

## CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF HOPE

*Dear Parishioners,*

The last few weeks have been full of meaning for our parish, as we celebrated and commemorated in various ways our 100<sup>th</sup> years since St. Anthony Mission was consecrated!

### **Tuesday, June 13 – St. Anthony's Feast Day Mass and White Tent Dinner**

After having offered two early Masses to accommodate the faithful, one in English and the other in Latin, we were graced by the visit of our new shepherd, Bishop Michael Burbidge, who was the main celebrant at our special 5:00 PM Mass.

Former priests of the parish also came to join us. Fr. John Cregan (the first pastor of our parish from the Diocese of Arlington) gave a heartfelt homily. Also in attendance were former pastors Fr. John Melmer and Fr. John Zeigler; former parochial vicars Fr. Jerome Magat and Fr. Mark Mullaney, along with our current parochial vicar Fr. Joseph Kenna, the Bishop's MC Fr. Robert Wagner; and native son Fr. Ronald Gripshover.

The evening Mass was particularly lovely at that time of day, with the setting sun streaming through the western windows and casting a heavenly glow which caught the incense wafting its way up toward heaven with our prayers.

Afterwards we had a crowd of about 250 parishioners and friends join us for a meal and fellowship under a great white tent. A live band in period costumes named the *Virginia Serenaders* provided us with authentic renditions of songs from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It was a wonderful and joyful evening in the hot Southern summer...

### **Saturday, June 24 – The Anniversary of the 1917 Consecration of our Church**

The parishioners assembled for the 9:00 AM Solemn Mass were treated to a special spiritual blessing, as history was made on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration. Our choir filled the church with hymns of praise as the incense filled the choir loft! The altar boys wore red cassocks as was done at the consecration on June 24, 2107.

The moment was historic and sublime, as if those present had set their foot upon the threshold that would mark the crossing into the 2<sup>nd</sup> centenary of our parish history. It was a small but blessed band of the faithful that posterity will not forget.

We again went from the house of God to the table of feasting, with a brunch in our parish hall and more friendship and fellowship!

### **Sunday, June 25, 2017 – The First Day of our Second Centenary!**

The import of this day in our history was perhaps hidden by the return to Ordinary Time, yet it was no ordinary event for us. In God's Providence the Catholic torch in King George County was being held in our generation's hands, and at last we carried it into our 2<sup>nd</sup> centenary, after having joyfully completed 100 years of worshipping Jesus Our Lord and serving His people.

After each Mass we knelt before the altar of God and listened attentively amidst billowing clouds of incense as we solemnly entrusted and consecrated our parish, including both churches and all the souls in our territory, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was a grace filled moment latent with spiritual import.

At 3:00 PM, the great Hour of Mercy, we gathered in the church once again for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the solemn chanting of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. And then silent prayer before Our Eucharistic Lord, beseeching Him to hold our small but faithful community close to His Sacred Heart as we stood at the threshold of our future century.

At 4:30 PM even more souls filled the church to sing together Solemn Vespers and close our worship with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

And then, as always, to the feast for friendship and happy fellowship!

Thank you, my dear parishioners, for it is because of your dedication to God and this, His humble house and faithful parish, that we have shared these good things!

Excelsior

-Father de Rosa, Pastor