Blessed Sacrament Parish: evangelization, encouragement, support

SEATTLE
BY ARMANDO MACHADO

Serving the University District since 1908, Blessed Sacrament Parish is described as a sacramental community united in God's love. The foundation of the parish activities is the call of Christ to evangelize and encourage each other in the gifts they have received in baptism.

Parishioners believe that as a Dominican parish, they “invite all people to deepen their faith and understanding through prayer, study and the proaching of the Gospel.” In addition, as people of God, they are to love one another and must be willing to listen, nurture and support each other.

They believe in the fullest collaboration of clergy, religious and laity “to achieve our common mission to make Christ present in our world.”

The pastor, Dominican Father Daniel Syverstad, said in an interview last week, “It’s staffed by Dominicans, and we feel a responsibility to bring our Dominican charism to the parish, and to the archdiocese… (The building) is a national historical landmark — the architecture is Tudor Gothic; we’re beginning to prepare for our 100th anniversary in 2008.”

Father Syverstad added, “We have a number of ministries and we continue to add ministries.” He said the parish has two RCIA programs for scheduling convenience.

And he noted the dedicated work of volunteers with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which has sponsored a Friday food bank since 1971, and a Sunday dinner since 1969, serving hundreds of people each week. Father Syverstad has been a priest for nearly 24 years; he’s been pastor at Blessed Sacrament since July 2003. He said he sees the need and hopes to eventually establish a Hispanic Ministry that would include a Spanish Mass, sacramental preparation and faith formation.

Earthquake repairs made
The Blessed Sacrament Restoration Campaign has raised $1.79 million of the $1.825 million project goal to pay off debt. The church was seriously damaged in the Nisqually earthquake of Feb. 28, 2001. Once the damage was secured, restoration of the church building began in earnest.

Workers undertook the daunting task of masonry repairs to the exterior brickwork and window casings, roof repairs, interior sand-blasting of the painted brick walls, as well as an ambitious seismic retrofit of the entire structure. The old brick chimney was seriously damaged in the earthquake, and needed to have, in part, a new core installed, complete tear-down of the brickwork, and construction of a new stack.

Although much has been done, more work remains. About $3.825 million has been spent; insurance covered $2 million. Father Reginald Martin was the pastor when the earthquake occurred.

The Parish Communities, said to be special ministries, are comprised of Home Schooling, a community of home-schooling parents and children; Married Couples, ongoing support and fellowship for married couples; provided through small groups that meet monthly in parishioners’ homes; Youth Group, a social and educational ministry for high school and junior high school students; and Young Adults Group, activities for single or married adults between ages 21 and 40. The Young Adults Group focuses on volunteerism, ministry and social activities.

Special ministries bring sense of church
These special ministries work to bring a sense of “church” to Blessed Sacrament parishioners and beyond. Communities are often a demographic collection of individuals active in many ministries, who promote and encourage a sense of parish unity.

The more than 25 parish ministries also include Eucharistic Adoration, Bible/Scripture Study, Homebound Caregivers, Peace and Justice, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Marist, and the Newman Center at the University of Washington.

During the Jan. 21-22 weekend, Blessed Sacrament Parish sold subscriptions to The Catholic Northwest Progress and received $5 for each new or renewed subscription. All subscribers received a special premium. For more information about this program, contact Keri Hake at 206-382-2075 or kerih@seattlearch.org.