

Cherubs Cupboard

A Continuing Legacy in our Community

by Sarah Wortelboer

Ted Hickey and his wife Sandra lived in the Oshawa area, raising their family as part of the local Catholic community in the 1980's. The couple volunteered in their parish Marriage Encounter faith formation program while Ted was a Catholic school principal. Sandra and Ted often thought about the need for a Catholic devotional goods store in the east end of the GTA. After years of considering it, they realized this idea was not going to leave peacefully. Ted decided to talk to his friend, Bishop Clune, about the concept that was circling the couple's minds. During their conversation the bishop wholeheartedly encouraged Ted to pursue the venture explaining that he had been praying for a store to open in the area which would support the Catholic faith. A friend of Ted's, a teacher and colleague, had a recently bought a commercial building in downtown Oshawa, which in the 1980s, was a bustling business area. The building owner, a Catholic faithful, was happy to supply the space at an affordable rent rate for this new business to begin. Ted and Sandra took the plunge and secured a storefront in their friend's building. Cherubs Cupboard, the first Catholic goods store in the Durham area was born!

At first, Sandra worked at the store while Ted continued to work full time as a Catholic school principal and behind the scenes at Cherubs Cupboard. The Hickeys became a relied-upon and friendly source of all things devotional. The business grew over the years and the Catholic community fell in love with Ted and Sandra and their wonderful approach to the religious goods business. The couple eventually employed a full time staff who would mind the store and when Ted retired from the school board, the couple visited Catholic schools across the Durham region, teaching students how to make rosaries and the importance of these devotions to their lives. As the store grew and friends continued to be made, Cherubs Cupboard became a pillar of the Catholic community. The Hickeys began to take their merchandise to local parishes for books sales and seasonal events. They supplied local churches with sacramental items all the while, the friendly couple evangelized people as they dedicated their time and talent to spreading the Good News of the Gospel through their store. Many priests and parishioners came to depend on the Cherubs Cupboard for their religious articles.

Sadly, Sandra passed away in 2021. Ted continued to oversee the daily operations of Cherubs Cupboards on his own, focusing on the job he and Sandra dedicated themselves to for 37 years. The people and the work of serving his Catholic community fuelled his efforts. After much prayer, in the spring of 2022, Ted decided it was time to retire. He had built this business from the ground up

and knew the community relied on his store for their religious goods. He could not bear the thought of Cherubs Cupboard closing and leaving the community without a source of Catholic devotional material. His customer base had grown so wide that people were travelling from far away to visit with Ted and browse the latest supplies he had brought in. His company and advice were a balm to the folks who frequented his shop. Ted decided to put the word out around the local community that he was going to sell his business. He hoped and prayed that Cherubs Cupboard would remain a fixture in the area.

He distributed flyers to local parishes and continued to pray that a new owner would be found. His flyer landed on the desk of the parish bookkeeper at St. Therese Parish in Courtice. The idea of continuing the business felt like a whispered invitation to Pilar's heart so she brought it home to her husband. They examined what would be needed to manage the store and prayed for guidance. Jason and Pilar Smith were invested in their family and careers, but much like many years ago with the Hickeys, the invitation in their heart grew stronger.

The building where Cherubs Cupboard was found for its entire existence was sold so the store needed to be moved as Ted retired. This presented a challenge but, God willing, they knew they could find a way to keep the legacy of Cherubs Cupboard alive. Once the decision was made, their family and the St Therese community rallied together to make it happen. The couple decided to rejuvenate the online side of the business and the idea of a mobile store was explored. With support and guidance, the

Smiths bought a trailer and parishioners gave of their time to help renovate it into a cozy, church like setting. The original logo Ted and Sandra designed was updated and placed on the trailer as a recognizable symbol of the business. Ted aided the couple in the transition and continues to guide them with advice and encouragement. God was willing!

A labour of love and faithful devotion that began by a Catholic couple 37 years ago, answering a call in their hearts continues to live on. Cherubs Cupboard will serve the community in a new way but still with the same mission of *making Christ known through that which is read, heard, and seen in all things Catholic*. A photo of Ted and Sandra hangs by the door of the Cherubs trailer parked in the St. Therese church lot. The Smiths tell their customers about how the business began and honour the work the Hickeys dedicated to their community. Cherubs Cupboard can be reached by phone 906-432-2882, email catholic@cherubscupboard.ca or by visiting the website at www.cherubscupboard.ca

