



The Immaculate Connection

Newsletter of the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church
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Our Parish Goals: A Conversation with Fr. Chumo

By Elizabeth Burns

The following is an article based on a conversation with Fr. Chumo about the goals of Immaculate Conception parish. Increasing awareness and deepening understanding of the goals invites the participation of parish ministries and can generate more ideas to grow the parish. Immaculate Conception has four goals: **1) to make spiritual opportunities abundant and centered on the Eucharist, 2) to intensify outreach, 3) to diversify youth ministry and young families, and 4) to ensure parish financial stability.**

Goal 1: To make spiritual opportunities abundant and centered on the Eucharist

“Prayer life, catechesis, retreats, devotions, liturgical life, music-- all of these are opportunities for people that can shape the spiritual life of a parish,” says Fr. Chumo. “In the Catholic church we are commanded to break bread, born out of the Eucharist, and that’s what we do. All ministries should have that bearing-- to bear much fruit we must be close to Christ.”

“Understanding spiritual seasons and organizing liturgical activities” throughout the liturgical year, notes Fr. Chumo, helps us to understand their true meaning. “We can get to know Lent and [it’s] activities so that when Easter comes we have an understanding of what it really means. “ Another spiritual opportunity is through devotions. “Devotions can be revolutionizing,” says Fr. Chumo. Marian devotions—praying for peace in the rosary, for example-- and devotions to the Eucharist with traditions like First Friday and First Saturday adoration and benediction, are practices that enrich spiritual life.

Other opportunities include following the saints’ lives throughout the liturgical year, learning from their example of following Christ, votive masses, and reading spiritual texts. “When we do Bible study, we try to meet this goal,” says Fr. Chumo. Parishioners can always name a speaker they wish to hear or suggest a possible parish pilgrimage. Through these kinds of practices the parish can become “strong and thrive--unshakeable”, says Fr. Chumo.

Goal 2: To intensify outreach

“Outreach is a response to give witness, mission by baptism, go beyond confines, driven by God’s love, grow the kingdom of God,” says Fr. Chumo. The goal of “outreach is to

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increase numbers, but [also] give witness to love of God, announce and proclaim the Good Word by word and deed. [We need to] nurture faith that is planted and not to be overwhelmed by weeds.”

As Father Chumo notes, Ithaca is a growing community, with a diverse population including college students and seniors, and knowing how to grow our own parish community is important. “All the ministries must make sure they do some form of it,” says Fr. Chumo. “We have to do a lot of work to get inactive Catholics to the pew.”

Having a presence at the local festivals like Apple Harvest or the Chili Festival can connect our parish with the community. Technology and music are some of the tools available for outreach. Technology offers many ways to stay connected, both to each other and to those who visit for Mass. The parish website offers information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The music ministry recently sung at Titus Towers from Advent to Pentecost, ministering to a demographic that may have restrictions on regular attendance at Sunday Mass. Reaching out to the homebound through the bulletin or bringing them communion or to Mass allows long-term parishioners to stay connected to the parish and each other.

Goal 3: To diversify youth ministry and young families

Immaculate Conception has many older parishioners, and a smaller number of youth, and so is faced with the challenge of growing a younger population. Special prayers and adorations can be held to attract younger people, and the recent parish mission with Steve Angrisano is an example of an event that resonates with youth.

How young people understand the Bible and what is their view of God and the Church are among the questions considered when engaging youth in parish activities. “We need to listen to their views,” says Fr. Chumo, “We need to use a way of connecting with them that’s inspiring, something that comes from their mouths themselves.” One way to reach youth is through social events that are faith-related, with a Gospel message. “Youth want to apply the Gospel right away,” says Fr. Chumo. “If they clean the house of an elderly person in the name of God, it connects them to who God is.”

Weddings also welcome young adults to Immaculate Conception. Besides parishioner weddings, there are wedding preparations for young adults who live out of town. Fr. Chumo has done fifteen Pre-Cana preparations for out of town couples so far this year. “Now,” he says, “they say, ‘when we are in town, this is our church.’”

