

'God loves a cheerful giver'

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Caption: Mary and Jack Shaughnessy share one of many laughs at Jack Shaughnessy Sr.'s, 80th birthday celebration. Courtesy photo/ The Catholic Foundation

One of the things I love about my role as Secretary for Advancement is the opportunity to meet inspirational people. In the past four months, I've met many heroes of our archdiocese's clergy, religious, lay leaders, employees, volunteers and benefactors. Another thing I love about my new role is the opportunity to share some of these inspirational heroes and good stories with others.

One of these new heroes in my life is Jack Shaughnessy Sr. who turned 80 this past week. If we ever created an archdiocesan "Hall of Fame" for generosity Jack would be a unanimous selection. He has given his time, shared his financial resources and helped build so many of our Catholic charitable, educational and health care institutions. And he has done it with a cheerful spirit that moves everyone that knows him.

Jack was born in 1926 and grew up in Quincy, attending Boston College High School. He graduated from Tufts University in 1946 and then entered the Navy, serving on a naval destroyer for two years. In 1948, he returned home to help his father, whose health was failing, run their family's business, Shaughnessy and Ahern Co., which is a large crane and rigging company.

Under his leadership, the company grew significantly over the next few decades and became one of Boston's most respected business leaders. His firm contributed to building some of our area's most famous structures.

Jack's impact on our area extends far beyond his business successes. Driven by his deep faith, work ethic and caring soul, Jack has given his time and shared his financial resources over the last half-century with nearly every major Catholic institution of our archdiocese. Among the many organizations he has helped are the Shaughnessy Family Center at Laboure in South Boston, The Catholic Appeal, Blessed John XXIII National Seminary, Caritas Carney Hospital, Caritas St. Elizabeth's Medical Center, Catholic Charities USA, Nativity Prep, the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, Boston College High School, the Archdiocesan Mexican Sisters Program, St. John's Seminary, The Catholic Foundation, and the Boston Catholic Men's & Women's Conferences. He has also been actively involved in supporting My Brother's Keeper, Health Care for the Homeless, Project Bread and the Ron Burton Training Village.

I am fortunate to have the opportunity to speak with Jack often. I am uplifted by every encounter with him because he provides so much encouragement, positive energy, and passion for the mission of the Church. Last Thursday, Jack called me to discuss our progress at The Catholic Foundation. During the conversation, I thanked Jack for all he has done and is doing to help the Church. In reply, Jack stated emphatically that it was his honor and privilege to do so. He shared with me how, as a young man, he was moved by the passage from 2 Corinthians 9:7 "God loves a cheerful giver." Jack continued by saying that "one cannot outdo God's generosity to cheerful givers" and then Jack shared with me how he feels that God has blessed him tremendously with the love of his wife of 51 years, Mary, his seven children and 17 grandchildren. How happy Jack is in talking about his family!

Last Friday evening, his family hosted a celebration for Jack's 80th birthday. One of the key parts of the festivities was a photo slideshow produced by his family of Jack's life. There were so many great family photos in the show but there were also a tremendous number of photos of Jack's involvement in his many Catholic organizations and events that are so meaningful to him.

Our Church in Boston is blessed to have Jack Shaughnessy Sr. and so many others like him. These cheerful givers realize that their blessings come ultimately from God. They seek to respond to God's generosity by sharing those gifts with the Church so that it can carry on Christ's mission. In this Advent and upcoming Christmas Season which is marked by many instances of giving, let us strive like Jack to be cheerful givers to those we love, those in need and the many institutions that are dear to us.

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