

## Living the Spirit Celebrating the Parish

As we celebrate our fiftieth anniversary as a parish in the Year of Faith, we stop to think about how we actually live our faith. Central to our Catholic life is the parish. The parish is always more than a church building. It is a vital and living community. It is the home of a select group of the People of God. In the parish faith is nourished and grows.

Parish life is life for the community. This is made very clear in the formal laws of the Church. No individual should expect to be totally satisfied where subjective opinions are at stake. It is not possible to customize a parish to every individual taste.

Parishes often try very hard to identify the areas where their members are not familiar with parish resources. I hope that all the parishes will be able to identify the areas where their members are not entirely familiar with parish resources. Certainly we have many rich resources here at Our Lady. Knowing what we have, we must be grateful and committed to make the most of our parish membership. In many ways our spiritual growth may depend on how we live in our parish.

Our spiritual life as Catholics is wrapped up in our parish life. There are many different opportunities to be a part of parish life. Feel welcome and get involved. Overcome any shyness you may have. And if you cannot be involved, don't feel guilty. Instead make your involvement one of prayer for all of your fellow parishioners. We have a prayer group that will welcome your commitment.

Many aspects of parish life are taken for granted. One of the most important parts of the mission of any parish is to assist Catholic parents in the Christian education of their children. In our busy society we do not have the luxury of personal attention to all the many details that go into making true believers. We rely on the joint effort that the parish school and parish religious education programs provide. These are always in need of constant attention and improvement. One area that seems to resist solution throughout the diocese is the continuing education of our high school youth. This gives us every reason to support our Youth Ministry programs here at Our Lady. We should see them as very much a part of the spiritual life of our young people.

It will never be possible to give the faithful of the Church all the knowledge they may need to live a Catholic life throughout the days God gives them. Today the Church is acutely aware that there is a need for adult education. Part of this effort will be a renewal of the practices of a Catholic culture. Much of our spiritual wisdom comes from our way of life in the context of our relationship with the world in which we live.

The parish lives in the real world. We should realize that there is a growing civilization of death around us. Religious values are being set aside in pursuit of secular goals. The many challenges of the world today bring great temptations for the follower of Christ. There is even a concerted effort to deny the divinity of Jesus. There is also a campaign to renew atheistic paganism as a way of life. Of course, the idols being worshipped are not made of silver and gold. They are represented well by the materialism of the secular world. We must recognize that we face temptations to a hedonism and selfishness that can damage our life in the Spirit.

As members of a parish we have to meet the challenge, as individuals in the state of life we have chosen, by our understanding of the teachings of the gospel. We must also reach out to others in whatever way we can. We must have a concern for our children, who must live in the midst of changing values. Our parish includes many children now on

the first path of Christian living. Our parish programs for them rely on the sacrifices of a generous people to make our school possible. We have active programs for those children not attending our school. These, too, exist because of sacrifices by parents and teachers.

We cannot forget that an essential part of parish life is its fulfillment of the duty to offer worship to the Lord. As Catholics our worship is centered in the Eucharistic liturgy. It does not stop there, for we worship also by our devotional practices. There is also the worship we give to God by our life outside the church. Our acts of charity are acts of love for God as much as they are for the recipients of our generosity.

The liturgy of the Church is not meant to be centered in our own satisfaction. At times it may inspire different kinds of good feelings and emotions. The Church has strict rules called rubrics for the celebration of the Mass and sacraments. These include sufficient options that priests must choose with care when they celebrate or preside. Bizarre deviations can only diminish the reverence to be given during the rites of holy Mass. It is no small task for all of us to make this reverence a reality. The spiritual drama of the Mass is not to become an entertainment.

Sometimes we hear how the homilies of the priests at Mass do not stress enough the current social problems. Some would like every homily to focus on such areas as pro-life concerns, the need for support of the family and marriage, the moral abuses of our political system etc. However, the homily is to take its inspiration from the Scriptural readings of the liturgy. It is to lead us to a practical holiness of life that increases the grace within us. There can be, of course, instructional parts in such homilies. However, we are to learn from other sources. There is a large body of Catholic books, media etc. that respond to the current problems of our time. I suggest that everyone should try to read one good Catholic book a year! Or subscribe to monthly magazines that may be more suited to one's taste.

Our parish is able to sponsor educational studies, such as bible classes, Advent and Lent programs, etc. We must find a way to make Christmas and Easter religious feastdays. It is no easy task to do so. We are called as parishioners to be apostles and evangelizers. We cannot escape this commitment and expect to be among those called to be truly children of God and heirs to the Kingdom of heaven. Let's make sure we use our parish resources to lead us into that happy state. And let's do it together!

As we celebrate a fiftieth anniversary, let us remember prayerfully all those who have gone before us. It was their hard work and sacrifice that has built our parish into a true People of God and a family within the Church. No small part of their accomplishments was due to their vibrant faith. It is this faith which we still see among our members. Yet, we must not be satisfied. There is always more to do to be more perfectly conformed to the image of Christ.

Here at Our Lady you will find Jesus. He comes to you in the Eucharist at Mass and Holy Communion. He waits for you in His sacramental presence in our Eucharistic Chapel. He accompanies you to your homes and neighborhoods. He has kept his promise to remain with us always.

Fifty years! So much accomplished; so much yet to do. Let's get busy and begin our fifty-first year. With great joy your priests send each of you their blessing!

***May the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless you and give you peace!***

*God love you always!*

*Monsignor David Morrison*