

St. John Chrysostom Parish Annual Report – December, 2009

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As my fourth anniversary as Pastor of St. John Chrysostom Parish arrives, it is my joy, once again, to present this report concerning the life of our parish. Thanksgiving approaches as I write these words and I wish to give thanks, first of all, for the gift we have received of faith in Jesus Christ, “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” The Lord has come “so that we may have life, and have it in abundance.” Let us also give thanks for our community of faith - the Church, and for our local family of faith, St. John Chrysostom Parish. We do not walk the journey to the Kingdom on our own; we walk as a pilgrim people led by the Good Shepherd. When our faith is strong, we rejoice together; when our faith is weak or we are troubled by life’s challenges and tragedies, we sustain one another in Christ. For this, let us give thanks.

There are so many who help to nurture our parish community’s life of faith. In a special way, I wish to thank Sr. Maureen Taaffe, SCN, Fr. Charlie Flaherty, and Fr. Paul MacDonald for their service to us in love. Fr. Paul Fitzpatrick, SM, has also become a welcome presence at Mass here. In addition, we owe our parish staff members a debt of sincere gratitude. Thanks to Florence Rosselle, Dorothy Walsh, Helen and Al Solimine; to the musicians who, under the direction of Dick D’Italia, help us to lift up our voices in “hymns, psalms, and inspired songs” – Alan Long, Marilyn MacLeod, John Papirio, and Osmani and Rena Rodriguez; to the members of our parish choir under the direction of Eileen McNeil; and to Kate Cody and Marie Sullivan for their dedicated coordination of our parish religious education program.

Over the course of several months this past year, I invited the members of our Parish Pastoral Council to join me in reflecting on the meaning of St. Paul’s words:

I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the extent of the full stature of Christ... Living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16)

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The purpose of our reflection was to begin to discern together how, as we face new challenges ahead, we will move from the present into the future, continuing to grow as a vibrant community of faith. The place for us to begin, I believe, is by asking the Lord to show us where He already is in our parish life. Where do we already see the gifts of the Spirit at work in our parish community? How can we foster those gifts? Do we need to call upon the Spirit to offer us new gifts for our life of faith? To begin to move into a necessary process of pastoral planning which will take account of new challenges and diminishing numbers of clergy and religious, we need to take a spiritual assessment of where we stand. That is, I believe, the heart of the task that awaits us so that we will be a church that is “mission driven” and not “maintenance driven.” The heart of parish life is mission. The Church exists for mission: for proclamation of the Good News that leads to sacramental sharing in the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We already see a generous and willing sharing of many gifts in our parish. Our parish religious educators share their faith with our young people. Others offer their support to our parish through volunteering for our outstanding annual bazaar, through kindness and concern extended in health care ministry, through sustaining our worship as greeters, ushers, lectors, and Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, through visits to the homebound, through leadership and participation in our parish Arise Together in Christ program of renewal, and through communication by maintaining our parish website. In addition, I rely on the generous time and counsel of the members of our Parish Pastoral Council and our Parish Finance Council.

Our parish’s newest project is perhaps our most visible one – the replacement of the roofs on all our buildings. This is the first of a number of projects we need to accomplish in order to improve the physical property of the parish and the beauty of our worship space. More information will be forthcoming in light of our most recent parish financial statement, enclosed with this report.

I’m also very grateful that our parish is a generous and supportive community for the many ecumenical and interreligious initiatives with which I’m involved. This past year, we hosted several Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue meetings, Christian-Jewish Dialogue meetings, as well as Evening Prayer with the Greek Orthodox on the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, and our annual prayer service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In addition, this past spring, our parish was the venue for a wonderful musical event. What started as a small, pick-up group of singers looking to make some music during the long winter nights eventually grew into a grand collaboration of many local choir members who participated in a wonderful Pentecost Sunday performance of sacred music, which was joyfully received.

May the peace of the Lord, who is our Peace, be with you always!

Fr. David C. Michael, Pastor

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Sacraments celebrated at St. John Chrysostom Parish in 2009

*Baptisms – 75 First Communion – 37 Confirmation – 45 Marriages – 2
Anointing Mass – 1 Funerals – 65 (as of 12/1)*

Average weekend Mass attendance, based on a count taken for three weekends in October – 1,315

Communion is offered each month at the Roscommon Extended Care Center

St. John's provides priest coverage of the Faulkner Hospital every Friday, and one Sunday every other month.

In addition, Eucharistic ministers from our parish participate in daily distribution of Communion at the Faulkner.

Pastoral Ministry report, submitted by Sr. Maureen Taaffe, SCN

The office of Pastoral Ministry continues to be an active one here at St. Johns. The spiritually rich programs and other parish activities continue to enhance our liturgical celebration as we complete the church year. Readings, reflection and discussion groups, as well as programs for family life during Lent and Advent helped develop an awareness of church traditions and a deepened understanding of the faith life within our parish. We have experienced an increased interest in all of our sacramental programs. The Baptism Program continues to thrive with many young families participating. The Marriage Program was very successful and the young couples enjoyed the interactions in a small group setting with our seasoned married couples.

Communion to the sick and visits to the homebound are rewarding experience for the caregiver and the person receiving the visit. This ministry continues to flourish and makes us aware of the importance of communicating with all members of our parish.

