

## Trying Something New

*Deb Egan*

A few years ago, I was sitting in the pews listening to someone talk at a St. Julia's Mass about Small Groups. At the time, I wasn't looking for a prayer group or thinking I should get more involved in the church community, but I was looking for something more fulfilling to do for Lent. The "giving up something for Lent" just wasn't working for me. As I listened to the Small Group Member talk about his experience with Small Groups, it gave me the idea that maybe instead of giving up something for Lent, I could *DO* something for Lent. That's when I decided to join Small Groups for the first time. I had never done anything like this before, so I wasn't exactly sure what to expect and I was pretty nervous. *Would I fit in with this group of women? Would they be holier than me or more knowledgeable than me? Would I be able to contribute to such a group?* These questions were in the forefront of my mind as I pondered the fact that I had signed up to participate in a Small Group.

Despite the butterflies in my stomach, I had decided to venture out and try something new.

When I arrived at our first Group meeting, I found our facilitator to be very kind and welcoming. In fact, all of the members of our Small Group were warm and friendly. (Today, I am actually a Small Group facilitator myself.) As I look back on that first Small Group experience, I realize that there were several things I enjoyed about the Small Groups experience that kept me coming back. First of all, being in a Small Group enabled me to get to know more of the parishioners and it gave me additional friendly faces to see at Mass each week. Secondly, it gave me a safe, warm environment in which to discuss my faith. I discovered that as members of this group, we were all on a new faith journey together and each of us had our own unique way of contributing to it. I especially appreciated this aspect of the group because these days we are so secularized in the world outside of church. I found it particularly refreshing to be in an environment where I could explore my faith openly beyond of the constructs of the church walls. Finally, Small Groups helped me to appreciate the readings at Mass on a deeper level. I found that after discussing the readings at Small Groups, I was more attuned to them at Mass and I found myself listening more intently to what the priest was saying in his homily each weekend and also digesting more from the readings. So, if you are looking for something to help you embrace your faith more and you'd like to get to know more of your fellow parishioners, try something new. Join a Small Group. You'll definitely be glad you did!