(continued on page 8)

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Thursday, February 14

1:30pm Titus Towers Service

Saturday, February 16

1:30pm Sharing Christ (PH)

Sunday, February 17

11:45am HS Yth Grp (YR)

2:30pm MS Yth Grp (YR)

2:00-4pm Cantata Rehearsal (CH)

Monday, February 18 Presidents Day

Office Closed—Mass at 9:00am

Thursday, February 21

4:00pm McGraw House Service

Saturday, February 23

1:30pm Sharing Christ (PH)

Sunday, February 24 Coffee Hour

11:45am HS Yth Grp (YR)

2:30pm HS Yth Grp (YR)

2:00-4pm Cantata Rehearsal (CH)

Monday, February 25

10:30am-Cayuga Ridge Mass

Wednesday, February 27

7:00pm Service Team (PH)

7:00pm K of C 4th Degree (PC)

MARCH 2019

Friday, March 1

7:30-11am Exposition/Benediction (CH)

7:00pm Praise/Worship/Adoration (CH)

Saturday, March 2

10:00am 1st Eucharist Prep (YR)

1:30pm Sharing Christ (PH)

3:00pm Holy Hour Adoration (CH)

Sunday, March 3

11:45am HS Youth Group (YR)

2:30pm MS Youth Group (YR)

2:00-4pm Cantata Rehearsal (CH)

5:00pm FAMBRE (YR)

Wednesday, March 6 Ash Wednesday

Mass at 7:00am, 12:10 & 7:00pm

Thursday, March 7

5:30pm Contemporary Group Rehearsal

6:00pm Parish Council (PH)

Friday, March 8

5:30pm Stations of the Cross

Saturday, March 9

1:30pm Sharing Christ (PH)

Sunday, March 10 Coffee Hour

11:45am HS Yth Grp (YR)

2:30pm HS Yth Grp (YR)

2:00-4pm Cantata Rehearsal (CH)

Monday, March 11

1:00pm Cemetery Grp (PC)

Tuesday, March 12

6:00pm Evangelization (PC)

Wednesday, March 13

Diocesan Day of Penance

2:00-4pm Confessions Heard (CH)

6:00-8pm Confessions Heard (CH)

Thursday, March 14

1:30pm Titus Towers Mass

5:30pm Contemporary Group (CH)

Friday, March 15

5:30pm Stations of the Cross

Saturday, March 16

6:00pm St. Patty’s Dinner (PH)

Sunday, March 17

11:45am HS Yth Grp (YR)

2:30pm MS Yth Grp (YR)

2:00-4pm Cantata Rehearsal (CH)

Advent Wreath

Advent means “a coming.” Advent celebrates that Christ came once in the historical way in Bethlehem; that He comes in the Sacraments and to each of us as we open ourselves to Him in prayer; and that He will come again in the fullness of His kingdom. So, we pray with expectation, “THY KINGDOM COME!”

The wreath is a custom first practiced in Germany many years ago. Families gathered greens (the symbol of eternal life) and made them into a circle (God’s love has no beginning and no end). The 3 purple candles are a sign of reconversion and repentance. The pink candle is a sign of hope! Jesus is with us to help us change more nearly into His image!

Purple candle: 1st week of advent

HOPE

Dear God:
As we begin our Advent pilgrimage,
Grant us courage to hope.

Hope for your presence,
Hope for your peace,
Hope for your promise. Amen.

Pink candle: 3rd week of advent

JOY

Dear God:
In the height of our Advent walk,
Grant us the courage to experience
joy.
Joy in the face of apathy,
Joy in the face of sorrow,
Joy in the face of uncertainty.
Amen.

Purple candle: 2nd week of advent

PEACE

Dear God:
As we journey down this Advent road,
Grant us the courage to make peace.
Peace in our hearts,
Peace in our homes,
Peace in our communities. Amen.

