s commitment to time with God in daily prayer. Barbara explains, “It’s at the center of our lives and the decisions we make are based on that center.”

Abby considers stewardship as a universal responsibility. The treasure lies in making a “difference in your community,” and relaying the message that “you are loved, you are cared for, and there are people here for you.”

Abby knows people often feel overwhelmed or that they have nothing to offer. “Service doesn’t necessarily have to be some big, grand thing,” she stresses, insisting “you don’t have to be some big



■ Dan Newman



■ Barbara Newman

traveler, with a ton of money and time.” Instead, Abby is convinced that even the smallest actions help in local communities like “grabbing some toothbrushes from Target or Dollar Tree and bringing them over to a homeless shelter.”

Ava, the youngest and a fifth-grader enrolled in Holy Trinity School Ministry, shows how youth poses no limitation to sharing talents. When not demonstrating her artistic flare creating cards or crafting and cutting construction paper, she helps with some of the service projects her mom coordinates. Even the smallest hands can help with “Feed My Starving Children,” and Ava enjoys inviting friends to come along and help, too.

“We come away with so much more than we’ve ever given,” Barbara reflects with great appreciation for their daughters’ personal stewardship initiative. They know that as active stewards they are Christ to others, and others are Christ to them. Stewardship is an integral part of fully living their Catholic faith.

Barbara and Dan look back and see their experiences as some of their favorite family memories. “It has given our lives an overriding purpose,” Barbara asserts, clearly cherishing the multiplying effects of stewardship and service, both direct and indirect. “For our family, it has brought us closer to each other — it has brought us closer to God.” †