

We have much to be proud of in our relationship with La Sagrada Familia.

Love ONE ANOTHER

BY: ARCHBISHOP JEROME E. LISTECKI



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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Anniversaries are special times, set aside for remembrance. Those of us with a spiritual vision acknowledge the “hand of God” that fashioned our commitment. This past weekend I traveled to the Dominican Republic to celebrate the 40th anniversary of our mission parish La Sagrada Familia.

It was 40 years ago that then Archbishop Weakland, through the vision of Msgr. James Harvey (native son of Milwaukee) of the Apostolic Nunciature in the Dominican Republic, requested that a relationship be created to support a parish in the Diocese of San Juan de la Maguana. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee would staff the La Sagrada Familia parish with priests. In the intervening years, the priests served the community, evangelizing, teaching, and celebrating the sacraments. They acted as an extension of our commitment to serve the universal Church. But like so many, they have received so much more than they could ever have imagined. Among the priests that served the parish two were made bishops; Donald Hying, now bishop of Madison, WI, and James Schuerman, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. They would be among the first to tell you how grateful they are to the people of La Sagrada Familia in shaping their vision of the Church.

During the Archbishop Dolan years, staffing of the mission parish was turned over to the Community of St. Paul. The missionary community was formed under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Its priests are incardinated (they belong) to the Archdiocese of Milwaukee with the specific task of missionary work. The members of this missionary community serve in Colombia, Mexico, Ethiopia, Dominican Republic and Milwaukee. Their charism is to serve the poor. There are also lay members who assist the community. Currently the pastor of La Sagrada Familia is Fr. Javier Guativa of the community of St. Paul, assisted by Fr. Thomas Nadu of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Dolores Puertolas, a lay minister from the Community of St Paul, is a tremendous pastoral servant who many say is the “heart” of the parish.

Everyone who comes for a visit to La Sagrada Familia is in a sense transformed. Bishop Donald Hying shared with me that every Catholic should experience a parish in a different culture. It broadens one’s vision and presents avenues for evangelization. The mark of the archdiocese is found everywhere that parishes of the archdiocese have built chapels, renovated buildings, and provided tabernacles. You my

LOA community should remember that during one Lenten season you provided funds for the building of hundreds of latrines for the people of the area.

Although La Sagrada Familia is located in a central town, the chapels serve a multitude of areas and the priests go out every Sunday to various locations covering a population of more than 35,000 people.

When you visit La Sagrada Familia, or any of the chapels, you are greeted with a hospitality that is second-to-none. Hugs all around as if you are family members not seen for years. Fr. Juan Camacho, who was a former pastor of the parish, said to me at the end of our arrival Mass, “Archbishop I’m hugged out.”

On Sunday, the anniversary celebration began with a procession of hundreds of parishioners. The enthusiasm was electric. Bishop Tomas Alejo Concepcion, the bishop of San Juan de la Maguana, was the principal celebrant. He was with us in our Milwaukee cathedral last September 2021 to begin this year-long celebration. He preached a heartfelt and insightful homily. He was assisted by the former Bishop Jose Dolores Grullon who was a great supporter of the La Sagrada Familia community. There were 18 pilgrims from Milwaukee who celebrated the event with us led by Dr. Antoinette Mensah of our World Mission office. She has worked hard to raise the awareness of our archdiocesan community to the existence and twinning possibilities with La Sagrada Familia.

I addressed the congregation at the Mass reminding them that we are one family joined by common “blood,” the sacrificial blood of Jesus that makes us one.

My travels to the Dominican Republic produced a number of mishaps. However, I’ll save them for another LOA when I will describe the further adventures, or better misadventures, of the Archbishop and Father Juan. It is worthy of a sitcom.

We have much to be proud of in our relationship with La Sagrada Familia. Our 40 years reminds us of the love and sacrifices given as a gift by so many. It reminds us of our unity as a Church. It reminds us that we belong to Christ. As we commit ourselves to the future we do so as we LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Jerome E. ListECKi
Archbishop of Milwaukee



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