Purple candle: 4th week of advent

LOVE

Dear God:
As our Advent pilgrimage draws to
completion, Grant us the courage to
share your love.
Love for the unexpected challenge,
Love for the vulnerable one,
Love for the presence of God. Amen.



Book Review (continued from page 6)

What is particularly striking are Cardinal Sarah’s lamentations as he clearly details how the clamor of noise has infected our Church. But by realizing this with much hope, he writes how we can effect a transformation by first deeply transforming our personal connection with Christ. On this note, I must be completely honest to potential readers: if seriously entered into, this book may genuinely touch your spiritual life. For myself at least, this book served as a mirror with which I saw that I had been lulled by noise into settling into a comfortable plateau but not moving any closer to God. But with the practical advice and the clear path that Cardinal Sarah lays out, you can’t help but have an excited hope to pray and to truly take on this spiritual journey.

The Power of Silence is a book that is at once quite practical and quite elevated. Since it is written in the style of an interview, it is easy to pick up and start reading or re-reading from any point. However, each paragraph is a deep well that leaves room for much meditation. Rather appropriately, Pope Benedict XVI has written an Afterword, in which he affirms how touching this book has been for him and how important the message is. Thus, in the spirit of silence I shall keep this review short, but let not my brevity mistake, I strongly encourage you to pick up this soon-to-be classic gem of spiritual literature and open yourself up to a new spiritual adventure towards our Lord. I pray that our Lord may open Himself up to you abundantly in this!

Thoughts from Fr. Chumo

Beloved sisters and brothers in Christ,

As always it gives me great joy and pleasure to have this opportunity to express my cordial greetings to all members of our parish family. The year 2018 is fast approaching its end. I can't believe how quickly time flies!

This year has been full of flurry of activities. So much has been done by many of our parishioners thus far, and for this reason I am eternally thankful to all. With the help of generous and strong volunteers we have been able to clean up the parish center and the parish garage. I have since moved into the rectory and I can confidently say I am fully settled. We still have a few rooms to clean up and do proper filling and have a better organized office. It is my hope that this can be done before Christmas. The year 2019 will have its own agenda items.

Last September, we had a Ministry Fair to highlight various ministries at our parish. It was a great success thanks to the evangelization team and others who offered the much-needed help. More than eighty people signed up for various ministries. Many thanks to all who helped in one way or other on this endeavor. Our parish has now more people who hunger for service after the example of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve, and give his life for our salvation.

This year we were lucky to host Steve Angrisano to lead us for a three-day parish mission. I am sure he brought joy and smiles into your hearts. He is such a gifted faith-filled person. He has a unique way of conveying Christian message in an inspiring way. We were truly blessed by his presence. It is now our turn to live and share the message of Christ with our family and friends. In the meantime, we have an Advent retreat in December with Dennis Billy from Notre dame retreat house in Canandaigua NY. Advent season is a wonderful season of anticipation of the birth of our Lord. Christmas is about Jesus. Plan on being there.

As you all are aware that we are in the process of selling the entire school campus property. The sale is being managed by a broker; Mr. Stephen Lipinski. We just received RFPs (Request For Proposals) from interested buyers. We are now reviewing RFPs with the help of the parish trustees and the chair of the finance council. The process might take a longer time to conclude than earlier anticipated and we are taking due diligence in this process. We request your patience and understanding in this endeavor.

Before I conclude this article, it is worth noting that the Church is going through the most challenging and painful time. The recent jury report regarding the clergy sex scandal has exposed the worst evil imaginable to victims, their families and the entire Church of Christ. The victims of the scandal have suffered tremendously. May God grant them the grace of healing and peace. Because of this shameful incident, many have decided to leave the practice of faith, something that is so sad to happen to anyone. The fallout from this tragedy is huge and the impact will remain with us for a long time.

