

Edrice Viechweg

What St. Francis Means to Me

Sunday, November 27, 2016

Today, like every Sunday, as I pull up in front of the church, I am overcome by a sense of calm and thankfulness. It is as if I am leaving the hustle and bustle of the world behind for a few hours, and I am entering a space where I can truly be at peace with myself.

A few weeks ago when Mark asked me to say a few words about St. Francis, I agreed to do so, but didn't think about what I would say until a few days later. That was actually the day when I emailed Mark to ask him if he would baptize the baby who became a part of our church family two weeks ago at our 70th anniversary celebrations. I was a bit reluctant to ask knowing what a special day it was for us and knowing that a baptism meant that the order of the service would be a little different and that it would take more time out of an otherwise hectic day.

I am going to admit that when Mark immediately replied with a positive response, I was not at all surprised because having known Mark over the last four years, I have learned that he is the real deal. Humble, approachable, graceful, a man who is always ready to help and who readily expresses his appreciation for all the little things we do to make our church a better place.

And while I am talking about the baby's baptism, I must tell you that the family just cannot stop talking about you. A few days after the baptism, my friend called me and her first words were "The people at your church. I've never been to a church where everyone is so friendly. They all came over to say hi and to welcome us to the church." They would like to thank you for your welcome and your hospitality.

St. Francis is my place of refuge, the place where I come to be recharged, to gain the strength to face whatever may come at me in the upcoming week. The things that I love most about St. Francis is the community, the way we welcome strangers with open arms and hearts, the way we worship with our brothers and sisters of other denominations, the way we reach out to our Muslim brothers and sisters offering them a safe place to worship, the friendships we develop and nurture, the way we welcome each other into our homes and our lives, the way we so willingly share all that God has so graciously given to us and the way we all work together to perform God's work in the world. Just take a look at our

weekly inserts and you'll see how what we do here on Sunday mornings is directly connected to the world beyond our sanctuary.

St. Francis is indeed a special place for me. It is a place where I feel at home, where I know that I am a part of a loving family. A family who laughs, cries and prays together. A family who supports me in every endeavor I undertake to assist my fellow Kitittians and Nevisians (people of St. Kitts and Nevis) at home in the Caribbean. It is a place where I can invite others to share in the wonder of God's welcoming love and grace. It is a place where I feel the spirit of God moving among us, where I come expecting to be spiritually fed, and I have never been disappointed when I leave.

God has blessed us with two beautiful spaces in which we worship him. He has charged us to be stewards of these churches to see to their upkeep and to ensure that they remain as beautiful as they are today, that they will be here for future generations to experience the same loving, welcoming experiences we do. Let us heed the call and do all we can to ensure that St. Francis remains a vibrant welcoming place where the stranger feels welcomed and loved, where people of other faiths feel safe and where the Spirit of God dwells. Thank you.