

I belong to what???

Sometimes women who are new to the parish are surprised to see a bulletin notice or flyer that declares: “All women of St. Sebastian’s are members of the Sanctuary Society.” They don’t remember signing up for anything!

If they read further, they discover that their membership is automatic, just like moving to Akron makes one an Akronite.

Of course, once this is spelled out, the men of the parish probably think that the Sanctuary Society must have a huge number of people at its meetings.

Not so, says Kristi Owen, co-chair of the group with Danielle Petit. Only a small number attend the actual meetings, but many parish women participate in other ways. More than 200 slip the \$10 annual dues into the yellow envelope that comes in the October church collection packet. Many also help as volunteers for the group’s parish events. Those include the International Festival, Women’s Night Out, the Christmas Tea, and an annual servers’ outing.

As for the dues and the proceeds from raffles and fund-raisers, they are used to maintain the altar with flowers, candles, hosts and, Kristi says, “whatever Father Valencheck says is needed for the sanctuary.” She adds that recently the group contributed to getting new cushions on the chairs and kneelers in the sanctuary and donated over \$7,000 to purchase a new church piano. Sanctuary Society also awards an annual \$500 scholarship to a server.

Besides helping to lead the ministry, Kristi is one of its biggest cheerleaders. Shortly after joining the parish two years ago, she attended an event sponsored by the Society. She found it was a great way to meet people, enjoyed being with the group and before she knew it she was an officeholder.

In addition to the social aspect, she says, it’s a way to give back to the church, since the proceeds from the Society’s work “goes back to the altar.” Although the Sanctuary Society started when the parish was founded in the 1920s, it’s still vibrant. Kristi says it’s also one of the “younger groups in the church with all of our board members having kids in the (parish) school.”

Kristi and her co-chair Danielle hope to see more women participate in the society either by contributing dues (October is membership dues month) or by volunteering and attending meetings.

Those interested in more active membership can contact Kristi at 330-414-2686 or kristijowen@gmail.com or Danielle Petit at 330-730-7351 or danielle@petit.com.

Coming: Breakfast anyone?