What should we do when faced with such circumstance? Humanly speaking, it's very painful. First, I invite all people of good will to pray for victims and their families. Second, pray for the Church of Christ and for all its members. Third, let's reach out gently to those of our faith community who have sadly walked away from the source of life. It is one more serious scandal if an innocent person abandons Christ because of the sins and failures of other people. I call upon all parishioners to arm themselves with the right armor of righteousness and holiness. The devil cannot stand holiness. Christian holiness and strong faith is our shield. Anger and resentment create a conducive environment for the devil to thrive. Only Jesus Christ has convincing and consoling words; only He has words of life, in fact eternal life. Remain in Him.

Amani kwenu!

Winter at Immaculate Conception

All Events held in the Church unless otherwise indicated;

CH=Church PC=Parish Center PH=Parish Hall YR=Youth Room (former shop)

Weekend Masses

Saturdays – 4:30 pm

Sundays—8:30 and 10:30 am

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturdays – 2:30 pm-4:00 pm

or by appointment

Food Pantry every Tuesday – 1:00 pm (Carges Hall)

Pietra Fitness every Wednesday—3:00 pm (GGPC)

Adult Choir EVERY Tuesday from 5:30–7:30pm (CH)

Contemporary Group EVERY Wednesday from 5:30–7:30pm (CH)

Coffee Hour after Sunday Masses EVERY 2nd & 4th Sunday.–Exceptions: December & May

DECEMBER 2018

Saturday, December 1

10:00am 1st Penance prep (YR)

3:00pm Holy Hour Adoration (CH)

Sunday, December 2

11:45am HS Youth Group (YR)

2:30pm MS Youth Group (YR)

Thursday, December 6

1:00pm Bible Study (PH)

6:00pm Pastoral Council (PH)

Friday, December 7

7:30am Exposition/Benediction (CH)

5:30pm Immaculate Conception

Vigil Mass

7:00pm Praise/Worship/Adoration (CH)

Saturday, December 8

Immaculate Conception

10:00am Feastday Mass

w/ Bishop Matano

Sunday, December 9 Coffee Hour

12:30-3pm HS/MS Yth Grp and Service

Team (PH)

3:30-5pm Advent Parish Retreat (CH)

Thursday, December 13

1:00pm Bible Study (PC)

1:30pm Titus Towers Service

Saturday, December 15

11:00a Penance Service

(Adults/1st Penance)

Sunday, December 16

11:45am HS Youth Group (YR)

2:30pm MS Youth Group (YR)

5:00pm FAMBRE (PH)

Monday, December 17

3:30pm Finance Council (PC)

Thursday, December 20

1:00pm Bible Study (PC)

4:00pm McGraw House Service

7:00pm Liturgy Committee (PC)

Sunday, December 23

12:00pm Additional Choir Rehearsal

Monday, December 24 Christmas Eve-

Office Closed

4:00pm Christmas Pageant & Mass

9:15pm Choral Concert

10:00pm Christmas Eve Mass

Tuesday, December 25 Christmas Day-

Office Closed

10:30am Christmas Day Mass

Monday, December 31 New Year's Eve

Office Closed (Regular 12:10 Daily Mass)

JANUARY 2019

Tuesday, January 1 **New Year's Day**

Office Closed Mass @ 9:00am

Friday, January 4

7:30-11am Exposition/Benediction (CH)

7:00pm Praise/Worship/Adoration (CH)

Saturday, January 5

3:00pm Holy Hour Adoration (CH)

Sunday, January 6

11:45am HS Youth Group (YR)

2:30pm MS Youth Group (YR)

Thursday, January 10

1:30pm Titus Towers Mass

6:00pm Parish Council (PH)

Sunday, January 13 Coffee Hour

11:45am HS Youth Group (YR)

2:30pm MS Youth Group (YR)

5:00pm FAMBRE (YR)

Monday, January 14

1:30pm Cemetery Committee (PC)

Thursday, January 17

4:00pm McGraw House Mass

Sunday, January 20

11:45am HS Youth Group (YR)

