Harvest Festival Shows Our Parish Family is One of Service, Fellowship

Over the years at Saint Joseph's, two things I've seen time and time again are the incredible sense of community in how people care about one another and want to build new friendships, and how they have a greater love for God and their parish that manifests itself all the time.

For instance, in every parish for it to thrive, it takes a small army of people who do things for the greater glory of God. In this week's Gospel, we have a teaching moment from our Lord where he lovingly teaches the apostles about not seeking their own glory, but rather that service is costly too. As He tells them, "…the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45). I've yet to meet someone in my nearly 10 years now as pastor who signs up to assist at something in our parish wanting something in return, or some type of recognition. Rather, whether it's serving as an usher, working at a funeral, cleaning the church after a busy weekend, or teaching faith formation, the one thing that ties that all together is a love of God and people wanting to help one another on their journey.

Next weekend, we'll be celebrating this spirit of service and community as we come together to celebrate with our Harvest Festival. Jordan Ecker, our director of Engagement and Communications, has been working very hard for months with a group of volunteers planning and getting things ready.

Taking place Saturday, it will kick off with "Trunk or Treat" organized by the Knights of Columbus starting at 2:30 running till 4. When from 2:30 to 4:45 and again after Mass, from 6 to 9 p.m. will be Family Fun events, and then after Mass Bingo with a Chicken Dinner. Bill Bradley, our Director of Music and Worship, will be leading us in a special Polka Mass that night. And of course all of this is possible because of a generous small army of people who are working to set things up, run the festival, and get it cleaned up for Sunday morning.

It's been a real labor of love from Jordan and a number of volunteers who've been working so hard. But the best thing about the Harvest Festival is the people.

Community is so important, and in these times when people can be so busy and also divided, it's so important to find things that bring us together. At the festival, this "small town" atmosphere really unfolds. People get the chance to sit down and talk, to connect more deeply, have some fun at Bingo and have their kids meet their neighbor's kids, and have a relaxing, great time. It's a continuation in many respects of something you see after our Masses too. Saint Joe's isn't a "Mass factory" parish where people shuffle in and out quickly; it's, as one parishioner put it, a "small town" kind of feeling, and I've felt so welcomed here now as I come up on 10 years next year.

I hope to see you at the festival next Saturday night. A heartfelt thanks to Jordan and our staff and our many volunteers for their incredibly hard work in preparing it.

Have a great week!

Fr. Paul