

July 2014

Dear Parishioners:

Members of the parish and finance councils have recently come together totaling about six hours. With the leadership of Mrs. Caryn Meron, Director of Research and Planning with the Diocese of Phoenix, they have begun the process of drawing up a three year pastoral plan (2015-2018) to be implemented as we prepare to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the parish.

I would like to report what has been accomplished thus far. The committee determined that:

The INTERNAL STRENGTHS of St. Matthew's are: (1) A welcoming community with an open door policy or that "all are welcome," (2) We are multicultural, global in our outlook, bilingual and attentive to justice/human rights issues, (3) Our Sunday celebrations are celebrated with simplicity, good music, and parishioners are always seeking to grow spiritually, (4) We have many volunteers, and many long time parishioners who are loyal and committed to our community, (5) A very capable dual language parish elementary school with a deep desire to reach out to immigrant families and the economically underprivileged.

The INTERNAL WEAKNESSES of the parish are: (1) We are financially insecure. However, in the past year, our Sunday Mass collections have grown stronger with an overall increase of \$1,500 TO \$2,000 per Sunday. The average total collection for weekend Masses (4) is about \$5,000, (2) Adult Education/Catechist training needs to be strengthened, (3) Communication between ministries and parishioners needs to be strengthened.

The EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES for growth for the parish are: Relationships with donors, neighborhood businesses/social services/ neighboring parishes/educational connections with ASU downtown and other institutions and out of parish clergy assistance, especially priests from Mexico who offer a different perspective regarding church.

The EXTERNAL THREATS that can cause harm to the parish are: (1) Anti-immigration policies and rhetoric (Sheriff Joe Arpaio, Superintendent of Public Instruction, John Huppenthal) which cause the break- up of families, (2) Fundamentalist religions enticing Catholics to leave the Catholic Church, (3) Demographic changes or growth in the parish neighborhood with homeless and mentally unstable populations, along with the detrimental influence of drug/alcohol/crime, (4) Rapid growth of social media and

exaggerated youth/adult usage of various forms of social media, thus weakening the unity of the family, i.e. lack of communication, time spent together, etc.

With the above information, and a discussion regarding what St. Matthew Parish could look like in three years, it was concluded that parishioners will be challenged to have:

(1) An **“intentional Catholic” mindset** with regard to who we are as followers of Christ. In other words, to be conscious of whom we are, what we believe, and how we engage the world as Roman Catholics in light of the Gospel.

(2) An **“intentional hospitality” mindset** that challenges us to move from the source and summit of our worship, the Sunday Eucharist, with a global perspective, and infuse our society with “Kingdom of God values,” i.e. justice, respect for all people, generosity, non-violent actions, etc.

(3) An **“intentional financial” mindset** of responsible stewardship (caretakers) for the life and growth of the parish not only with regard to the physical buildings and getting our bills paid on time, but how we grow as stewards within the context of spirituality, liturgy, family catechesis and the parish elementary school.

These three points will be our guiding lights for 2015-2018. After the celebration of the 75th anniversary on December 20, 2014, parishioners will be invited to take part in the final process to determine the objectives of the above three goals and their implementation.

In the spirit of Pope John XIII, who was recently canonized a saint, let us, through his intercession, move forward as we celebrate 75 years of celebrating the Sunday Eucharist, working for justice, and putting into action the Kingdom of God.

Rev. Raymond J. Ritari, Pastor

Planning Committee: Dot & Frank Hernandez, Carlos Ortega, Blanca & Luis Porchini, Jaime Hernandez, Bea Tovar, Julie Moentk, Anna Lucas, Rosita Espericueta.

All people have the right to live. They have the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services. In consequence, all people have the

right to be looked after in the event of ill health; disability stemming from their work; widowhood; old age; enforced unemployment; or whenever through no fault of their own they are deprived of the means of livelihood.

John XXIII "Pacem In Terris" (Peace on Earth) 1963

