**AWARDS SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BARBARA ANTEKEIER**

Hello everyone.... to friends and family, colleagues and parishioners, our Board of Trustees, alumni, donors, and all of our distinguished guests tonight, I am both honored and humbled to have the opportunity to be the recipient of this year’s Service Award for the Wall of Honor here at Muskegon Catholic Central. Each year, for the past \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years, our community has come together to acknowledge excellence, service, and dedication by awarding three coveted recognitions. In receiving this award, I join a very special list of dedicated Crusaders who have taken the time, and given of themselves... while wholeheartedly sharing their passions and talents, to exemplify what it means to care and contribute... in any way we can, to this educational and faith based community. The level of my commitment and the quality of my participation is a direct result of the inspiration and encouragement I have consistently received from all of you.

I once heard an expression from an English poet. It states, “I am part of all that I have met.” The work we do, and the care we take, is all based on the actions and encouragement of those that came before us. The Wall of Honor was physically built by hard working, dedicated individuals that created the actual foundation for the project and the legacy. The people who have preceded us in getting these awards are all part of us.... part of the example of the material, emotional, educational, and religious investment made here at Muskegon Catholic Central in order that we may continue to inspire future generations. I know that as far as I am concerned, none of this would have been possible without the love, support, and guidance I have received throughout my life. We all have a narrative that helps to explain who we are and how we got here. I grew up learning the story of my parents, who sacrificed to put their children... there are **FOUR** of us, through Catholic schools. My mother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, was an immigrant from Czechoslovakia who came to the US at the age of three in 1925, and my Dad, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who, also at the same age, was an orphan, raised in St. Johns Children Home in Muskegon. Neither of their lives were easy, in fact, their circumstances were daunting...lesser people would not have held on as they did, but they found ways and made sacrifices to build lives for themselves, and as a family. They managed to put all of their children through Catholic schools while instilling in us the faith and strength that we have carried throughout our own lives and in our own families. Because of their wisdom, ethics, and devotion, I can proudly say that I have been “in the system” of the MCC for over forty years.... as a student, a Catholic school parent, and, of course, as an employee in my current executive support position. Each experience and vantage point has informed and inspired the other... I mean, (**If you want to make a joke you can say**)... my kids are great, but having “walked more than a mile” through the corridors of Muskegon Catholic Central, I was able to empathize with their reluctance to (**Name a typical chore or test given at the school that most people have an issue with and can relate to**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_... I mean, I **UNDERSTOOD**... after all, I was in the same position all those years ago, but I had to keep my “parent hat” firmly on my head and not empathize too much!! (**Wait for the laugh**).... and now, of course, thank God, **THEY** have children.... and you know what **THEY** say about payback!!! .... It’s a **BLESSING**!!! I **meant** it’s a blessing!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

To my husband, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, you have always been my rock, my greatest booster, and my reason to smile... and laugh. To be blessed with you as my life partner has allowed me to navigate this world with faith, grace, and humor. To my kids, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, thank you for always teaching me... and **thank your father** for keeping me laughing!! (**Wait for the laugh**). To all of our grandchildren, it is an honor to watch you find your way in this world, following the path set out for you.

In the long run, we do what we do, not for accolades.... although they **ARE** wonderful, and acknowledgement goes a long way.... but we serve and support for those we love....for those whose legacies we honor... for the meaning and the glory of our faith.... and for those yet to be. My true mission and purpose is to know that I’ve made a difference... and that I’ve been able to take the hard work and devotion of my parents, and with my husband, instill in my children and grandchildren the importance living a meaningful life in a humble and quiet way. Receiving this award is quite an honor, one that has “encouraged” me to look beyond myself. While it confirms the humanity I share so freely, that comes much more naturally to me than standing before you, right now. To me the greatest acts of kindness and service are those we do from the heart, as private gestures in an all too public world... but honestly speaking... this feels **REALLY GOOD**!!!

President Woodrow Wilson once said, “There is no higher religion than human service. To work for the common good is the greatest creed...” that principle is the foundation of our faith... it’s the basic fundamental theory that motivates us and our sense of community... it’s the hand that reaches out to lift one up... not to ask for something in return. Whatever we have, whether it seems inadequate or challenging, is **enough**.... because in our hearts and souls, that’s where the real work is done, and we can all access those important characteristics within ourselves. I read somewhere of the “THREE B’s”... Be Honest, Be Pure, Be Humble.” that is how I choose to live my life, and it’s the gifts my husband and I have chosen to leave with our children and grandchildren.

In closing, I would like to offer a prayer so that we all might find the beauty and strength in giving of ourselves....

Father, may everything we do

Begin with your divine inspiration....

May our life’s work find its origins in your kindness and loving spirit

And may we go forth with compassion and grace.

Thank you all!!