

SAINT ROSE OF LIMA CATHOLIC CHURCH'S PARISH PROFILES

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Giving Back

Bill Simmons became an altar server after his wife Diane joined the Funeral Schola, and she found it to be a very important and rewarding ministry. Bill, who also liked the idea of helping out at funerals, asked if he could be an altar server.

After being accepted he attended a couple of funerals, sat in the back of the church, and made mental notes of what the servers did throughout the Mass. “Even with that I felt uneasy the first few times on the altar, but was reassured by former pastor Fr. Robert Fitzpatrick’s promise that it was his job to make me look good,” says Bill, “and he did.”

For the retired educator, the funeral ministry has been a real blessing. “I am reminded at every one of these services just how substantive the Catholic funeral liturgy is, how supportive and consoling it is for relatives and friends of the deceased and how it reassures all in attendance that the end of one’s earthly life is not the end of everything, but marks the transition to a life that is eternally glorious. I find these thoughts very supportive in my own life.”

At the conclusion of a funeral, a feeling that almost always stays with Bill is his amazement and respect for the life that the deceased had lived. “If the deceased was someone I knew, I often discovered that I had no idea of the breadth and width of his/her interests, talents and abilities,” he says. “One such acquaintance may have been a gifted piano player, another a great cook, another a military hero and yet another a self-effacing mother who raised wonderful children. Being informed of these things always increases my admiration for that person.”

If Bill sees one of the deceased relatives whom he knows before Mass, he mentions that he is going to be a server. “They always thank me,” he says. “I feel privileged to be of some small assistance during that person’s hour of need.”