

Testimonial #2

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FCCW was founded in 1996.—but for me, go back 2½ years: my brother, Bill, a priest for 7 years, had just died of a massive heart attack at age 34 and my son, Scott, age 5, had repeated seizures. It was a lot to process, but working through these things made me yearn to be more part of our parish. I am a cradle Catholic who had a truly wondrous example set for me by my two loving, faith-filled parents and I had been very active in church and ecumenical outreach during my young adult years. I tried 2 years of teaching CCD and even though this challenged me, it did not fill that yearning. So reading about the start of a new women's fellowship in St. Catherine's bulletin was an answered prayer!

The first meeting was held at Pat Scileppi's home. I walked into beauty—candles and teacups, lace tablecloth and flowers, a simple cross and a pretty nametag. Seventeen women gathered that night and I felt welcomed, wanted, and at home. Pat's daughter walked in as we were cleaning up and commented that it looked like we had had a very special gathering. She then went on to share a dream she had had that Our Lady of Guadalupe was blessing this fellowship.

Within 6 months I was Pat's co-facilitator and collaborating with her was so wonderful, so memorable. We studied angels and had a speaker on angelic experiences; we delved into the life of a living saint, Mother Teresa, learning that, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." And we climbed to the 'High Places' with Hannah Hurnard's "Hinds Feet on High Places," learning about encouragement. This culminated in our first Women's Day—"Invitation to Encouragement"—in May 1998. We went on to have yearly Women's Day events 1998-2001. I want to just say that this was such a coming together in the Spirit as women of St., Catherine of Alexandria's FCCW formed work groups, planned, and fully participated in being servants to our larger community on these very special days. I am still amazed that we did these 4 years in a row! What an outreach!

Along the way in these early years, Pat attended the Religious Education Congress and listened to Fr. Virgilio Elizondo's talk on the "New Evangelization of Our Lady of Guadalupe." This was such a confirming moment for Pat and our Fellowship of Catholic Christian Women. Our Lady had truly been working in and through us as even from the start with FCCW already meeting most of the characteristics of the new evangelization outlined in Father Elizondo's talk. It is so very important for all of today's facilitators to review these characteristics and orient new members regarding them. Every fellowship needs to fully embrace all 10 characteristics in our ongoing pursuit to honor Our Lady and further the kingdom on earth of her son, Jesus Christ.

It was all of these things and Pat's special attention to details, along with a very successful first Women's Day, that caught the real attention of our Pastor at the time—Fr. Tom Burdick. He set us on the path toward Diocesan recognition and Women's Day really started the spread of FCCW to other parishes. Pat's initial vision, fired by the characteristics of the New Evangelization of Our Lady of Guadalupe, has flowered into the many fellowships we have today. Pat truly had the spiritual gift of leadership as defined in "Uniquely His": LEADERSHIP—the special grace to share a vision or ideal with others in such a way that they desire your direction and become motivated to work together to make it happen.

God bless you, Pat Scileppi! Happy 20th Anniversary and may your FCCW vision continue to spread!