

Immaculate Heart of Mary parishioner makes rosaries

By Elizabeth Lowe

elowe@CatholicReview.org

PARKVILLE - Francis Wiegmann has several tackle boxes of various sizes in his home, but they aren't full of hooks, bobbers and sinkers.

Wiegmann fills them with dozens of different colored beads, wire, nickel silver chain, string, crucifixes - and rosaries.

The parishioner of Immaculate Heart of Mary, Baynesville, began making rosaries in 1997 as a hobby.

"It just grew like topsy-turvy," said Wiegmann, 79, who estimates that he's made thousands of rosaries. "It's a hobby and a work of mercy. I think it's just one of those things we do as Catholics."

Wiegmann, a retired industrial engineer who worked for CSX for 36 years, has been married to his wife Cecilia, 77, for 59 years. They have five children, 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Growing up, Francis attended Sacred Heart of Jesus, Highlandtown, and Cecilia attended St. Casimir, Canton. Both attended their respective parish school.

"We have lived the faith, always," Wiegmann said. "We have lived with parents who loved their faith, were regular churchgoers."

At Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Wiegmanns are extraordinary ministers of holy Communion, lectors and choir members.

“We love our faith,” Wiegmann said. “There’s hardly a day that goes by that we don’t say the rosary.”

While Cecilia doesn’t make rosaries, she supports her husband’s hobby.

“He’s a good craftsman,” she said. “I’m proud of what he does.”

Wiegmann typically makes the rosaries when he watches TV at night. He plops a tray with the materials on his lap and gets to work.

“Every little tiny bend and twist makes a difference,” said Wiegmann, who uses four types of pliers to make those bends. “It should be balanced, tight.”

He averages six to eight cord rosaries over the course of a couple of hours, but metal rosaries take longer to make – he averages one per evening.

He purchases the materials for the rosaries from Our Lady’s Rosary Makers International, a Louisville, Ky.-based organization that teaches people how to make rosaries with the hope that they will make and distribute rosaries to missionaries.

Wiegmann sells his rosaries from 50 cents to \$28, depending on the materials used, but said it’s not about turning a profit. Money from rosary sales is used to purchase additional materials.

“I will make a rosary for anybody that wants it,” Wiegmann said.

A fourth-degree member of the Knights of Columbus, Wiegmann also repairs rosaries and often receives rosaries from family members of deceased persons to give away.

Last October, the Wiegmanns moved from their single-family home in Parkville to Oak Crest, a nearby continuing care retirement community. In March, Wiegmann displayed his rosaries at Oak Crest’s hobby show.

Father Michael W. Carrion, pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary, called Wiegmann “very dedicated” to his hobby.

“He’s been very generous with providing rosaries to those who would like to have

them,” Father Carrion said, “sending them to different groups. For him, it’s an evangelization sort of thing, an encouragement for other people to join in. He feels that’s his contribution.”

Copyright (c) July 10, 2012 CatholicReview.org