

PENTECOST 2017 STATE OF THE PARISH

By Fr. Nick Zukowski

Veni Sancte Spiritus! Come, Holy Spirit!

Here is how the Holy Spirit, and our openness to that Holy Spirit has enlivened and empowered this community of St. Martin de Porres over the past twelve months:

The Parish Goal to reach out to the community is in motion. Our Evangelization Commission is looking to advertise in local free papers, to send e-mails to our parents and guardians in our Faith Formation program, to create those now-famous Robo-Calls to our registered and inactive parishioners to join us, and expanded our parish web site.

We are reaching out to the unchurched and the fallen-away Catholics with gifts at Christmas and Easter: Matthew Kelly's books: "Rediscover Christ" and "Beautiful Mercy."

We completed our beautiful welcome booklet for new parishioners. We hope to distribute a copy to each parish household so that you can review it over the summer, and prayerfully discern how you will be able to participate more fully in our parish life. All of our parish ministries and services need additional members. We are investigating sending a postcard invitation to every house within our parish boundaries, inviting them – and you -- to our Festival of Ministries in the fall.

Our parish pictorial directory by Lifetouch has been completed. Almost 250 households had their photo taken.

The Education Commission sponsored the Martin Readers book review and offered adult formation series on Bible Study (Bible Timeline) and the Pope's letter on the environment. They also continue to find initiatives to bring young families to the Church. Christian Formation students brought the Nativity alive at our tree-trimming service in December. They also collected hundreds of pounds of plastic bottle caps and lids to help the environment.

In addition to its regular outreach, the Christian Service Commission sponsored its first mission trip to Kentucky with ten missionaries from St. Martin's. We are coordinating with St. Michael Parish in Sterling Heights to send a total of 18 missionaries this summer. We also learned how to say "Appalachia" the correct way!

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A Colorful Art group was started. We participated in "Mercy in Action Day," which usually takes place in October by collecting medical supplies.

Sunday Offertory sacrificial giving online began, and we even have a link to this year's Catholic Services Appeal for those who would like to pledge electronically. Our Sunday collections are slowly squeaking close to budget, but as of today, we are still about \$10,000 below budget.

We have completed the renovation of our new church restrooms. We also improved our church sound system, repaired our church door closers and installed new exterior doors to the parish hall. The next step with the doors of both buildings is to install handicap openers.

In honor of our 55th anniversary as a parish and the 50th anniversary of the dedication of this church building, and in honor of the 100th anniversary of the vision and appearance of Our Lady of Fatima, I am commissioning a portrait of Mary and her Immaculate Heart, one of the three requests given by Mary at Fatima in 1917: "Promote devotion to my Immaculate Heart." It will hang next to the portrait of the Divine Mercy in the church sanctuary. It will be sponsored by a gift given last Christmas by the Active Christian Women's Club, who celebrate their own anniversary – 40 years this year.

Also, with the recent generous donation made by a family in our parish, I hope to paint the large image of St. Martin in the back of church to compliment the soft-painted tones of the image of the Holy Family, also in the back of the church. I celebrated 35 years of ordained ministry last month, and Sr. Noreen O'Connell, a Dominican Sister living in our area, celebrates 70 years as a consecrated religious woman.

Speaking of the Archdiocese, we are not only connected as members of St. Martin de Porres Church, we are connected to the 24 parishes of the Central Macomb Vicariate, to the Archdiocese of Detroit, and to the Universal Church.

Pope Francis and Archbishop Allen Vigneron, have been encouraging the Church to embrace the "new evangelization", renewing the message of the Gospel in our own lives and sharing it with others. In the last twelve months, the archdiocese, and our parish, have had a number of experiences that have energized this effort. Last April, 2016, Archbishop Vigneron brought "The Amazing Parish Conference" to Detroit, the first for any diocese in the U.S.A to have all parishes in one diocese participating.

Over a period of eight months, parishes across the archdiocese hosted a three-night experience, "Come, Encounter Christ" -- evenings of praise and

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worship music, powerful preaching, and an opportunity for the sacrament of reconciliation, closing with Benediction. All of this, and much more, including the Holy Door at the cathedral for the Year of Mercy, led to the Archdiocesan Synod in November, 2016. Everyone who participated -- bishops, priests, deacons, religious, representatives of the faithful -- all spoke of the three days as being Spirit-filled!

This weekend, Archbishop Allen Vigneron released the long-awaited pastoral letter to all Catholics in southeast Michigan.

Copies of the pastoral letter will be distributed this summer. As a parish, we will dissect and digest its contents and apply what it calls for to our parish.

All of this, and much more to come, is a result of the events sponsored by the Archdiocese -- no parish, or even a vicariate, would have the resources to put on these experiences which are having an effect in the lives of the faithful. It is the Catholic Services Appeal that gives the Archdiocese the financial resources needed to sponsor the variety of programs and services that no single parish could undertake.

The culmination of a years-long process of prayer, dialogue and discernment, the Archbishop's pastoral letter will focus on how to change the way God's Word is shared in four distinct areas: personal life, family life, parish life (local Catholic church communities), and from the administrative staff that directly supports Archbishop Vigneron, known as Central Services – affectionately referred to as “Downtown.”

This process began in 2014 with the observance of a Year of Prayer for a New Pentecost and branding a new evangelization initiative called “Unleash the Gospel.” It is hoped that as a result of this pastoral letter, all local communities will discover effective, modern ways to proclaim and live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is why Jesus Christ came; this is why He sends the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God will make us one with God. When we open ourselves to receive the Spirit of God, we will be strong enough to inspire and empower others. The Holy Spirit helps sinful people to receive the power of God to repent of their sins. The Advocate will help us to stand next to God, and to “Unleash the Gospel” in our parish, in our Archdiocese and in the world!
Veni Sancte Spiritus! Come, Holy Spirit! Breathe on us, O Spirit of God!

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HERE ARE THE NUMBERS!

At In our parish, we celebrated 11 infant baptisms (9 last year), 1 child baptism (2 last year) and 4 adult baptisms (none last year). 5 people were received into the Catholic Church at Easter (2 last year), and 16 children received their First Holy Communion (24 last year). 40 young people were confirmed (34 last year), and we celebrated only 2 weddings this past year (we had 5 last year). 194 students were enrolled in our Christian Formation program, compared to 227 last year, and 40 young people are in our FAM youth group ministry (35 last year).

We had 65 Funeral Masses and funeral home services so far this year, compared to 77 last year. Our parish enrollment is 1174 households with 2349 members. Last year the figures were 1361 and 2864. But we did a “purge” of our parish registration, eliminating all the cards that had no activity for the past five years. Most of those folks had died or had been moved out of the area.

FOR ALL THAT HAS BEEN, “THANKS!”
FOR ALL THAT WILL BE, “YES!”