

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

A (Parish) Love Story

Every year around this time, we mark our Parish Feast Day and take note of the remarkable history that has unfolded in this building. But the story of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs can't really be told in brick and glass and marble alone. What tells the story of a parish are its people. Because in the people, we discover nothing less than the Body of Christ.

That is the real story of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs.

It's the young father out of work, who comes here to light a candle and spends his last dollar on a rose to leave on Our Lady's altar. It's the couple with a sick newborn, taking turns going to different Masses so that one of them can stay home with the baby. It's the widow who stops by in the afternoons to pray the Rosary, and the janitor coming to Mass every morning before going to work, and the woman who works at the bank running down Queens Boulevard for noon Mass on her lunch hour.

**And the works of this parish
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That is Our Lady Queen of Martyrs.

It is the gathering of believers every Sunday to proclaim what we believe—and then to live it. Many do it through the many ministries we have. It is the lector reading God's word. It's the minister of Holy Communion, taking the Eucharist to an elderly woman who has a broken hip. It's the usher who holds open the door, and the singer who leads us in song. It is the choir that fills this space with something so transcendent that it could only be called a prayer. It's the altar server who comes running in at 8:30 on a Sunday morning, wearing sneakers and shorts, and throws on a cassock that's two sizes too big and dashes onto the altar during the Gospel because being here is absolutely the coolest thing in the world. And here's the amazing part: There are 90 others just like him.

That is Our Lady Queen of Martyrs.

It's the guy at the Easter Vigil, who spent his whole life looking for something, and finally found it, here. And so, on a springtime evening he stands before hundreds of people with baptismal water dripping from his face, mingling with his tears, and he just can't stop grinning. He is now a Catholic. He is a part of us. And we are a part of him. And that, too, is Our Lady Queen of Martyrs.

It's the dozens who come every Thursday to behold Christ, in the monstrance, at Adoration. It's the *hundreds* who come to walk the Stations of the Cross with Mary. Our Lady Queen of Martyrs is the baby being baptized, the little girl receiving her first communion, the teenager being confirmed, the bride getting married. It is the sacramental life of God's Church being reborn again and again. And, of course, it is our priests, who make possible the ongoing miracle of the Mass.

That is our parish. That is our story.

Ultimately, it is a love story. The story of our love for God—and His for us. It is a story of how we live that love in ways large and small. The reading from St. James today says that faith without works is dead.

Well, faith *with* works is brilliantly alive. And the works of this parish are a beautiful testament to a living faith. A faith that grows, and spreads, and touches others. It's the spirit of the place, and the spirit of the people. But faith without works is dead. And we are a parish of astounding works, and abiding faith.

And *that* is the real story of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs.

And on this feast day that we celebrate, we thank Our Lady, full of grace, for watching over us. And we ask that God's grace will continue to sustain us—that we may continue to be a people of faith, and a people of works. And so we pray, with joy, and gratitude, and hope:

OUR LADY QUEEN OF MARTYRS, PRAY FOR US.

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