

May 26, 2019

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS!

Celebrating 40 Years! With the traditional May Crowning of Mary last Sunday, we just had a wonderful celebration of our Parish Feast Day at the end of our CCD Year 2018-2019. It was a beautiful, sunny Sunday morning and many of our CCD children and Youth participated actively. While singing "Immaculate Mary" and "Hail Mary", the children came one by one to place flowers at the feet of Mary. The newly confirmed led us in praying the last and fifth decade of the Glorious Mysteries: "The Crowning of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth". While we were singing "Hail, Holy Queen", Mary Ardita one of our high school seniors, who assisted CCD during her high school years, crowned Mary. Then everyone began to process toward the Church.

As the main celebrant at the 11:30 am Youth Mass following the crowning of Mary, I felt being in heaven! Quoting St John Paul II, I repeatedly say that every Mass is Heaven on Earth. For me that morning it was not heaven on earth, it was just heaven! My joy was to see so many children and youth fill the front pews as they participated in the Mass Entrance Procession. They were also attentive during the entire Mass. I wish it would be the same participation in such large number of our children and Youth at every Mass every Sunday, not just at a special Youth Mass.

My joy was also to see a joint participation at Mass of many Confirmandi and many First Communicants in the same red gowns, white dresses, and suit-and-ties they wore on the day they received their sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion. This was particularly fitting to happen on our Parish Feast Day celebrating our patroness Saint "Our Lady Help of Christians". In the last few years, we have chosen to celebrate our Parish Feast Day (May 24 on the church calendar) on the Sunday preceding May 24. Last year, it happened to coincide with Pentecost Sunday and the entrance of our parish into the "Year of the Holy Spirit". This year, it happened on the Fifth Sunday of Easter, just three weeks before Pentecost. Next year, May 24, 2020 will fall exactly on a Sunday (which is a rare occurrence) and it will be our 40th Parish Feast Day!

Celebrating our 39th Parish Feast Day last Sunday reminded us that though still one of the youngest parishes in the Archdiocese of Washington, we are getting more "mature": 40 years in 2020! Does it matter that we are entering into our 40th year this September 15 and celebrate the completion of our first 40 years next September? Many of you know, I love numbers though I keep saying numbers do not matter. We know the importance of the number "40" in the Bible: 40 years of preparation in the desert before entering the promised land, Jesus fasting 40 days in the desert after his Baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist. We now celebrate 40 days of Lent, and Jesus's ascension into heaven 40 days after his resurrection. Last Sunday, we were reminded that for us Christians today, what matters is not numbers, but first and foremost is our Love of God and our Neighbour: an unconditional love, the same way Jesus Christ loved us giving his life for us on the Cross (Jesus' New Commandment of Love, *love one another as I have loved you* John 13: 34).

However numbers, including dates in history, give us a sense of our reality and a sense of perspective. Still today "40" years

represents a full generation. In order to know God, and ourselves we need to know where we come from. We believe that God is the Creator of each one of us and that our destiny, our journey on earth is to go back to Him. To know ourselves, it is important to be aware of the changes that we have gone through in past years. Numbers help to measure quantity and at times may be a proxy, though imperfect, for quality. We may be proud that within the framework of the last 10 years, we have reached some record numbers this 2018-19 CCD Year: 400 students enrolled, 51 Confirmations, 73 First Communions! To know our own parish, it is important to know our own history.

In order to know our parish better, and on behalf of our entire staff and entire Parish Council, we are proposing to all of you a full year of celebration: **celebrating 40 years**, beginning Sunday September 15, 2019 and concluding September 13, 2020! Following the completion of our Year of the Holy Spirit this Pentecost June 9, we have about three months for preparing a few special celebrations beginning with our 39th anniversary this September and concluding/culminating with our 40th anniversary next September. We plan to establish a "**Celebration Committee**" and would love to have some of you as members to volunteer to help with preparation and implementation. It is essential to have a good representation of our "**OLHOC pioneers**", those of you who have been members of our parish from its early beginnings. Please contact directly our Office Manager Jeannie Jacobs (office@OLHOC.org or 301-645-7112). As our plans progress, we will keep you informed and continue seeking your feedback and participation. While our parish has evolved over those first four decades of existence; we have remained a strong, faithful and united family of families. Our wish is that we continue to do so over the next 10 years and beyond.

I invite everyone to meditate on the prayer recited with all our children and youth last Sunday: "*O Mary, you love me with a Mother's heart. Just as you held your son Jesus in your arms, you hold me in your care. Help me in my need. Protect me day by day. And through your Motherly intercession, may I become ever more aware of the breath of God living within me. Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us. Amen.*" We know that Mary is our Mother in Heaven. We believe that as she is so close to the Father and the Son in Heaven, she is a perfect intercessor for us. We believe that as the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and as the Mother of God, she can always lead us to her son Jesus, now in Heaven!



*One in Christ,
Father Alain*