

Mercy High School alumna lives her Catholic faith by teaching others



Faces of Faith



One of the most important lessons of Christianity that Becky Egan Hogg tries to convey to her religion students at Mercy High School in Baltimore is God's unconditional love.

GET TO KNOW

Becky Egan Hogg

What is your home parish?

St. Matthew, Northwood

Who had the most influence on the development of your faith?

"My parents (Jerry and Peggy Egan, parishioners of St. Mary, Govans, for 49 years), as my first teachers, had a great influence.

Outside of my home, Mark Pacione (former director of the archdiocesan office of youth and young adult ministry), also greatly influenced me. When I was going into sophomore year here at Mercy, I got involved with the Archdiocesan Youth Advisory Council. Mark called me up. Then I became super involved in archdiocesan youth ministry. He was my hero. He grounded me many times. He's the reason why I do any of this. He was and is such a model of Christian living for me. I can't overstate it."

Who is your favorite saint and why?

"St. Pope John XXIII, because of his role in Vatican II and his commitment to breathing new life into the church. St. Oscar Arnulfo Romero, because of his concern for justice and being a voice for the voiceless."

What makes you proud to be Catholic?

"I was very fortunate to have been raised in a household very committed to the church.

The priests in my life have been true servants who care for the community.

The day after my oldest child was born, I'm sitting in the hospital bed holding my newborn. The chaplain asked me if I wanted to receive Communion. I said OK. She said prayers, and gave me the Eucharist. I was holding my child. I cried through the whole thing. I'm not someone who cries. I'm holding a new life and the Body of Christ is being given to me. It was pretty cool.

The sense of community is what makes me proud to be Catholic."

“No matter who you are, where you’ve been, what you’ve done, come as you are,” explained the 47-year old director of mission and ministry who teaches sophomore and senior religion classes.

Hogg believes that message resonates with students.

“I think they see that I’m as open-minded as I can be,” said Hogg, a parishioner of St. Matthew in Northwood. “I’m doing my best to not have any preconceived notions.”

Hogg, who attended the former parish school of St. Mary of the Assumption in Govans, graduated from Mercy in 1989. She then earned a bachelor’s degree in religious studies from Fairfield University and a master’s degree in religion from Yale Divinity School. She has been on the staff at the Baltimore all-girls school for 21 years and says being Catholic as “almost part of my DNA.”

“We need to be supportive of one another,” Hogg said, noting that a “ministry of presence” is crucial to her role. “I see that here at Mercy, definitely with the students, with the faculty. We have a very tight-knit community.”

Hogg began teaching at her alma mater in 1995, serving as a religion instructor until 2000 before leaving for three years. She served as campus minister at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from 2000 to 2002 and as director of sacramental preparation for the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Towson and Church of the Nativity in Timonium from 2002 to 2003. She returned to Mercy in 2003.

Hogg works to show students her best intentions.

At the start of each school year, before wading into coursework, Hogg explains to her students that what separates them is only this: she has been on life’s journey

longer.

“It makes them far more receptive,” Hogg said. “We’re on this journey together. I don’t have some special connection to God.”

Hogg’s experience has been that most students are open to the message of the Catholic Church.

“You get kids coming from so many different backgrounds,” she said. “I try to do as much as I can about Christianity.”

This includes talking about Pope Francis as a world leader, rather than solely as the head of the Catholic Church.

“We have more in common than people like to think,” Hogg said.

Hogg sees that in her own experiences at St. Matthew Parish, where she worships with husband, Trey, and daughters, Emily, 6, and Margot, 9. Hogg is a member of St. Matthew’s pastoral counsel.

At Mass, one of Hogg’s daughters insists the family sits in a pew in the rear of the church.

“I can see the congregation,” Hogg said. “It’s a mix of people from all over the world.”

What unites the parish is the “common love of Christ and unity in the Catholic Church,” Hogg said. “It’s very much relational.”

When Hogg isn’t with Mercy’s girls, the former competitive dancer teaches youths at Egan School of Irish Dance. The school, which she founded in 2003, uses space at St. Pius X in Rodgers Forge.

“I don’t want to let go of Irish dancing,” said Hogg, the school’s sole teacher.

Egan School of Irish Dance, which currently has approximately 30 students in elementary and middle school, recruits dancers strictly through word of mouth. Students perform at venues including Stella Maris, St. Matthew and the St. Patrick’s Parade in Baltimore. The school also offers a summer dance camp.

Back at Mercy, Mary Beth Lennon, its president and a 1985 graduate of the school, said “it’s clear to everyone who knows Becky that she lives her Catholic faith and is imbued with the charism of the Sisters of Mercy.

“She works extraordinarily hard to bring students closer to God,” Lennon said. “She works creatively to meet the needs of our students from all faith backgrounds.”

Lennon described Hogg as “a perfect example of faith-filled lay leadership in the church.”

“Becky is a real Mercy girl who grew into a woman of Mercy,” Lennon said. “Her influence is felt throughout the archdiocese.”

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