2:30pm MS Youth Group (YR)

Monday, January 21

Martin Luther King Day

Office Closed—Mass at 9:00am

Wednesday, January 23

7:00pm Knights of Columbus 4th Degree

(PH)

Saturday, January 26

1:30-4pm Sharing Christ (PH)

Sunday, January 27 Coffee Hour

11:45am HS Youth Group (YR)

2:30pm MS Youth Group (YR)

Monday, January 28

10:30am Cayuga Ridge Mass

3:30pm Finance Council (PC)

Wednesday, January 30

7:00pm Service Team (PH)

Thursday, January 31

7:00pm Liturgy Committee (PH)

FEBRUARY 2019

Friday, February 1

7:30-11am Exposition/Benediction (CH)

7:00pm Praise/Worship/Adoration (CH)

Saturday, February 2

1:30-4pm Sharing Christ (PH)

3:00pm Holy Hour Adoration (CH)

Sunday, February 3

11:45am HS Youth Group (YR)

2:30pm MS Youth Group (YR)

Thursday, February 7

1:30pm Titus Towers Service

Saturday, February 9

1:30pm Sharing Christ (PH)

Sunday, February 10 Coffee Hour

10:30am 1st Eucharist Enrollment

11:45am HS Yth Grp (YR)

2:30pm MS Yth Grp (YR)

5:00pm FAMBRE (YR)

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Book Review: *The Power of Silence* by Robert Cardinal Sarah

By Dante Iozzo

Against the dictatorship of noise. This subtitle for Robert Cardinal Sarah's work, *The Power of Silence*, is at first glance striking and, as one keeps reading, hopefully convicting—bringing the kind of conviction by which one finds a way to grow closer to God. This book was born out a friendship with a Carthusian monk who was suffering from a disease that robbed him of his ability to speak. This silent friendship was long and immensely fruitful; and from the depth of this friendship founded in silence with another human being, Cardinal Sarah enters into a mediation on how our relationship with God is conducted almost entirely in silence and how can we learn to grow in His friendship. Rather than presenting a dusty chest of abstract anecdotes about learning to be quiet, this book is surprisingly practical.

It realizes that interior silence is indeed something quite difficult for us to enter. It realizes that exterior silence is nearly impossible to find in the world today if it is not actively sought out. It realizes that it can be disturbing for us to find God remaining silent when there is so much calamity in the world and in our own personal lives. But from this foundation, Cardinal Sarah gives practical advice for how to cultivate interior silence, how to recognize God's voice in it, how to search for and enjoy exterior silence, and how God remaining, seemingly, silent amid evil is a more profound demonstration of His love than we could imagine. Having grown up in Guinea under the oppression of a dictatorship, Cardinal Sarah brings his wealth of experience of just how surprisingly powerful God's silence can be.

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OUR GROWING PARISH

By Maureen Seeley

We are pleased to recognize our newly-registered parishioners and the parishioners who have successfully completed and received the sacraments.

We wish to welcome to our Parish community the following newly-registered parishioners:

Abigail Miller

John Paul Schickel

James Egan

Sherley Galan

Carmen Khoo

Denise Agati

Matt & Nichelle Stiadle

Carmella Calabrese

Douglas Summers

We wish to welcome and congratulate our newly received parishioners into the full communion in the Catholic Church:

Vinton Stevens

Karen White

Carmen Khoo

We congratulate the parishioners who received the sacrament of First Holy Communion:

Sofia Bell

Maxwell Koszalka

Johanna Bryant

Daniella Drozd

Charlene Bryant

Maggie Bryant

We welcome and congratulate our newly-Baptized members:

Samuel James Fox

Eliza Priscilla Erikson

Cameron William Hart

Parents: Keith & Molly Fox

**Parents: Brian & Priscilla
Erickson**

**Parents: Christopher &
Catherine Hart**



The Synod on Youth

By Rich Rasmussen

In October, bishops and young people from all over the world gathered in Rome for what has been titled *The Synod on Youth*. The synod covered a variety of areas that young people around the globe are concerned about within our church. In my searching for insights to this article, I came across a few headlines: “Young people want leaders who are fathers, not Pharisees”; “Church needs to meet young people where they are;” “Young people need to be heard, not arrogantly lectured”; “Pope tells synod to be a lifeline of hope for young people alienated from the church.”

