

Hi Fr. Mike,

I would often attend the Sunday night Mass at your parish while I was a graduate student at Marquette from 2011-2013 when I got my MS in Counseling. I have since moved to Iowa to finish my PhD in Counseling Psychology. I wanted to reach out to share with you how important my short time at St Francis was.

I was raised Catholic in Marathon WI, and grew up in the shadow of St. Anthony Retreat Center. My grandparents both worked there for many years. My grandmother sewed the Capuchins' habits, and my grandfather was caretaker of the buildings and grounds. My parents both volunteered at St. Anthony's where our family was involved in the Franciscan 3<sup>rd</sup> Order there.

When I moved to Milwaukee for graduate school and was looking for a parish to attend while Marquette was out of session, I remembered that many of the Capuchins in Marathon would often come and go from Milwaukee, and looked up your parish. You and your parish greeted me with open arms, literally! I was thrilled to find such a welcoming, warm, and loving church community that truly lived the Catholic social justice mission. I was inspired by the people at St Francis to keep working to truly live the Gospel. St Francis served such an important role in helping me grow in my faith, and sustained me through some tough times in my training as a counselor at Marquette. My experience with your parish helped me to connect my faith to the lessons I was learning at Marquette in serving those suffering from mental illness and addiction. I still regularly go to your website to read your Two-Minute Teachings, and check the bulletin to see what is happening back in Milwaukee. St Francis is a hidden treasure in Milwaukee that I try to share with as many people as I can. It's one of the things I miss most about Milwaukee.

As I prepared to leave Milwaukee to move to Iowa, I started dating a Lutheran girl. I wanted to share with her what I thought the best version of the Catholic faith was, so I brought her to a few Masses at St Francis. She shared the same moving experience at St Francis that I did, which sparked her to explore her faith more deeply. It was her experience at St Francis that led her to decide to become Catholic, and she is currently preparing to join the church with our local RCIA in Ames, IA. We wanted to share with you how important our time at St Francis was to us.