

Evangelization Mid-Year Report  
Holy Comforter—Saint Cyprian Parish  
March 2011

Dear Parishioners,

As you are well aware, we spent over a year preparing for an evangelization outreach which began in September of 2010 and which will continue in a second phase in May of 2011. The fall outreach featured six Saturdays of knocking on doors to meet our neighbors. In May, we will spent an additional four weeks doing the same. We have also had several neighborhood outreach activities such as the blessing of the animals, two concerts, several neighborhood meetings, WIN activities and meetings of the Historical Society here on the premises. I would like to make this midyear report by reviewing our stated goals and reflecting on how we have done.

**Goal 1 – Obedience to Jesus Christ** – Jesus, just before he ascended, gave the great commission: *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age* (Matt 28:19-20).

This “Great Commission,” as we have well studied amounts to standing order # 1. Namely, that we should go and make disciples of everyone and seek to draw them into the life of the Sacraments and the teaching of the Gospel, as entrusted to and proclaimed by the Church. I went so far as to say to you that if we would obey Christ, we would have a future as a parish. But that if we did not plan on obeying him, we did not deserve to exist and should not expect many blessings.

And, praise the Lord, as a parish, we have responded well. Over **forty** people signed up to walk each Saturday and most made it almost every week. Another **forty** signed up to pray, while we walked. And **twenty** took part in preparing a meal for those who prayed and walked each Saturday.

Hence, over **one hundred** in this parish have stepped up to help us obey Jesus Christ. Other parishioners worked hard to draw fallen-away family members to the Christmas Masses, to the concerts and other activities and committed to re-invite family to God’s house in these ways. Our Christmas attendance was significantly up this year.

I think we, as a parish, have generously and magnificently stepped up to obey Jesus and to fix our focus on what matters most to Him: that we should summon everyone to a saving and transformative relationship with Jesus.

**Goal 2 – Becoming better known by and connected to our neighbors** - Our walkers visited **1625** homes in our boundaries! There we had discussions, gave invitations and left information about the Catholic faith, our parish and parish activities. The majority of our visits were to people who knew very little about our parish. Hence we have made significant inroads to becoming better known by our neighbors. We have also made progress in this regard by encouraging a number of community meetings to take place on our premises and to have parishioners and clergy available to meet and greet those who attended. Hence I think we are making significant progress in becoming better known to our neighbors. We have a long way to go, but we are well underway. Remember, the first step in friendship evangelization is friendship.

**Goal 3 – An increase of 25 in the Sunday head count and 10 new families registered by Feb 2011.** – We have met the first goal and are close to the second goal. In September, before we began the campaign, the Sunday headcount averaged close to **485**. Currently, our Sunday attendance averages **515-525**. This is attributable to new members and also to more faithful attendance of long-time members. Steadily re-inviting family members, meeting new neighbors and being more faithful ourselves to Sunday Mass and the sacraments, has had the cumulative effect of raising our

weekly attendance. Thanks be to God, and to your fidelity to Christ's command, the erosion of our attendance numbers has been reversed!

As for new registrations they are between 8 and 10 new family units. We are just beneath our goal in this matter. However, it remains true that not everyone registers immediately and some not at all. My own sense is that we are well in conformity with the intention of this goal. Three registrations are directly attributable to home visits. The others are not. In this matter I will not quibble with the Lord, for it sometimes happens that when we cast seed on the ground the birds of the air carry that seed elsewhere, where it still grows.

The fact is that our evangelization outreach is already bearing fruit. It is not a bumper crop, but it is steady and consistent growth.

**Goal 4 – Better focus of all parishioners and ministries on the most essential work of evangelization** – The Evangelization program has been successful in helping all of us to focus more on Job 1. For, it sometimes happens that parishes can become inwardly focused and place too much emphasis on things which are not wrong, but which are secondary. Social functions, trips etc., have their place, but the main task of every parishioner and organization here is to be summoning people to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, to be seeking new disciples and to be handing on the faith entrusted to the Church.

During September and October we were especially focused in this regard. Many meetings and socials gave way to the main task of putting boots on the ground and walking through our parish boundaries announcing Christ. Other parishioners were also working hard to re-invite family and friends to Mass and parish functions.

Once again in May, we will fix our focus, and make use of opportunities such as Mother's Day, May Procession, First Communion and Graduation to draw back fallen away members and find new members. Hence, we do not set aside traditional observances but help to focus them more specifically on evangelization.

**Goal 5 – Personal renewal** - Almost to a person, everyone who participated in the Evangelization walk and in the prayers, and also in the cooking, report a personal strengthening of their faith. It was wonderful to come together, and work together in new ways, on what we all know is most important to the Lord.

Many were able to shed fears associated with the sharing of the faith, many came to better understand their own faith as they shared it and all of us knew that what we were doing was essential and worthwhile. Many of us heard stories and were able to share those stories with others.

In getting to know our new neighbors we also confronted some racial divides and crossed them. We came to discover a more profound diversity in our neighborhood than we knew, and pray that those we met also experienced the same. In the end we all knew and experienced that we had been blessed and strengthened in our faith.

Well done, good and faithful parishioners, well done (*cf* Matt 25:23)! May God, who has begun this good work in us, continue to strengthen us for it. And may the blessings of obedience be our in abundance.



Rev. Msgr. Charles Pope  
Pastor