Each week there is an increase in food collected and distributed to the Roslindale Food Pantry and to some of our parishioners. Five couples are faithfully collecting the food each week and delivering it to our friends in need.

The generosity of the parish family to the Christmas Giving Drive continues to renew my faith in others as we enter this joyful season. With our special emphasis placed on items of clothing and food it never ceases to surprise me of the generosity and uniqueness of the gifts. These items were distributed to Our Lady of Lourdes parish, Pine Street Housing, Rosie's Place, Friends of the Unborn, and to our parishioners in need.

Evangelization is alive and well at St. John's. As we enter our second year, the *Arise Together in Christ* program continues to grow. Many parishioners not directly involved in small group faith-

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sharing discussions have been inspired by the reflections found in the bulletin during these weeks.

Religious Education report, submitted by Marie Sullivan and Kate Cody

The Religious Education Program is flourishing this year. Many new children have joined with returning students to learn about the Good News and to participate in Faith as a community. This year the children have learned a great deal about the saints and are participating in the Liturgy as a class community. All students are learning about the importance of giving and sharing with others during these trying times, especially at this joyful time of the year. This coming spring approximately thirty five young adults will be receiving the sacrament of Confirmation and thirty children will be receiving First Eucharist.

We, at St. John's, are very fortunate to have such a dedicated group of volunteers in the Religious Education Program. These men and women return each year to teach the children about the life of Christ, how to lead a sacramental life, and to share Faith with our children. Our new volunteers add vitality and a new perspective to our wonderful program. All these devoted volunteers share their faith with all children, many of which face physical and learning challenges. They are truly witnessing to Jesus and we are grateful for their presence.

Report from Parish Pastoral Council, submitted by the members of the council

The Parish Pastoral Council is made up of nine members, who represent the parishioners of St. John Chrysostom Parish. The Parish Pastoral Council is called to assist the pastor in helping create the vision for our local community of faith, in consonance with Cardinal Sean's vision for the Archdiocese of Boston. The PPC is a mission focused group, articulating the mission of the Church through the seven elements of parish life: evangelization, worship, word, community, service and social justice, stewardship, and leadership. It is not a program-planning or financial management group.

Taken from Matthew 10:8: "The gift you have received give as a gift" - Cardinal Sean's vision is the handing on of the faith, and spiritual renewal of the Archdiocese is the foundation of the pastoral planning effort. Our Parish Pastoral Council will be working collaboratively with other local parishes for the benefit of increased evangelization of our faith, a more effective sharing of resources, and in furtherance of Cardinal Sean's vision at the local level.

Children's Choir report, submitted by Osmani and Rena Rodriguez

In 2006 and 2007 we had experienced great success with the Children's Choir. They sang for several events outside of church and were well received. We had a large group of kids, between 15 and 30 members, who worked hard, sang well, and it showed. However, in the winter of 2008 and spring of 2009 we experienced a significant drop in attendance for the Children's Choir. Some of this can be attributed to the natural attrition of working with children. They grow up and move on to other things.

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Several parents mentioned that it was difficult for the families to be at both the 9:00AM Mass and religious education classes on Sundays. To work around this issue we started this year with a detailed schedule of Sundays that would allow the kids to participate in both religious education and choir, hoping to get some new members. We put up posters, hung fliers, talked to people, and we got several new singers. But very few were able to make the commitment to a weekly rehearsal, or they were too busy on Sundays with many other activities. After a couple of months of low attendance at rehearsals and Mass, we decided to temporarily suspend the choir rehearsals and reassess the obstacles facing us. Several of the kids still come to church on Sunday and sing with us doing psalms and some hymns, but it's not an organized venture.

In January of 2010, we are planning to meet with Marie Sullivan and Fr. Michael to explore possibilities of incorporating the Children's Choir into the regularly scheduled religious education classes. For several years now, we have assisted with the music for First Communion by rehearsing with the second graders during class. Marie has suggested expanding this current arrangement slightly, allowing the children to learn more seasonal repertoire which would hopefully engage them more in the worship service, which could also be used as a training ground for a more experienced children's choir.

We are hopeful that this restructuring will enrich the religious education program, enhance the music at the 9:00 Family Mass, and allow us to explore the possibilities of reestablishing a more structured choir of experienced singers involving the children and young teens.

St. Vincent de Paul report, submitted by the parish conference

During the fiscal year that ended on September 30, 2009, parishioners contributed \$29,460 (by means of the baskets placed at the church doors and the special Thanksgiving Day collection) to the work of the parish St. Vincent de Paul conference. During the same period of time, conference expenditures were \$30,873.

35% of this amount was distributed as food vouchers to needy families and individuals. 29% provided rental payment assistance to families threatened with eviction or in need of help obtaining shelter. 22% helped families pay overdue utility bills. Most of these families were in danger of having gas or electric service shut off. 4% was for clothing and furniture.

The remainder was for a variety of special projects. These included \$1500 for the Roslindale Food Pantry, and contributions to Sancta Maria House in the South End (a shelter for homeless women operated by the Legion of Mary) and Cross Roads Family Shelter in East Boston (operated by Holy Redeemer Parish). The members of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference wish to thank the parishioners of St. John Chrysostom Parish for the continuing generous support.

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