

## STATE OF THE PARISH – 2017

### INTRODUCTION

As I begin this evening's "State of the Parish" talk let me first thank the Parish Men's Club for hosting this evening. I gave a similar talk a few years back – I can't remember exactly when – and we thought it was time for another. The purpose of this Address is to let you, the parishioners, know how our parish is doing in promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our community. We must always remember that we are not a single congregation. We are just one parish within the Diocese of San Diego and faithful members of the Roman Catholic Church.

I remember that prior to the last "State of the Parish" we were just talking about the need for more meeting

space and plans to build a new Parish Pastoral Center. We opened that Center in September 2010 and it has been a great asset to our parish. The total cost for the Center, including the land on which it is built, was approximately Five and half million dollars. Msgr. Bourgeois, my predecessor as pastor, bought the property for one million dollars and the construction itself was about four and half million dollars. Wonder of wonders, we opened our Pastoral Center debt free with a little more than five hundred thousand dollars still in the bank which was used a few years later to renovate our church interior.

## THE LITURGY

The center of any parish life is the liturgy and our church had some desperately needed repairs to be made in order to make the Liturgy a more effective worship experience for our parishioners. We had quite a few problems that most people didn't see. The stage like structure on which the altar, ambo and presiders chairs were set had termites and needed to be replaced. The lighting was insufficient, the carpeting was worn, dirty beyond cleaning and needing replaced. The pews needed refinishing, the baptismal font leaked almost every time it was used, the dark wood paneling in the sanctuary was separating from the wall and there was no crucifix – as is required by Canon Law. It was obvious that something needed to be done. In one month's time – the month of

June, 2011, the entire work was completed well under budget. For that we have Garczynski construction and development to thank. Subsequently, a new, state of the art sound system was put in. SOME people – a few, really – complain they still can't hear but, unfortunately, there's nothing more we can do. In spite of that, acoustical testing shows that every square inch of the church receives good sound. We now have a more beautiful worship space and I often hear comments from visitors on what a beautiful, prayer inspiring church we have. Not only is the liturgy the source and summit of all prayer, as the Second Vatican Council stated, it is the source of absolutely everything we do as a parish community. It is the nourishing, unifying presence of Christ in the Eucharist that gives us the grace and strength we need to be His

witnesses in the world. I believe we celebrate liturgy well here at San Rafael. The church is kept clean and neat as befitting the House of God, the music is outstanding (the best in the diocese in my view), the homilies are well prepared, the Altar Servers, Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers are well trained, the vestments and sacred vessels are well maintained in the spirit of dignified simplicity, and the liturgies of the major holidays, (Thanksgiving, Advent & Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost) are prepared months in advance and well coordinated as they take place. Thus, it is only fitting that our parish church not only be beautiful but be properly maintained at all times because THIS is our family gathering from which all our activity flows.

## PARISH DIVERSITY

San Rafael Parish has grown to 3,135 registered households of an increasingly, mixed cultural makeup. My first two assignments as a pastor, from 1988 to 2002, were in very culturally diverse parishes. When I arrived here in August of 2002 I thought to myself "I haven't seen this much blond hair and blue eyes in 15 years!" Well, when you look around now the church at almost any Mass on the weekend you can see that is definitely changing. With the addition of 4-S Ranch to our parish we have received an increasing number of people from India, Africa, Viet Nam, and the Philippines. They add a rich mix to our parish with their cultural identity and shows how the Catholic Church lives up to its name – Universal. A recent demographic study of Rancho Bernardo breaks

down as 58.7 % White, 2.8% Black, 23 % Asian, 10% Hispanic and 5.4% "other." This very closely resembles our parish now, there might be some differences in numbers. Members of these cultural groups are also joining and participating in many of our parish organizations, particularly the Knights of Columbus, Religious Education and our Youth Ministry. I feel, though, that we ought to be reaching out more vigorously to our new parishioners to encourage them to join us in our endeavors. We do not have – nor will we have – “cultural” groups in San Rafael simply because I feel it is imperative for all of us to work together as on a single track rather than working together on parallel tracks where we see each other but do not connect. There is one exception this, however. For years, long before my arrival,

we have hosted the Guatamalan Migrant Community for Mass every 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month at 7:00 p.m. They also meet for weekly rosary in one of the classrooms on Friday evening and use our facilities for retreats and social events. They consider themselves very much part of our parish community.

