

SAINT CLARE PARISH PROFILE

MARY AND GARY MOMMAERTS



Gary and Mary Mommaerts have been active supporters of St. Clare Catholic Parish for many years, having attended Mass services at all three church sites.

But they insist the parish has provided them with far more than they could ever give back in return.

“The parish has helped us so much, and we just love our community here,” Mary said. “I think we got that all through knowing the community and being involved in our parish. People have been so good to us over the years. Everybody works together. We love our parish.”

Mary is a lifelong member of St. Clare Catholic Parish.

She was raised on a dairy farm in Greenleaf just down the road from St. Mary Church and St. Mary Catholic School. The small schoolhouse Mary attended as a child was torn down about three years after she graduated and was replaced with the building that now houses the parish office and former St. Mary Catholic School.

“We would walk to school in the morning and walk back to the farm at night. All of my brothers and sisters went to St. Mary school,” said Mary, the second oldest of 12 children. “I was always happy in this parish community. We always attended Mass, and we’ve enjoyed our parish.”

Mary continues to serve the parish. This marks her seventh year as an aide for the 3K class at St. Clare Catholic School (which formed during the parish merger).

“After I retired from my job (in accounts payable) I wanted something to do, so they had this opening at school and that’s when I started,” she said. “I’m so happy I got this job. It’s just a wonderful place to work, and I enjoy all the kids.”

Corralling an energetic group of 3-year-olds keeps Mary on her toes, “but it’s so special, all the love

they give you,” she said. “Being around them just makes your day. It makes you smile. They’re such good kids. Our school has good, kind people.”

Mary also sings with the Belles Choir, is a past member of the school board, and for about 15 years she served as the school librarian.

Mary received her baptism, First Communion and Confirmation at St. Mary Church. After finishing at St. Mary Catholic School, Mary went on to graduate from St. Joseph Academy in Green Bay.

Meanwhile, Gary was born and raised in Green Bay, having been a member of St. Joseph Church and School for grades 1-4 before transferring to St. Agnes Church for grades 5-8. He graduated from Premontre High School in Green Bay.

Gary met Mary in Greenleaf while visiting his sister and brother-in-law. Gary and Mary got married at St. Mary Church in 1969, and for the first 1½ years they lived in De Pere. Then they moved to a home in Green Bay for about six years before building a home in Greenleaf in 1977 on property owned by Mary’s father. The couple has lived there ever since, just a minute’s drive from church.

“I was glad to move out to a home in the country — wide open space,” Gary said. “I loved it out here then, and I still love it out here.”

“I came from big parishes in Green Bay, so I love the closeness of our parish,” he added. “I really love the history. Especially during COVID, I’d go and sit in church during the week and look up and see the wood beams and think, ‘Did the farmers all get together and do that? How did it get built?’ It really fascinates me. I’m sure the two other church sites feel the same way.”

Gary currently serves as a Eucharistic Minister and greeter. For more than 30 years he also participated in several parish groups. He chaired the parish and finance councils, was a trustee on more than one occasion, and served on other special committees on and off throughout the years.

“It was very, very rewarding,” he said. “We got to meet so many people and became such good friends with them. It was really an honor and a privilege to be on those councils and committees.”

The Mommaerts' children include daughters Lori and Katie, and sons Jeff, Mark and Daniel; the couple’s son Tommy passed away at the age of 6½. All of the Mommaerts' children attended St. Mary Catholic School. In addition, the couple has eight grandchildren ranging from 1½ to 17 years old.