

Good afternoon fellow parishioners, My name is Joan Clifford. My husband Joe and I have been married almost 52 years and we have 8 children and almost 19 grandchildren. We have been parishioners of St. Agatha's Parish for 47 years. In the course of our lives many things have changed, not just in the world we live in, (which gets smaller and smaller)...but also in the way we live our faith.

Back in "the day"...our attendance at Mass was very different. The priest said Mass in Latin – with his back to us...except for the "epistle, the gospel and in those days "the sermon ". There were "Missions" and novenas, etc. and all have had their place through the years. Everyone took home something from these devotions, but still it was something we didn't share.

If you look in our bulletin....every week the Gospel is printed and we are encouraged to really stop and listen to God's Word and pick out a word or a sentence or a thought that touches our lives. Then there is a question for us to ponder.

During the week, every time there is a meeting at St. Agatha's, be it a staff meeting, the parish council or whatever - the meeting begins with the prayer – the reading of the Sunday gospel and a reflection on the message that God is bringing to our lives.

I'm sure you have noticed the sign outside Church, - read about it in the bulletin or heard about it from someone who has participated – that Season 4 of Arise is about to begin and YOU are invited to take part.

I have taken part in the Arise Program since the first session – and I look forward to this new session. It has been very meaningful for me to see how I can connect with God in my everyday life. I feel it has awakened in me an awareness of the revelation of God and a deeper appreciation of how God moves in my life. The Arise Program has helped me to develop a more personal relationship with God and at times I find myself asking the question that I often hear my grandchildren ask – wwjd – what would Jesus do in a particular situation.

The Arise Meetings have made me more aware of what Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have been saying in the gospel since the beginning, but I don't think I really heard....and it is only now as I try to "LISTEN" to the word and try to live out "the Word" in my daily life.

Silence is a very important part of the overall faith sharing process and we have to learn to be comfortable with silence – God often speaks to us in the Silence.

For each person, their experience in the Arise Program is different. For those not familiar with the program – let me tell you a little about it. It is for 90 minutes, once a week, for six weeks. You can choose what day of the week is best for your schedule and also what time of the day....there is a time convenient for everyone. Age does play into this – participants are from teenagers to those of us on the "Back Nine" in our lives. There are no strangers in the group – only friends you have yet to meet. Everyone is welcome!!

Many of us might be thinking of the upcoming season of Lent and what can we do for Lent....well, Arise offers a spiritual and meaningful way to observe the Lenten Season and prepare for the coming of Christ at Easter. I encourage you to sign up and take part in "something special" that will reaffirm your faith.

WE are MANY parts – but we are all ONE body. And the gifts that we have - we are given to share. Come and be part of the New Heart, New Spirit, and we shall all Arise together in Christ.