### PARISH STAFF

Our parish is served by a pastoral staff that is truly incredible. To be honest, the place practically runs itself because of the competence of those on our Staff whose names and positions are listed in our bulletin as well as numerous volunteers who freely give their time and talent when needed and asked. As part of our staff we can't overlook our Maintenance Coordinator: Ruperto Cardenas – who can do *anything* & whose talents have saved us

literally thousands of dollars; Gardener: Emilio Avila – who keeps our grounds as beautiful as they are; Housekeeper: Guadalupe Cardenas, who works not only in the rectory (making sure my shirts are ironed, for one thing – because I don't iron) but also helping to keep our parish hall kitchen clean and in good order. We pay our workers a good wage, way above the average, because they're worth it! When all the hoopla was raised not too long ago about raising the minimum wage and giving sick days to employees I thought "Who *doesn't* do that?" because just wages and working conditions are not only found here but throughout the Diocese of San Diego. I am very proud of our Parish Staff and you should be as well. They're the best! Whenever I leave the parish I have no doubt that things will run properly in my absence.

I am also a firm believer in giving someone a job to do and then letting that person do it without looking over his or her shoulder. I've regretted that at times past, but not now here at San Rafael.

### PARISH CLERGY

Along with Staff, let's talk about the elephant in the room: The Clergy.

When I arrived here I was 15 years younger than I am now. I had hair. I had more energy and when I genuflected I didn't need to keep my hands on the altar to push myself up. As well as serving as pastor of the parish I was and still am the Vicar for Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs for the Diocese of San Diego. I was the only priest in the parish and I could still do it all by myself. For several years I was the Dean of the Escondido Deanery.

That added a little to the work but not much. I was then asked to serve as Director of Diocesan Cemeteries which requires a weekly meeting followed by Mass at 11:00 a.m every Friday at Holy Cross Cemetery, a quarterly board meeting and serving as the priest on call for funerals or graveside services for families who need a priest for the final services of their loved ones. For years we argued with the diocese about the need for new offices at Holy Cross, the ones being used having been built in 1936! Finally, we received permission to build a new office building at Holy Cross and then demolish the old one, all of which was completed a year ago. The diocese will also be opening a new Diocesan Cemetery here in North County – next to St. Thomas More Church in Oceanside – in the next few years. We have the property (15 acres)

and we are now in the permitting process for cemetery use. All of this takes work and time away from the parish for me, but as I promised you when I arrived, the parish takes priority over everything (especially since the parish pays my salary and the other jobs are simply other jobs). Last year just before Easter I spoke with Bishop McElroy and told him that in order to continue to do everything I was doing and to be able to do it well I needed an Associate, to which he agreed. As one parishioner recently said: "You need help. You're getting grayer" to which I replied "Better gray than bald." Sadly, I'm both! So, prior to Pentecost last year the bishop assigned Fr. Craig Haider to San Rafael as Associate Pastor. Fr. Craig was with us for a little less than 10 months before he concluded to leave the parish in order to deal with some

personal issues. He drove away from here at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>. *This was all of his own doing.* (bis) I have not heard from him since he left, despite texts and emails I sent him. A few weeks ago he did see Bishop McElroy and, for all intents and purposes, Fr. Haider is on a leave of absence. In other words, he is no longer involved in priestly ministry. Where he is, what he is doing, where he is going I do not know. I pray for him and I ask you to pray for him too. And that, really, is all anyone needs to know about this.

Fr. Haider's leaving the parish left me, once again, without an Associate. I am grateful to Fr. Raymond Wea who is assisting us on weekends and, last week, I received a letter from Bishop McElroy, informing me that a new Associate has been assigned to the parish

commencing July 1<sup>st</sup>. The priest is Fr. Thomas Kiely who is coming to us from the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey. I have been assured he is a man of quality character and when I receive more information about him I will let you all know. What I do know is that he originally studied for the Diocese of San Diego but when his parents moved to New Jersey he went with them. They both are now deceased and he is returning to San Diego where he has family.

You also know that Deacon Len Vaillancourt and his wife Diane recently moved back to their hometown of Albany, New York. Deacon Ward still works with us and I am happy to announce the Deacon Bob Holgren will be joining us in ministry no later than July 1<sup>st</sup> and, hopefully, sooner! Deacon Holgren has been a deacon for 5 years

and is employed as Business Manager in two other parishes. He will work with us only in ministry and he, Deacon Ward and I will work together for scheduling and Programs.

