

To: Father Paul
Joe Hershel
Our Lady of the Assumption Parish Council

November 14, 2016

From: Gary Texter

Subject: Pastoral Assistant's Report

Adult Faith Formation

Our Lady of the Assumption's Day of Recollection and Renewal, *The Heart of the Community: Caring, Gratitude, Hope* was a great success! Although Fr. Paul was unable to be with us, as he was giving a retreat to Lay Carmelites in Massachusetts, he was with us in spirit and secured Fr. Michael Kissane (Provincial of the Carmelite Order) to say the Sunday Mass. Fr. Michael helped set the tone for the day working our theme of Caring, Gratitude, and Hope into his homily. Bette Bonitz and the choir led the people in the opening song requested by Sister Margaret Ellen and the Song, *We Can Be Kind*, that I requested for the meditation as well as some other well-chosen songs throughout the Mass. The Day continued in the Parish Center, with prayer, song, talks and discussion led by Sister, a Pot Luck Lunch, a Music Video of *We Can Be Kind*, small group sharing, quiet reflection time. We were blessed with 40 attendees. There were 2 people who wanted desperately to come but were ill, and Sister made a point to visit them and pray with them after the closing. The evaluations of the day by the participants were stellar! Some who had not been to programs we have done expressed how delighted they were to attend. It was a day that fed the spirit and also the sense of community for those attending, as well as providing some really good physical nourishment as evidenced by the wonderful variety and quantity of food.

There is a thirst among our parishioners for more, and we will work on additional opportunities.

Cheryl Avery, associated with the Augustine Institute and Lighthouse Publications asked if I thought there might be an additional need among the local parishes for more training on FORMED for Formation Leaders. I told her there was, and she secured space at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mt Carmel throughout the day and evening Nov 9 and Nov 10. Many from our Adult Faith Formation Network Parishes attended. We placed the times in our bulletin and Bette Bonitz, Chris Hershel and myself attended. Our Lady of the Assumption was able to take advantage of a special offer on a book obtained for less than 10 percent of cost that will be given out at Christmas time with a special letter from Fr. Paul. (Perhaps an opportunity to not only do something special for our regular Mass goers, but to reach out to the C and E (Christmas and Easter) Catholics as well.

We have about 13 parishioners signed into FORMED now. We will have a formal launch soon, probably the weekend of Nov 27 –there are many programs of interest parishioners can view during Advent. I will confirm with Fr.Paul.

Ecumenical Outreach

Season 9 for the Greater Middletown Interfaith Council Warming Station for the Homeless will begin November 20, 2016 at St. Paul's United Methodist Church with a prayer service beginning at 7:30pm before we open the doors to our guests at 9pm. The Greater Middletown Interfaith Council Variety Show on Sunday October 23rd at Orange County Community College was a huge success raising over \$6000.00 for the Warming Station. Several OLA parishioners sang in the joint choir, including the song *We Can be Kind*, which was sung at both weekend Masses this past weekend. Fr. Paul and I were among the announcers introducing the acts. Our thanks to Gail Johnson from Our Lady of Mount Carmel for Coordinating this event and to all who contribute in any way to benefit The Warming Station which serves those who might otherwise not survive the winter months.

The Annual Interfaith Prayer Service will be Tuesday, November 22, 2016 at 7pm at Temple Sinai, Middletown. All are welcome. On Saturday Nov 19 at 9am OLA will host its Annual Thanksgiving Prayer Service for those receiving Thanksgiving Baskets. As always, all are welcome to attend.

Thanksgiving baskets are distributed immediately following the service. Many thanks to Chris Hershel and the Thanksgiving Basket distribution team and to all parishioners who are helping in any way.

God bless you all, - Gary