

## **Lest we stumble in the dark....**

“If you tell a person (of any faith) that you are going to light a candle for them, they understand what you mean,” Terry Tolson, chairman of the Votive Lights Ministry, recently noted.

For most people, the small squat candles, known as votive or vigil lights, symbolize the Catholic church itself. They also are well known--as they are sometimes described--as tiny flames of prayers of devotion, gratitude or intercession.

Terry, who with the help of four other parishioners, maintains the candle stands both for the small votives and the 3-day candles, thinks of herself not so much as the head of a ministry as the contact person for this particular maintenance need of the church. We don't have meetings, she said, but we keep in touch.

Although the votives themselves are ordered by the sacristan with the other church candles, the small ministry crew handles their daily upkeep. That includes removing burnt candles and replacing them with fresh ones, replenishing the matches, sticks or starter candles, and collecting the offerings left by those lighting candles.

Most people probably regard the lighting of church candles as Terry does. “When you don't know what to do in a situation, how to pray, or even what to pray for, lighting a candle is comforting,” she said.

She added that although she might wish to stay in church for three days, she would not have the time. By lighting one of the large candles, however, “I feel that the flames represent my ongoing prayer.”

Terry originally joined the ministry group to replace another person and she did it because it was a job that needed to be done.

After helping assure the availability of candles for a little over a year, she has found some other spiritual benefits, besides being reminded of how the flames represent the Holy Spirit, the Light of Christ and other religious truths.

At other churches—for a funeral, during the diocesan pilgrimage and on other occasions, she finds herself aware of the candles and is more inclined to light one herself. She also said she likes to see them lit, because “It's nice to think of them as prayers said and continuing.”

Anyone wishing to join in the work of this ministry is invited to contact Terry. She can be reached at 330-315-3676 or [tctolson@gmail.com](mailto:tctolson@gmail.com)