### ACTIVITIES

Frequently, when I have guests in town and we come back to the parish after having dinner out somewhere, I'll be driving onto the parish property and there are people and cars everywhere. More than once my guest has asked "What's going on?" My usual reply is "I have no idea. It's like this a lot!" San Rafael is a very busy place.

Our parish has ministries to serve almost every need, from birth to death and beyond. We would be here at least an hour longer that we will be if I were to describe them all. Let me just say this; I've never been in a place

that is so committed to service than San Rafael. Just to name some of our ministries: Baptism Preparation Class; Mother's Spirituality Group; Eucharistic Ministers to the Homebound; Mental Health Ministry; Holy Innocents Children's Hospital in Mbarara, Uganda; Men's Club; Knights of Columbus; Women's Fellowship; Society of St. Vincent de Paul; Ecumenical/Interreligious Committee; Ushers; Greeters; Legion of Mary; Pro-Life; Marriage, Family Life & Spirituality. These are just a few of our involvements. Every winter we also host the Interfaith Shelter Network for two weeks in The Fitzgerald Room (Rooms A/B) of the Pastoral Center. This past year, of the 154 cot nights available, 147 of them were filled with guests. We not only house them but assist them in every way possible to find stability again in their lives. The

activities of our ministries can be found (I think) on our parish website once the minutes of the Ministry Council (which is our version of a parish council) are posted. ALL of our ministry outreach is done by volunteer parishioners. The ministries and their contact information are included in our weekly bulletin.

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Again, as with other aspects of our parish life, we try to cover all bases with Religious Education. Here are just a few numbers.

Pre-School through 6<sup>th</sup> Grade – 257 students (of whom 70 are in their First Communion Class); Middle School – 95; Confirmation Class – 1<sup>st</sup> year 60, 2<sup>nd</sup> year 48 students (who were Confirmed here last Friday evening); Adult Bible Study, 115 attending. On top of these we

make every attempt to provide an annual Parish Mission and other days of Prayer/Parish Retreats throughout the year. We actually hope to expand this over the coming three years with our "Marriage, Family Life/Spirituality Committee" and Religious Education Office combining efforts to offer more events for the spiritual growth and welfare of our parishioners.

## FINANCES

This is probably the part many of you have been waiting for. Trust me, for every pastor I know (well, for MOST pastors I know), Catholic and Protestant, this is the least favorite part of any parish report - the Finances.

Every week the bulletin reports that the weekly income needed to run the parish is \$30,675. As you read it you also see that sometimes we make the budget,

sometimes we exceed the budget, sometimes we don't make the budget. Again, to avoid boring you to tears I'll break things down as well as I can (or rather, as our bookkeeper can).

For the Fiscal Year 2015/2016 – the most complete we have: Our annual income was \$1,657,169 with an average weekly income of \$31,869. Our disbursements (expenses) were \$1,694,834 with an average weekly disbursement of \$32,593. That is a net annual loss of \$37,664 or an average of \$724 per week. We have tried to reduce our expenses as much as possible to adjust for this but sometimes it is literally impossible to do. Of the 3,135 registered households 1,505 contribute on a regular basis either by envelope, monthly contribution or credit card. This amounts to just about half of our parishioners

contributing to the parish. For most Catholic Parishes this is very good. I try to keep expenses down as much as possible and I hate asking for money. However, we all know that inflation takes its toll and sometimes the request comes to bump up our offering just a bit to keep our parish and its ministries active. Like you, I pledge and pay an amount back to the parish every month which is actually a bit above a 10% tithe. Still, I would like to see more of our parishioners take their commitment to the parish more seriously by their regular, financial contribution.

San Rafael is without a doubt *the most generous* parish I have ever served. In the last fiscal year, through various special collections and charitable donations our parish contributed \$181,492.00 in charitable causes that

directly assist the Church locally, nationally and internationally. This is over and above the monthly donations of our parishioners to the St. Vincent de Paul Society we give at the end of every month. We can especially be proud of our involvement in the building and running of Holy Innocents Children's Hospital in the Archdiocese of Mbarara, Uganda. Since the hospital opened 7 years ago, 148,000 children have been treated at the out-patient clinic and more than 30,000 have been admitted to the 60 bed hospital. On top of that the infant mortality rate in the Archdiocese of Mbarara has dropped significantly, and this is all due to your goodness and generosity! We are currently in the final stages of completing and then opening the surgical center of the hospital which will give even greater assistance to the

children of that part of the world! Basically, to complete the current stage and bring HICH to full hospital standards required by the government of Uganda, thus making it eligible to receive some government funding, we must still find approximately \$500,000 to outfit fully the surgical center with two operating rooms, staff housing (required by the government) and fresh water reclamation and storage capacity. Our Patron Saint throughout all of this has been St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, who has worked absolute miracles for the children. I am fully confident of her continued blessings. So, St. Thérèse, if there is anyone here this evening who has \$500,000 they don't know what to do with, you know what to do with it!

The Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) is where the diocese receives a good portion of the funding for the

many ministries of the diocese. Once again, due to inflation, our parish assessment has gone up over the years from \$64,000 in 2009 to \$106,00 in 2016. Every year, because of the goodness of our parishioners, we have exceeded our assessment and the excess funds are returned to the parish for parish use, which has enabled us to purchase new flooring for the Religious Education Rooms for the elementary age children, new tables and chairs in the Parish Hall, and to help pay a huge portion of our Solar Electricity installation. Last year, for example, the assessment was \$106,000 and the funds received were \$230,973, an overage of \$124,973! This was all contributed by 429 parishioners, roughly 13.5% of those registered at San Rafael. This year we are on track to do very similar to last year and the overage of this year will

be to help repay our Funds on Deposit with the diocese which were used for our Solar Installation. We are extremely grateful for the goodness of those who contributed, showing their commitment to the Church. Imagine what could be done if every household contributed to the ACA! I add here that the people of the Guatamalan community who meet here, and who have very little of their own, also take ownership of the parish ACA by collecting for it among themselves for the benefit of our parish.

## SOLAR INSTALLATION

For more than a year the Parish Finance Council discussed the pros and cons of solar energy for electrical use, then vetted 4 different companies. In the end we contracted with Stellar Solar and last Fall the work on

installation of solar panels on all of our buildings was completed.

Our Solar installation is up and running but it's too early to tell yet exactly how much are savings are to date. Because of all of the inclement weather we experienced this year we did not have as good a report as we'd so far hoped. However, with the rainy season past we expect to see a considerable savings on our electricity bill due to what is generated by our solar panels which we purchased outright rather than leased.

#### Cost Breakdown: Stellar Solar Company

Total Cost:	\$387,571
Paid by SRP:	\$240,00
Borrowed from Diocese:	\$147,571

We still owe the diocese \$25,000 from the loan but we will be able to finish paying back the loan this July when we receive the first rebate from the ACA.

Overtime we will see considerable savings in our electric bill and the initial cost will have been worth it!

## VOCATIONS

This brings me to the last item on the agenda: Vocations. By this I am speaking specifically for vocations to the priesthood.

As you know one of two petitions prayed daily at our parish Masses is for an increase in dedicated vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. I am happy to tell you that this year 10 new candidates (10!) are being admitted to St. Francis Center for Priestly Ministry as candidates for the seminary. This is a positive, hopeful

increase and we pray that it continues. One of those who are now in formation for the priesthood is from San Rafael Parish and another has applied for admission to our seminary formation program in the Fall. Yet another young man will be attending the University of San Francisco but is interested in studying for the priesthood for San Diego and will keep in touch with our vocation and seminary formation priests here. **PRAYER WORKS!!!** Please, keep praying for this vital need of the Church. In the Diocese of San Diego the retirement age for priests is now 75. I really don't want to go beyond that so we'll need someone to take my place 9 years from now, if not before.

## CONCLUSION

I hope that this "State of the Parish Address" hasn't been too boring. I could have been more detailed but neither you nor I could stand it! However, let me say this: The State of San Rafael Parish is very good. It is strong in every way a parish should be. There is always room for improvement but what we offer and do, we do very well. We strive to serve the needs of our parish to the best of our ability. We are financially stable, we are exceedingly generous with the less fortunate, we are committed to quality, Catholic education at every level, we have a deep sense of the presence of Christ in our midst and our liturgy is clean, prayerful, embracing. We are in good shape. I am very proud of you all as parishioners, and I am prouder than ever to work with you as your pastor.

Years ago, above the door of one of the buildings at USD, which we used when I was in the seminary, were the words, in Latin: Caritas Christi Urget Nos, from 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:14 and it pretty much became my motto as a seminarian, as a priest, as a Christian – and it is the motto that we embrace here at San Rafael as our own: “Caritas Christi Urget Nos;” “The Love of Christ Impels Us.”

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU!