

Richmond parish reflects diversity of body of Christ: Archbishop

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Parish Visit

As many of you know, this past Friday morning I began a formal visit of your parish very fittingly with the celebration of Holy Mass.

I enjoyed immensely the opportunity of meeting and talking with so many people who are engaged in the life of your active parish family. I was inspired by your love of Christ and the Church, and it gave me a taste of the kind of hope that “does not disappoint us” (Rom 5:5), of which St. Paul spoke in his Letter to the Romans, which we heard proclaimed. You should

be thankful that, with God’s grace, your parish community is walking in the way of the Lord under the guidance of your pastor, Father Au, his assistant Father Henry, and the ongoing assistance of dear Father Francis.

The warmth of your welcome is evidence of a parish which practices hospitality, and for that I am very grateful. Likewise I thank all those who worked with such dedication to organize my visit.

It is clear to me that this is a parish that successfully, if not without challenges, is able to bring together communities from many cultural backgrounds who worship and gather in three different languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. This is a microcosm of the Church as Catholic, as the Body of Christ spread throughout the world. Yet we are all united under Jesus Christ our Head, and in communion with Pope Francis as the Successor of the Apostle Peter, upon whose faith the Lord builds up his Church. Your cooperative spirit is a great strength and a sign of the unity to which God calls the human family.

Secondly, it was a blessing for me to learn how deeply the Word of God contained in Holy Scripture is revered, studied, and meditated upon by so many parishioners. There are numerous groups which gather regularly to ponder God’s Word. Indeed you are a people which waits upon that Word, and I especially commend all your initiatives in this regard.

Thirdly, I want to express my admiration for taking to heart and living up to your vocation as people who are “co-responsible,” together with the pastor and his assistant, for the mission of the parish. Through Baptism and Confirmation you are all called to build up God’s holy Church, and I see that you are doing this by putting your charisms, gifts, and talents at the service of your brothers and sisters, whether parishioners or members of the wider community in Richmond.

So many parishioners have been active here with dedication and sacrifice for many years, some since the foundation of the parish – and I thank you most heartily.

You know how engaged you are, but it is helpful for you to get a sense of just how active you are as a parish, and so I will list – at the risk of omitting some, for which I apologize – the groups I met with the last two days: the Pastoral Council, Finance Council, Chinese Faith Group, Maintenance and Building Committee, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Canossian Sisters, Lectors, Liturgy of the Word with Children, Neocatechumenate community, teachers in PREP, RCIA team, hospitality ministers, greeters, ushers, Legion of Mary, Catholic Open House, refugee support team, parish staff, instructors of the parish community



activities group, video evangelization ministry, Chinese class coordinators and teachers, the Cantonese- and English-speaking Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus, bereavement group, Chinese and English prayer groups, Encounter the Word, Bible in Action, Great Adventure Bible study, young adults in both Cantonese- and English-speaking groups, altar servers, members of your four excellent choirs. This list, which is not exhaustive, tells me that you are truly engaged in building up the Body of Christ, collaboratively and with your pastor.

And so I thank you and urge you to continue to grow your good works, inviting ever more parishioners to share in your many ministries.

Thank you again for your welcome, but above all for being a parish which is a community of the baptized centred on the celebration of the Eucharist. Because you are armed with the living presence of Jesus, getting your strength from him, that you can fulfill your calling to be missionary disciples inserted into the world, drawing others to the light of the Gospel.



Back to Pentecost

Now I would like to say just a few words about the third divine person: the Holy Spirit, who will be poured out on these young people in the sacrament of Confirmation.

Let us go back to the Upper Room of Pentecost, where the Spirit came upon the Apostles together with Mary and radically changed them, giving them a new inner strength and power. Remember that before this, the Apostles' faith was imperfect and hesitant; they had left Jesus to die almost alone at Calvary, and their leader Peter denied that he knew Jesus. While good-hearted, they were anything but courageous.

What happened after the Spirit descended upon them? They became strong and persuasive. The doors of that Upper Room in Jerusalem burst open, and the simple fishermen went out to preach the Gospel, the Good News that Jesus was the Messiah and that he had died and risen from the dead to forgive their sins. The men who once trembled for fear of the authorities now confronted the crowds gathered in the temple and challenged the religious leaders (cf. Acts 4:1-14). They were stoned and imprisoned, dragged before judges.

How could this happen? Why such a change? Because the Holy Spirit filled them with a power that gave them courage to go out and boldly proclaim the message of salvation in Christ. Freed from all fear, they began to speak openly with self-confidence (cf. Acts 2:29; 4:13,29,31). These frightened fishermen became courageous heralds of the Gospel. Nothing could stop them.

Their message, nearly two thousand years later, has reached even to Richmond. Had they not been courageous enough to proclaim the Good News, we would not be here today.



Pentecost Continues

But something else happened – and continues to happen today, this afternoon, in this church. It is this same Holy Spirit, the third person in the one God, who will “descend” this afternoon upon you, dear young people about to be confirmed. Even if ever so briefly, today, this church becomes the Upper Room, your Upper Room. Yes, indeed: the sacrament of Confirmation “in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church” (CCC 1288).