

The Ascension Weekly

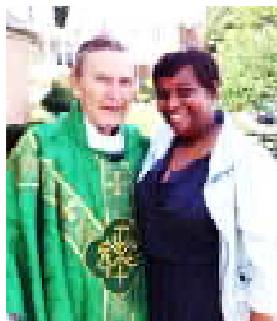
January 20, 2019

Friends, former parishioners remember Fr. Henry

This article is the second installment in our series of memories shared of Fr. Henry by parishioners who knew and loved him.

I will always remember my first son's Baptism because Fr. Henry showed such genuine joy in bringing another soul to the light of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was not just a duty to him but a special privilege. We did not have a Godfather for my son so Fr. Henry was kind enough and eager to be his Godfather- what priest does that? He truly loved the little ones and his spirit still is felt in Ascension through not only the physical church but the truly loving congregation he has gathered. After Briar, my husband, finished his military service, we came back to Ascension because of the unequalled warmth we felt from Fr. Henry and the whole congregation.

- Asuntha Chiang-Smith



Father Henry came at a time when we were trying to get over the devastating loss of our church burning down. He was a breath of fresh air that we needed at the time. The Johnson Family took to him immediately, especially our mother Lelia. He was always looking outside the box which is something that our mother was not always comfortable with. He helped her to be more outgoing and active in the church community. She had never been on a plane or outside the country before. Father Henry wanted to take her to Rome to see the Pope. Unfortunately, she passed away before that could happen. That was the first time I'd ever seen a priest cry.

Father Henry buried both of our parents, Mama in 1984 and Dad in 1987. He was a great support for the family during those difficult times.

In 1985, Father Henry celebrated with us in a joyous occasion when he married Brian and I. He also baptized our son Jesse in 1987.

During his time at Ascension, he loved the children of the parish and they loved him. It was important to him that a mass would be just for them. That's when the 10:00 mass became the children's mass. He loved music, so the folk group came about, just for the children's mass. He wanted it to be lively and fun for the children. I remember he wanted us to learn and sing "Hail Holy Queen" like they did in the movie "Sister Act". We did! Father Henry was "one of a kind". I will miss him deeply.

- Pam Welch

Father Henry was very special to my husband Dick and I. He meant the world to us. He was the reason we became active and engaged at Ascension. At the time we arrived in the area, Dick was a Congregationalist from New England. Fr. Henry took him under his wing and taught him the ways of Catholicism. They became good friends. Dick had taken courses on theology at Harvard, which led to good discussions between the two of them. The way Fr. Henry was most impactful to us was how he helped us have our marriage blessed in the Church. It was the second marriage for both of us, and we had gotten married in the Methodist Church, which was very difficult for me as a Catholic. At the time, there was a strong movement to help lapsed Catholics come home again. At the first Mass we attended at Ascension after having moved back into the area, Fr. Henry preached in his homily about coming home to the Catholic Church. I was in tears by the end of Mass; it was unbelievable. That was the beginning of my journey home. Eventually, we had our marriage blessed in the Church, and Dick became a convert to the faith. We became active in the parish; we became CCD teachers, and Dick joined the choir and eventually became a cantor, at Fr. Henry's urging. He was truly an amazing priest and wonderful friend.

- Beverlee Lee

Some examples of his love of children: For those who complained about his children's Christmas Mass having Santa there, he said it was the only time the Church was quiet. He liked to tease the altar servers. One of his favorite ways to splash water on them at the washing of hands. He could always take a joke on him. One time as he returned from a vacation he saw a FOR SALE sign posted in front of the Church. After he calmed down he thought it was a great joke on him by the unnamed altar servers. The take away from all these few examples is the children loved him!

- Mary Ann Boyer, former secretary at Ascension