

“Come away to pray...”

Since 1985 Marge and Tom Burkley have been urging their fellow parishioners to renew their spiritual life through retreats.

It is something they firmly believe in. Marge said recently that it was “personally satisfying to get away from all (our obligations) and focus on our spiritual journey towards uniting with Christ.” Tom agreed, saying he liked the invitation “to set aside time from a busy schedule to focus on my spiritual life, with a special emphasis on prayer.” He added that “during a parish retreat, we feel a sense of community seeing our fellow parishioners around us.”

As head of the Retreat ministry, the couple promotes, not parish retreats per se, but those offered by Loyola Retreat House (formerly known as Loyola of the Lakes). They said that the beautiful grounds, outdoor prayer walks and stations are an added inducement to quiet reflection.

Becky Haller, of Loyola, says that the retreat house appreciates the help of people like the Burkleys in diocesan parishes. Generally, such representatives invite their fellow parishioners to three retreats each year. These are: a women’s spring weekend in April; a men’s Advent retreat—which is upcoming December 5 to 7, 2014, and is still open to new sign-ups (check brochures at the church information racks) and a men’s Palm Sunday retreat which will be held March 27, 28, and 29, 2015.

So what exactly do the Burkleys do to promote retreat attendance? They outline their duties as:

1. Calling people who’ve attended previous retreats, or friends who might be interested, and telling them where they can find specific information at church.
2. Putting up posters, supplied by Loyola, in the church entranceways.
3. Setting out informative brochures, again supplied by Loyola, which include a sign-up form.
4. Writing up notices for the church bulletin for each upcoming retreat.
5. Sometimes setting up tri-fold boards with pictures of the retreat house, grounds, garden walks and shrine.

The couple has on occasion spoken to individual ministry groups at their meetings and even once, Marge said, from the pulpit. They also man a table at the annual parish Stewardship Fair.

After nearly 30 years of chairing this ministry, however, the Burkleys are ready to turn over the reins to new leaders.

If anyone would like to take up the duties or help with the work, they can reach Marge and Tom at 330-864-8694 or martom315@aol.com