

LITURGICAL CLOWNING

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During the 1970's, Liturgical Clowning started in the Columbia area with a group formed by Pastor Floyd Schaffer at Abiding Savior Lutheran Church. The group called themselves the Faith and Fantasy (FF) Clown Ministry and eventually took up residence at the Kittamaqundi Community (KC). F&F's basic rules for clowning, especially Liturgical Clowning, were: always to forgive and reconcile the sinner; raise up the lowly; and extend love and acceptance to all.

Fr. Joe Schaefer invited the group to participate one Sunday evening in a Liturgy service with the Catholics. Shortly after, I attended workshops in Massachusetts on, "Clown, Mime, Puppetry, and Dance Ministry," which inspired me with ideas for using the Mime Clowns at Communal Reconciliation Services. I coordinated with the local F&F clowns and gained approval for them to plan a reconciliation Service with Fr. Nick Amato at St. John's. In 1979 I attended their training class and with the help of other members and teachers from my class, we planned and introduced Liturgical Clowning at St. John's at several liturgies.

Once interest in the Clowning Ministry was raised, we were able to provide 8-week classes for interested members of St. John's Youth Group, Middle School Religious Education, and adult parishioners. St. John's then had its own Faith and Fantasy Clown Group which helped in various ways at numerous functions at church, including illustrating conversion and reconciliation at Confirmation Retreats, and providing a balloon ascension as an illustration of the Gospel on Ascension Thursday.

We were also invited to do clown services and classes for various church groups in the Baltimore area. Deacon George Martin also did extensive ministry as a clown at places such as domestic violence avoidance events, psychiatric hospitals and children's hospitals. He was fondly remembered for entertaining numerous St. John's children by making balloon animals at many parish events.

The FF clowns from St. John's and KC were further able to spread the clown ministry when they taught a week-long clowning class for priests and nuns from around the country who were enrolled in the Summer Institute at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana. Also, several of the clowns moved from St. John's and took their clown ministry with them to other parishes as far away as California and Ecuador.