

2006 Annual Meeting Presentation

The main purpose of this presentation is something of a state of the parish report. It is an overview of what is happening here at St. Joseph's and some looking to the future also.

We gather together each weekend to celebrate the Love of God in Christ and the wondrous mystery of the Eucharist. Our weekend Liturgy reflects well the Second Vatican Council and invites and welcomes all. We have good music with a number of different choirs, prayerful Eucharistic Ministers and well prepared Lectors. There are fine altar servers and a good number of ushers. Our liturgical group who takes care of church décor does wonderful work in Church and the custodian keeps us neat and clean. We have a very effective outreach to Spanish speakers with our Mass in Spanish. Please continue to welcome new people as you see them in Church. All are welcome – Grandparents, and parents with families, little babies who sometimes are a bit noisy, teens and single adults, single parents, divorced, separated, those also who are gay.

This past year we undertook a number of projects to enhance our physical setting. An upgrading of the handicapped accessibility was greatly needed. After many months you are seeing the results of a lot of work...yes, it is slow going. But it will be done well and will be here long after we are gone. I think future generations will be pleased with the ramp, elevator, toilette and parking lot. There is more to this project. The lower parking lot will need to be done also. We had estimates of \$400,000.00 for these projects. Over \$200,000.00 has been pledged. There is more than \$50,000.00 in bequests and other donations that has been given and we have been informed that because of another bequest there will be other monies for this project. It is my hope that we will not have to dip into our savings much to complete these projects.

Another project that continues to move along is the organ pipe renovation. Our pipe organ along with our other liturgical furnishing are a true treasure. The new set of pipes added to our present organ will serve our community well into the future. While this project ran into some snags, it is on track and will be completed in 2007.

Our school has a long and venerable tradition. You make it so. It has a very qualified staff of principal and teachers with outstanding academic credentials and a high rating from the New England Accreditation Association. Every ten years the school is re-evaluated. The teachers and staff are diligently working on this for the evaluation to take place this coming October. We encourage all to consider sending their children to St. Joseph School.

We have a very fine Religious Education Program that oversees the handing on of our faith in Jesus Christ to the young people in our parish. We assist parents in their roles as the first of teachers in the ways of faith in Jesus Christ. This role is vital to us as Catholics. Recently, I heard someone talk about the young people as not being the future of the Church but the present Church. We need and want them in Church today...you help us with that...bringing them making them part of the liturgy...in roles as members of the congregation, altar servers, choir members, lectors...even now...We hope to be able to offer more intergenerational experiences like the Advent wreath making of last year. It is our hope too that we can do something further with youth ministry – especially those who have celebrated Confirmation and young adults of college age and in their twenties.

We have had many sessions with parents having children baptized, young adults getting married, but there is much more that we can do for adult education especially in the area of understanding Scriptures better and the roles of the social teachings of the Church...look for us to invite you to be part of those things in the future.

This year there has also come into our discussions the need for greater involvement of lay ministers. We have some people who have taken lay ministry classes along with others who have been part of the training of catechists. All of those training sessions we hope to use for the further growth and development of who we are as a Catholic, Christian community.

One of the things that I have continued to notice is that there are many different ministries present here. Often times things are done very quietly and in the background. While that is often the best way of reaching out to those in need, it is hard for new people to find out areas that their talents might be used...So we hope to be able to make better known what is going on. Over the past few months notice the ministry notes that have been highlighted in the bulletin. Yes, that means that you have to read the bulletin and the web site in order to know some of these things. We are constantly looking for ways to get people to know and be part of what is going on.

There are new people who are on staff this year. There are people we are in the process of saying thank you and good bye to. The most obvious is Fr. Robert. Over four years he has served us well. He has been a strong part of the Spanish speaking community gathered here at St. Joseph. He has been instrumental in bringing to the Archdiocese of Hartford the John XXIII retreats. He has been able to develop many of the talents of lay people being involved in the Spanish speaking community. For that we are grateful. Now he will be going to St. Maurice in New Britain as temporary administrator until he is reassigned sometime in the summer. We wish him well.

We welcome the newly ordained Jose Mercado. Fr. Jose, Fr. Mercado will be with us for three years. There is much for him to be part of here.

Deacon Bob Pallotti also served us well for over ten years. As he does more and more in the Diaconate Office and accepts a new assignment in another parish, we will miss him. He did much for us in the area of Social Ministry and always tried to educate us in the ways of the social teaching of the church. While we are not going to be replacing his full time position as pastoral minister, we will be receiving a new deacon, Mr. Neil Richter. Deacon Neil will be here on weekends helping at Mass, preaching, baptizing leading prayers and Wake services.

My hope is that there will be further growth and development through lay ministry, and more adult and youth interaction for us a community.

All of us should be proud of who we are as the Catholic, Christian community of St. Joseph. There is much that God accomplishes through us. Yet, we continue to grow and further develop the good work that God has begun.

I am pleased with what has taken place within the Council itself. The Council, its members have been very helpful to me. As I bring topics for discussion, I find the response from the Council on target and extremely useful. I find the concerns that Council members bring up insightful and appropriate. Parishioners have spoken to Council members and those concerns have brought forth good discussions.

I am grateful for your being here. This helps us to be better focused and more responsive to the needs of the community and to give praise and honor to our loving God.

- Fr. Joe