

Catholic Review Column: How to Celebrate Our 226th Anniversary

Last Sunday, about 2,000 people gathered at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland for the principal liturgy celebrating the 225th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. It was a wonderful celebration that brought together a cardinal, archbishops, bishops, priests, deacons, women and men in consecrated life, school presidents, principals, students, leaders of Catholic universities, hospitals, charitable institutions, and many, many faithful lay men and women in the archdiocese.

And there was an equally wonderful spirit among all who were present, as together we remembered the many sacrifices and contributions of those who have gone before us on the day in which we prayed for the souls of all the faithful departed.

As we prepare to wrap up our celebration of this important archdiocesan milestone, it prompts us to question how each of us might add our own page to the impressive story of this local church.

That story, I said in my homily last Sunday, is being written in the homes that you, the people of God of this archdiocese, have established, where the faith is handed on from generation to generation. It is being written in the young people who are coming of age in the church and taking their rightful place within it. It is being written in the workplace and ballot box where you bear witness to your faith, and in the many ministries of the church which you sustain by your leadership, expertise, participation and generosity, including our Catholic schools, Catholic Charities, and Catholic healthcare.

In remembering and praying for those, past and present, who have built this local church and sustained it by their prayers and zeal, we, the people of this Archdiocese of Baltimore, are confronted with a challenge. From their place in eternity, our forebears are praying for us, urging us onward, pleading with us to open our hearts to Jesus sent as our redeemer, and asking us to heed Pope Francis' call that we become "missionary disciples," ready to bear witness to Christ, ready to help

accompany those who no longer practice their faith or who are searching for truth and love to the fullness of life and love, revealed by Christ and communicated by the Holy Spirit.

The intrepid faith of those who went before us prompts us to rededicate ourselves and this archdiocese to the mission of evangelization, relentlessly asking: What does the mission require of us? How should we be present in every neighborhood in this local church? How should we open our arms to the newly arrived and our growing diversity? What should we do to support our families as the principal agent of evangelization? What should we do to make vibrant our parish communities, make solid our schools, and our charities signs of Christ's compassionate love for the vulnerable? What should we do to defend life and human dignity, to reach the young, and to respect the dying and the aged? How can we help create a society that is more just and compassionate, a society truly open to the gift of life and the promise of eternal life?

Perhaps our answers to these important questions will serve not only as our own page in the story of our church, but also our gift for the archdiocese's 226th anniversary!