

Stories

A Newsletter of Parishioners' Enlightening Stories of Life Events

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- **Ministry Involvement with Jozef de Groot**
- **Social Justice Ministries at St. Patrick**
- **Newsletter Notes From Fr. Eric Tellez**

Involvement in Ministries is Central to My Life

By Jozef de Groot



Jozef & Suzanne de Groot

My name is Jozef de Groot and I am a long time parishioner at St. Patrick, since 1984. I am married to Suzanne. I brought to this marriage three children and inherited two older children. I have been active in several ministries. In my retirement, my current major ministry involvements are: Small Church Communities (SCCs), Valley Interfaith Project (VIP), and JustFaith.

First some background. On June 13, 1952, Vader (my father) and Moeder (my mother) and eleven of their fifteen children boarded a bus in front of our small house on the Haarlemmertrekvaartweg (in the town of

Noordwijkerhout), crossed the Piet Gijzen brug, waved goodbye to all of the town people gathered along the route and headed for the harbor in Rotterdam. There we boarded a freighter, the Leerdam, for the United States. Our destination – Lodi (a small town located in central California). The memory of that trip when I was nine years old is still vivid. It was my first major journey.

My parents were unique and exceptional people. My father's honesty, respect for life and people, his love for his wife and children, his devotion to his family, and his Christian faith were his legacy to our family. My mother's personal strength,

her practicality, forbearance, patience, keen intelligence, and especially her deep understanding, provided the underpinnings for her husband and the entire family. Her ability to grow, to change, to gain new understanding without ever losing her balance or compromising her personal and Christian values provided a sense of continuity, security and unity.

I have often said that my parents' faith in God, their love of family and community, and their insistence that human and religious values (rather than

Newsletter Notes From Fr. Eric

Jozef de Groot is a parishioner in our community who exemplifies what it means to embrace the cause of social justice in ministry. St. Patrick has a long tradition of support for social justice through many ministries such as JUSTFAITH, Habitat for Humanity and partnering with the Valley Interfaith Project to name a

few.

Through the example of Jozef's parents, his life experiences and exposure through our community, Jozef has taken a leading role in our social justice programs here.

You will enjoy reading Jozef's journey to our country and ultimately to our community.

I am always amazed at the many different experiences and journeys we have all had before we arrived at St. Patrick Catholic Community. Let us continue to celebrate and learn from those journeys.

Peace in Christ,

Fr. Eric Tellez



de Groot Family Farm

My parents' faith in God... and their insistence that human and religious values are paramount, all had a profound effect on me.

If you would like to learn more about the ministries which are mentioned in this newsletter, check out these contacts .



political ideologies) all had a profound effect on me. Although my family contains the full spectrum of political thought, none of my brothers and sisters are ideological to the extent that their views override the qualities and values they grew up with: love of family, a strong sense of community, and an ability to go beyond political and social boundaries when family or human needs make it important to do so.

My personal journey to justice is rooted in my family and early life at home on the family farm. I joined the Franciscan seminary after completing grade school. When I left the seminary (after 12 years) I started a new life in Phoenix. I gradually dropped out of the Church when the faith I had grown up with no longer fed or sustained me. But my sense of the sacred, belief in the mystery of life and need for a larger meaning endured. The conviction that community is the bedrock and foundation for all human life also never wavered. It is with these tools (which were rooted in my family and early life) and the promise and vision of Vatican II, that I slowly began to re-create my life as a Catholic. It's been a long journey.

Within St. Patrick Catholic Community and the context of Vatican II, I was able to again envision myself as a practicing

Catholic. Little by little, the three major elements of my current journey (community, action, and spirituality) unfolded.



Thirteen of Seventeen de Groot Family Members (circa 1950's)

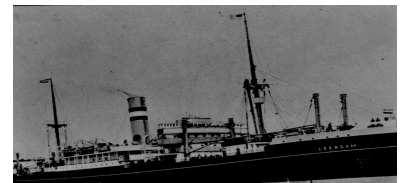
In 1990, the parish decided to make Small Church Communities a part of the structure of the parish. Over the last 20 years, being a part of a small Christian community has been critical for me in living out the demands of my baptism and in sustaining me for the "long haul."

In 1999, Dick White invited me, and others, to work with him as members of VIP (the Valley Interfaith Project). St. Patrick, has been an institutional member of VIP ever since. VIP has provided our parishioners skills and opportunities for public involvement. St. Patrick has been a significant voice within this community and has played a significant role in many of the victories over the last ten years.

In 2006, several parishioners and I went to a daylong workshop with the founder of

the JustFaith program. We have been deeply involved with this organization since then.

For me, these three involvements, and what they have led me to, have become central to my life. Justice work has been both the most difficult and the most rewarding. Giving and doing for people is much easier than the day-to-day struggle to understand power and to learn how to use power to impact public laws and practices—not only for us but for those without power, influence or resources. It is my strong belief that transforming society to more closely reflect the reign of God was Jesus' primary focus. If we are to be faithful to His call, working to create a civic society that works for and supports all of us equally has to be high on the agenda. This work, however, can only be done with support of the community, with personal prayer, with study and growth



De Groot Family Freighter to US

and with a commitment to those who are poor, have disabilities, are ill, are immigrants/refugees or are dispossessed in any other area of life.

Mary Permoda
mary@stpatricksscottsdale.org
480-998-3843x116

Jozef de Groot
degroot1@q.com
480-991-1580