

Fr. Martin's Reflection – August 14, 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I receive many letters of appreciation and they all mean so much to me, but this letter from Maria is also meant for you and I want you to read her words and know how much you meant to her and Stephen while they lived among us.

Hello Father,

I pray you are well. I have wanted to speak to you for a while now but it's just so difficult. In my cowardliness I decided to write to you instead. It is with great sadness, my dear Father Martin that I tell you that I have officially moved from New Jersey and I am back in New York with my family. They have been a great support to me and I really need them now.

I want to tell you, and I wish I could tell all the Mary, Mother of the Church parish community, what you and they have meant to Stephen and I. Stephen and I loved our life in Columbus NJ and a great part of that was because of our parish family at Mary Mother of the Church.

We always knew how blessed we were to be part of such a loving body of faithful people but after Stephen was first diagnosed with his illness, well, that's when we really saw the face of God in our parish. We never realized how important it was to belong to a parish family until that moment. I thank God always that in Stephen's last days he was blessed with the love of genuine friendships in the supportive community of Mary, Mother of the Church Parish. We were blessed also to receive support, prayers and love even from people in MMOTC that we really did not know but who are now forever in our hearts.



No one will ever tell me about how being "spiritual" is enough and about how one does not need to belong to a church, without me telling them about a parish in Burlington County NJ by the name of Mary, Mother of the Church that gave me and my husband a glimpse of heaven by our being in communion with the faithful of God in a church family. Especially when we found ourselves hanging on the cross of illness and goodbyes. I have heard it said that the kingdom of God is in the here and now, present in and through the Church but that it will only be perfectly realized at the end of history. Well, Stephen and I caught a foretaste of what that perfection of God's Kingdom might look like and feel like at MMOTCP.

Also, I need to say that I could not be more proud of St. Mary's and Holy Assumption and of you Father. I witnessed the coming together of these two communities which blossomed into one beautiful family and I will never forget that. Beautiful people of God who found, in you, the Shepherd God promised in Jeremiah 3:15. "And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding". Thank you, Father, for the incredible gift of your life and your ministry. There is nothing I can say that will cover the depth of our gratitude for knowing all of you. I don't have the words to express such things. But I pray that someday when you get to heaven and our Lord receives each and every one of you He will reveal to you the merit of what you have done in our lives.

*We love you very much,
Maria Guzman-Paczkowski and the Holy Soul of my dear Stephen Paczkowski*

May God continue to bless you Maria and may the soul of Stephen rest forever in the presence of God.

Fr. Martin