



The Parish Covenant Corner

A weekly look at how our faith community is living out the Parish Covenant and growing in our relationship with God.

“ I will make a covenant of peace with them...

I will be their God and they will be my people.”

(Ezekiel 37:26-27)

Greetings from the Larsens —Anna (7), Jack (10), Janet and Jeff

When Sue Miller invited us to write for ‘**Covenant Corner**’, our first reaction was ‘Oh.

How nice of you to ask Sue, but...’ We rationalized our polite decline—we’re pretty reserved worshippers; we don’t have unique or inspiring stories; and we’d have to find time. Sue encouraged us to pick just one aspect of the **Covenant** and after quiet reflection write a short piece. Well...here’s our best try, but not so short.

The first **Covenant** pillars considered were **Worship** and **Support**. These were pretty straightforward and easier for us to enumerate. Attending weekly Mass recharges our ‘spiritual batteries’ and shines a bright light upon the blessings of Christian life. Weekly Mass ‘grounds us’, as does sacrificial and proportional giving.

The next **Covenant** pillar reflected upon was **Service**. We consider our service efforts in keeping with the dedicated families who’ve come before us and who we work with side-by-side today. As adult Catholics, we have grown from our service experiences – learning the value of prayer for constant guidance, learning from missteps along the way, and feeling inspired by the good works of others.

Most rewarding is engaging Jack and Anna in service activities they fully grasp, like painting Fun Fair games with Jeff in the garage a few Januarys ago—memorable and chilly! Our favorite family ministries are *Greeters*: jovial Jack is a natural fit; *Church Cleaning*: the kids clean with uncommon conviction, but when Janet’s alone, it is peaceful and gratifying to prepare God’s house for guests; and finally *Senior Lunch*: Anna and Jack have enjoyed their Senior reading buddies while Mom sets-up and serves lunch (thank you Roseann and Mike).

The Senior Lunch reminds me (Janet) of delivering ‘Meals on Wheels’ with my mother years ago. That memory sent me down a final reflective path. What facets of family faith **Formation** could we pass on to our kids, like some of the lessons my parents passed along to me?...finally a unique focus for this letter. Read on.

During Advent, we greet each day with a surprise from our *Jesse Tree* Advent calendar. Our *Jesse Tree* booklet begins: *“Hi! I’m Jesse and this is the story of a special Christmas tree named after me! Long ago a great king named David was the leader of the family that Jesus was to belong to. King David is my son and the Jesse Tree tells the story of our family from the very first parents...”* Our *Jesse Tree* story starts on December 1st with Adam and Eve and ends with Baby Jesus on December 24th.

Many *Jesse Tree* versions exist, but this one is special as it was created by Jack and Anna’s Grandma Irene. Back in the mid-1950s, Irene was looking for a unique way to teach her first preschooler the Christmas story. With little available at the time—born out of burlap, felt fabric, rick-rack and imagination was Grandma’s first *Jesse Tree*. The fabric and style is updated, but Jack and Anna love that they share this 50 year Advent tradition with their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

But there’s more...two years ago in Mrs. Borremans’ K5 classroom – there it was again. Grandma’s *Jesse Tree* had made its way into Anna’s classroom. Placed on a shelf beneath the wall-hanging was one of Irene’s original booklets – worn and tattered from loving use by the Borremans family and students. You see, as part of her service to others, Irene shared her initial booklet and patterns for a nominal \$1 donation. What a pleasant surprise to see the *Jesse Tree* hanging in Room 104. Anna made sure to give Mrs. Borremans a new booklet for Christmas, signed by Grandma Irene herself!

And so, this story and this letter come full circle...‘Oh. How nice of you to ask Sue.’ With just a little bit of time and quiet reflection, we have found inspiration and guidance from our **Covenant**. And, as Advent approaches, we continue to find comfort in the timeless traditions of the Church, St. Mary Parish and our extended families. *Advent Blessings to You and Yours!*