

# MEET THE STAFF

## **Ann Marie Benzinger**

Pastoral Associate



Born into a devote Catholic family in N.Y.C., her formation was enriched through Catholic Elementary and high school, and a Jesuit university. A move to N.J. brought her contact with people of many cultures and faiths motivating a three year course of study at Caldwell College's Institute of Biblical and Theological Studies and a Master of Divinity at Immaculate Conception Seminary. A relocation to Florida and ministry as a D.R.E. and Youth Minister resulted in an M.A. from St. Thomas University and graduation from the Audire spiritual direction process.

Since a very definite call to ministry was experienced and a choice for a single lay lifestyle was made, for over fifty years, she has been privileged to serve parishes, schools, and dioceses in numerous capacities in the areas of education, ecumenism, social justice, liturgy, etc. The beauty of God's people, saint or atheist, and daily Mass enrich her love and zeal for the Church.

Presently, she is Pastoral Associate for marriage preparation and annulments (trained in Orlando & Seattle), facilitator of Bible sessions, and directs R.C.I.A. (trained by North American Forum) and baptism preparation. She is grateful for the gift of faith and shall spread the gift of Christ for however long or where ever our Lord wishes her to be His instrument.

## **Gabriel Cruz**

Maintenance Manager



Gabe was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico. He worked for the Meriden Community Action Agency as a Supervisor for several years before moving to Florida. He is fluent in English and Spanish. He married Lilly Cruz in 1983 and they have 2 children and 3 grand-children. Their son, Gabriel "Lenny" Cruz, Jr. is a sergeant in the US Army and he is now serving in Afghanistan. Lenny is married and has 2 children. Their daughter, Naomi Cruz-Markham, lives in Dunnellon with her husband and their daughter and works as a Hair Stylist.

They moved to Florida in 1987 and started attending St. John the Baptist. Gabe worked at Ryder's for several years before going to work for CK Power for about 7 years as a diesel mechanic. He started at St. John's as a temporary helper during the transition from Fr. Emilio Garcia to Fr. Donald Mainardi. Once Fr. Donald became the priest, he hired Gabe in June 2000 as the permanent maintenance man. He has gone through several different courses and workshops including, water management, electricity, and mechanics. He also attended Central Florida Community College.

## **Lilly Cruz**

Business Manager/Bookkeeper



Lilly was born in Aguada, Puerto Rico. She attended Middlesex Community College where she studied to get her Associates Degree as a Legal Secretary. She worked for the State of Connecticut as a Secretary for the Parole Division. She then met Gabe and married him in 1983. They have 2 children and 3 grand-children.

They moved to Florida in 1987 where they started attending St. John the Baptist. She attended Central Florida Community College and has received a Certificate in Business Management and Law. She worked for the Deltona Corporation as a Sponsored Trip Coordinator for 3 years. In

1991 she joined St. John the Baptist as the Secretary/Bookkeeper. She has received her certificate for the *Tending the Talents* two year course.

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### **Claire Hamilton**

Children's Faith Formation Coordinator



In April 2004 Claire Hamilton and her husband Darryl came to Dunnellon from New Hampshire via Spring Hill, Florida. While living in New Hampshire Claire was a member of the parish staff, working as their Confirmation Coordinator.

Later, in Spring Hill, she did volunteer work for a time in the Youth Ministry office. Shortly after moving to Dunnellon Claire became active in St. John the Baptist Catholic Community first as Coordinator of Environment for the church, then as Coordinator of Liturgy for the Children's Faith Formation Program. In 2007 Claire joined the parish staff as Coordinator for the Children's Faith Formation Program. She and Darryl have 4 children and 6 grandchildren.

### **Kay Kelble**

Organist/Pianist



Kay has always loved music, and recalls that as a child, in Milton, Massachusetts, her parents would rock her and her sister to sleep, listening to radio broadcasts from the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Honolulu, always a treat!

She studied classical piano for ten years, followed by one year of popular music study, and during school years she was pianist for the Cecile Baker School of Dance, in Milton.

Employed as a legal secretary for a number of years, Kay and her husband, Joe, formed their own trio, which entertained at numerous social events, and during that time, Kay was also Organist at St. Joseph the Worker Church in Hanson, Massachusetts where Joe and Kay raised their family.

She joined St. John the Baptist on June 1, 2011.

### **Marie LaRock**

Housekeeper



Marie was born in Niagara Falls, New York and went to school in **Merico**, New York. She was married and raised 4 children and she has 5 grand-children.

Marie moved to Dunnellon in 1982 and in the year 2000, she was hired as the housekeeper at St. John the Baptist's Rectory during the transition from Father Emilio Garcia to Father Donald Mainardi. She also does care giving work.

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## **Cathy Medanich**

Janitorial Coordinator



Cathy was born in Merrillville, IN to Bob and Betty Schiesser. Attended Merrillville High School 1st girl to major in drafting 1973, attended Indiana Technical College graduate in 1975 with Associate degree in mechanical engineering design. She worked at Gary Steel Products for 10 years designing steel processing equipment before being moved to purchasing components until department closed. Kennedy's Amoco 3 years managed convenience store gas station taking shift, ordering scheduling. Bearing Service Co. 13 years sold power transmission products to steel mills taking care of primarily the steel producing side also stocking for their needs.

In 1989 Cathy married her best friend Andy Medanich. The couple moved to Florida in 2001. Bought a John Deere and was offered job setting up parts department and selling parts, left when Mother, who lived with Cathy and Andy, got sick. "St John's later was looking for part time help and here I am". Cathy and Andy have 2 fur-children, Cody will be 4 in March and Dakota just turned 3. They are the love of our lives. Afternoons are spent with Andy and the boys if she is not working at home or other's homes.

## **Maureen Orkwis**

Secretary/Youth Coordinator



Born in Flushing NY, Maureen moved with her family to St. Petersburg, Florida in 1971. She then moved to Dunnellon in February of 1988, which turned out to be one of the coldest winters EVER in Florida. In the early 90s she and her friend Robin Liss began working with the high school youth of SJB parish by establishing the Teens in Christ Youth Group (T.I.C.). Among other activities, three separate mission trips took about 15 teens along with adult volunteers to Mexico, Jamaica and Belize where vacation bible school was taught along with building projects for the very poor. All funds were raised by the team. Maureen became a paid employee of St John the Baptist

in August of 2004. In April of 2005 she was asked by then pastor, Fr Joe Pinchock, to lead the youth ministry program once again.

Maureen has a Bachelor's degree in Church Leadership, which specializes in parish and financial growth as well as administration of large "mega" churches. Maureen studied liturgy at Catholic University.

She is currently working towards her Masters in Pastoral Theology through St. Joseph College in Standish, Maine. Maureen is certified as a Director of Youth Ministry through the Diocese of Orlando and has a National Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies from The Center for Youth Ministry Development, a two year program.

As a child, Maureen was a member of Suncoast Theater Artists in Review, a professional children's theatrical school. Through S.T.A.R. she appeared at St. Pete's Bayfront Center in "Oliver" and at Eckerd College in "The Hobbit". Maureen has worked street theater for Renaissance Festivals as well as volunteering and directing a variety of theatrical venues including Dinner and Civic Theater.