

[Readings: Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104; 1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23]

The poet William Blake wrote a poem about Pentecost. Part of it says: Unless the eye catches fire, God will not be seen. Unless the ear catches fire, God will not be heard. Unless the tongue catches fire, God will not be named. Unless the heart catches fire, God will not be loved. Unless the mind catches fire, God will not be known.

There is no greater need for us to be on fire than right now! In that Spirit, as we celebrate our 60th anniversary as a parish, I share with you my observations, my hopes and my vision for us.

Everything we propose, everything we do, everything we decide: how does it affect our parish mission statement to strive, to celebrate and to serve?

I am grateful for the warm and open welcome I have received here as your pastor, now going on eight years. My friends, my family and my cardiologist all say that they have never seen me so much at peace. I thank you for that. And I thank my meds! Most importantly, I thank you for staying with your parish in good times and in bad.

I also admire the folks of St. Martin's for your openness and welcome and for the openness to the Holy Spirit for those who are in transition between parishes. I marvel at the number of families and parishioners we have here who were founding members of the parish. Would those of you who were here at St. Martin's since the early 1960's please raise your hands? The 70's and 80's. The 90's and the early 2000's. The last twenty years. Thank you for your faithfulness.

Over the 60 years, our parish, like all parishes, have had highs and lows, moments of grace and moments of sin. What I marvel at is how most of you have stayed loyal to your parish. The complexion of our parish has changed over these sixty years. When we were founded, the City of Warren was fertile with Catholics. 80% of the residents of Warren in 1962 were Roman Catholic, and of that 80%, another 80% were Polish-Americans and Italian-Americans. The building boom necessitated the establishment of twelve Roman Catholic Parishes. The community was plentiful, young and growing.

The next era of the Church in Warren was full of activity. The young, the middle-aged and the elderly formed social groups, ministries and services.

There were dozens and dozens of social organizations for every parishioner, for every talent and for every gift. The golden years of our parish were probably during the 1970's and 1980's. Monsignor John Hall was pastor at the time, reminding us that the proper spelling of his last name was B-O-S-S! We also learned that his favorite song at Mass was Let There be Peace on Earth.

We had so many students in our religious education/faith formation program that we had early time-release schedules with the public schools. During the 1960's and 1970's we had between 1000 and 1500 students enrolled in our after school programs! We even had groups meeting in private homes. By the year 2002, only twenty years ago, those numbers fell to about 400. By 2012, we were down to 219. We now have about 60 students, including those preparing for Confirmation.

With the arrival of the 21st Century, we continued to live out our parish mission statement, revised and approved by our Parish Pastor Council in 2012: *We, the parishioners of St. Martin de Porres of Warren, reflecting the qualities of our patron saint, strive to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the mystery of God's love in our midst, and to serve one another and the wider human community, thus continuing the Mission of Jesus.*

The Catholic complexion of the City of Warren changed radically over the last twenty years as younger families moved north and east, and our most active parishioners got older and more limited in their ability to serve. Founding members and parish leaders were called home to the Lord. Our "pillars of the parish" got fewer and fewer, with very few Catholic families and individuals moving into the Warren area. Here are the parish statistics since our 50th anniversary celebration only ten years ago, in 2012:

Sacramental Statistics 2012 – 2022

Year	Baptism	RCIA/Faith Formation	1st Comm	Confirmation	Marriage	Deaths
2012	53	1/219	47	43	17	83
2013	58	3/219	47	29	13	98
2014	26	2/219	43	29	14	61
2015	15	4/263	31	27	7	82
2016	13	2/235	23	34	7	75
2017	11	7/171	18	39	0	68
2018	11	0/110	11	35	3	79
2019	6	0/110	11	24	1	59
2020	3	4/65	9	19	2	64
2021	6	0/57	6	18	2	60
2022	1	1/48	8	18	2	30 as of Saturday.
TOTALS	Baptism	RCIA/Faith Formation	1st Comm	Confirmation	Marriage	Deaths
	203	24/1716	254	315	68	759

This change was noted in the entire Archdiocese of Detroit, and as the result of two waves of Together in Faith, parishes in the entire Archdiocese of Detroit were closed, consolidated or spared. In Warren, we went from twelve parishes to six. With our new process of Families of Parishes, we formed a “Family” with St. Blasé Parish, St. Ephrem Parish and St. Michael Parish, all in Sterling Heights. This is an exciting time for our parish, and for all parishes.

The best gift all of you at St. Martin de Porres can give is your openness to the Holy Spirit, your generous moral support and to keep your sense of humor!

Do you remember the Great Flood in Warren back in 2014? Our rectory (the priest’s house) and the Parish Center were spared, but the church got 4 feet of water in the basement. I had to say something the following weekend.

You and I didn’t know each other very well – I had been here only less

than two months, when I made you laugh for the first time. Before I began my homily, I said at each Mass: "At the count of three, I want you to say this with me only once. THIS NEVER HAPPENED WHEN FR. ROMAN WAS HERE!" You did, you got it out of your system, and I never heard those words again!

The second time I remember everyone laughing in church was when the Gospel said this: "Everyone who humbles himself will be exalted, and everyone who exalts himself will be humbled." Then I led us in a chorus of "O Lord, It's Hard to be Humble!" There have been many other laughs along the way.

On that first Easter Sunday evening, Jesus Christ appeared in the Upper Room, wished His Apostles His peace and breathed His Holy Spirit of peace upon them. Peace of mind. Peace of heart. Peace of soul.

On that first Pentecost Sunday, the Upper Room shook and the Holy Spirit set the Apostles and Our Blessed Mother "on fire" which gave them a boldness and a courage to go out and proclaim the Good News. That's what we celebrate today.

Duke University did a study on "peace of mind." Factors found to contribute greatly to emotional and mental stability are involved in action.

These factors will help us in our vision for the future and in our mutual cooperation, and bring us the peace of the Risen Lord, the peace of His Holy Spirit, and the peace of mind we crave as individuals and as a community.

These factors include the absence of suspicion and resentment. Nursing a grudge is a major factor in unhappiness. Not living in the past. An unwholesome preoccupation with old mistakes and failures leads to depression.

Not wasting time and energy fighting conditions you cannot change. Cooperate with life, instead of trying to deny it, fight it or run away from it.

Cultivating the old-fashioned virtues of love, humor, compassion, loyalty.

The Holy Spirit speaks through broken people to a broken world, using a language that every broken heart can hear and understand.

Because we know what it is like to be broken, we can speak of the healing love of Christ's sacrifice. We can witness the healing hope of Christ's forgiveness. We can speak of the healing faith in Christ's promises

In 1980, Senator Ted Kennedy failed to receive the presidential nomination at the Democratic National Convention. Instead, he spent the rest of his political years as a prominent and influential Dean in the U. S. Senate.

The words at the end of his concession speech touched my heart and come to mind now as we look back and as we move forward: “For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die!”

So we can say this with confidence: “For all that has been, we thank You Lord; for all that will be, we say YES!” St. Martin de Porres, pray for us! Happy 60th Anniversary! AMEN! ALLELUIA!