

# Little Flower parishioner marks 60th year as altar server

On June 1, my grandfather, William Gerard “Jerry” Davis, will celebrate his 60th anniversary of altar serving.

Bishop William C. Newman, who my grandfather served mass for in his early years, referred to him as “born to serve.” This title is an accurate summary of his life, both inside and outside of church. Jerry, as he is called by most, served his first Mass on June 1, 1949 at St. Elizabeth for Father John Alberts. He continued to serve at St. Elizabeth for the next seven years, becoming a personal altar server for Bishop Newman during that time.

Bishop Newman remembers him as dependable and cheerful, especially at early Masses, with bright eyes and finger-combed hair. He had a passion for service; he was always looking forward to serving Mass. Serving Mass at that time was not an easy task. Masses were said in Latin, and the early Mass began at 5:30 a.m. It took extreme dedication to serve happily in those conditions.

Jerry moved to St. Wenceslaus Church in 1956, where he served as an altar boy and sacristan until 1962. In 1962, he married Cathy (nee Knorlein), and they are still happily married 47 years later.

Later that year, he went into active duty in the U.S. Navy, where he served Mass aboard the ship. He was also able to serve Mass for Italian and Greek priests in Europe because of the Latin standard of Masses at that time. Near the end of his service in the Navy he lived in California for a year, where he continued to serve Mass. When Jerry moved back to Baltimore in 1964, he joined the Shrine of the Little Flower parish. In the 45 years he has belonged to the Shrine of the Little Flower, he has served his church community as an altar server, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, reader, parish council member, gym teacher and sports coach.

In 1974, Jerry’s son Eddie became an altar server, and Jerry had the privilege of serving his first Mass with him. He received that honor again in 2005 when his

grandson, Eddie Dunnigan (currently an eighth-grader at St. Ursula School in Parkville), became an altar server. In addition to serving his church, Jerry lives to serve his friends, family and community. Throughout his many years of serving others and serving the church, his outgoing personality has acquired him many friends. He has been a member of the Knights of Columbus for 18 years. He is always there to lend a helping hand to his friends and brother Knights. He started the Knights of Columbus Pro-Life march in Baltimore, which he has organized for the last five years as well as organizing a Night for the Blessed Mother. Another of his early projects was Clergy Night honoring all Religious staff, especially priests, as Jerry has always been a staunch supporter of all Catholic priests.

Jerry also does a lot for underprivileged children in his community. The most admirable quality about Jerry is that he truly enjoys serving others. Father Michael Orchik, pastor of Shrine of the Little Flower Church and close friend of Jerry, says that he is an “enthusiast for the works of mercy.”

It is evident in Jerry’s spirit that he is truly passionate about helping others. Over the years he has included all of our family members in his activities. My brother serves Mass and I do the readings for many of the Masses sponsored by Jerry’s Knights of Columbus Councils. Jerry said that his desire to serve has come from his parents. His mother had a love for the Blessed Mother, and he was determined to carry on that love. It is apparent that he has done an excellent job of doing so.

I have witnessed firsthand Jerry’s service to his family. He displays unconditional love toward his children and grandchildren. His service to me, whether it is picking me up from school or taking me out to eat, shows me that he loves me and will always be there for me. His actions never go unnoticed, and the love he gives to others is always returned. I think I speak for everyone when I say, “Congratulations on such a big milestone, and thank you for all you have done.”

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