It is not my intention to delve into each of these headlines individually and give an in-depth analysis. However, these comments are incredibly poignant and timely, especially considering a recent study on young people and religion and a newly discovered population called “Nones.” The “Nones” are young people who are no longer affiliated with the church. Some think that they had something happen that made them angry, so they left. However, their non-affiliation is not due to a rash decision based on anger and emotion but due to a reflection on the role of faith in their lives and how it impacts their life and how community impacts their lives.

So, the question is, what leads to young people, at the average age of 13 years old, to no longer be affiliated with the Church or even being totally “done” with it? Based on both quantitative and qualitative research, it seems to be that there is a lack of attachment with feeling a sense of community. Let that sink in for a moment. As Catholics, who we are is based on the reality of community. Our entire Mass is based on coming together to worship and walk with one another in life and in faith. So, what is happening?

Bob McCarty, in his book *Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics* argues that there is a likelihood that there are young people who are in our pews who have actually “checked out” spiritually and emotionally and no longer affiliate with the Church. He states that it is most likely that these young people are, what he calls “un-gospeled.” They may come to Mass and be involved but, they have no meaningful experience of Christ in their lives. This may even be a reality in our parish and if it is, that is on each of us. We are supposed to experience the love, grace, mercy, joy and forgiveness of Jesus through those we are in community with.

It is important for us to recognize that the process of addressing this issue is complex. However, it is also important to know that the answer is not simply about focusing on symptoms. Interestingly, what has been found is that young people aren’t really looking for flashy liturgies, or rock style music during Mass. We must be about understanding the causes of why young people are leaving. Young people are looking for a faith and worship that are meaningful. They want to know how to live their faith out in the real world and how to put their faith into practice. They need to hear and experience the *how* through every aspect of our Church. In listening to Bob McCarty at a conference I attended, he stated that young people have a real hunger for the holy because we are all created in the image and likeness of God. He also stated that if “our hearts are restless until they rest in you O Lord” then young people will go where their spiritual hungers are fed. He used the analogy of a fitness club being such an environment. There everyone knows the person’s name, they help the person set goals, they support them to achieve those goals and share in the joy when they do. Hmm, sounds a little like what church can be.

So, the question and the challenge for us all: Is the Immaculate Conception faith community a place where a young person’s hunger for God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is satisfied? Do we satisfy that hunger through meaningful and prayerful liturgies? Do we provide a welcoming space for young people and their families? Do we nurture and encourage them? This is not a single person’s job. It is a responsibility for all of us. I don’t know about you, but I am challenged more now than ever to feed the hunger of the young people in our parish. As for those who may have left; I say we go get them back!

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Goal 4: To ensure parish financial stability

The short and long-term financial security of the parish is the final goal. The church should be “safe and sacred,” says Fr. Chumo, “we want to maintain it in the best shape—clean, safe, beautiful, and inviting.” Fiscal discipline can be challenging: maintenance and insurance costs are high and one of the parish cemeteries, Mt. Olivet, is at capacity, generating no income but requiring regular maintenance. It can be difficult assessing risks and liabilities. Closing the parish school and selling it and the adjacent property will generate more income, with the goal of putting the money in trust and using only dividends for expenses and leaving the principal intact. Financial transparency is a part of good stewardship, which ensures a legacy for future generations.

Realizing all these goals involves action, on the part of parishioners, parish ministries and the staff. “These agendas can invite good ideas if people listen in their hearts,” says Fr. Chumo. “Every parish ministry can listen and build and bring in these ideas in their own way.”

Advent 2018

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