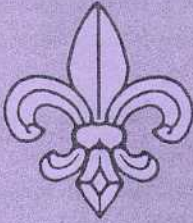


CHURCH OF
ST. JOAN
OF ARC

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March, 2010

Dear Friends of the Arc,

The three figures in the enclosed photo are not the Three Musketeers, nor the Three Blind Mice! Rather, they are three priests united in a new venture of ministry to the people of God.

The priest in the center is myself. To my left is Fr. Gerard Marable, the pastor of St. Bartholomew Parish, the administrator of St. Joan of Arc Parish and soon-to-be the pastor of the merged parish, which will be called St. Josephine Bakhita.

To my right is Fr. Rico Ducle, who was born in Haiti, but has lived in South America, the Philippines and the USA. He speaks, Creole, French, Spanish, English and Tagalog [dominant language of the Philippines].

All three of us are embarking on a new approach to ministry that has arisen as a result of the merger of the parishes and the need of the diocese to reach out to the Spanish-speaking people who have come to live here.

The mergers of parishes that have affected so many people in our diocese are also having their effects on the priests and on the ministry. For Fr. Gerard, it means becoming the pastor of a parish that will include communities of African Americans, European Americans and Latin Americans!! The merger raises the interesting challenge of affirming all of the cultures while negotiating the Mass schedule, the use of buildings, the sharing of resources and personnel and the communication of all of this in two languages!!

To help Fr. Gerard, as well as many other parishes along the Black Horse Pike region, Fr. Rico and myself have been assigned to minister to the Spanish speaking community. The church of St. Joan of Arc, in the parish of St. Josephine Bakhita, will be one center of ministry to the Latinos.

Another center of ministry is forming in the area of Sicklerville, in a trailer park along Williamstown Road and an apartment complex on Egg Harbor Road. I have been celebrating Sunday Masses in the trailers and the apartments. I have been impressed by the beautiful little community of Catholics there who want to celebrate their faith, share the faith with their children and meet other Catholics.

In February, ten youth from the trailer park joined 28 youth from St. Joan of Arc for a retreat led by young people from New York and North Jersey. They sang, told stories, read the bible, shared a meal and created a beautiful memory of a faith community that cares about them.

Many of you who are reading this letter probably enjoyed similar experiences in your adolescence. It might have been at a Catholic School, a CCD program, a Sodality, a CYO, or a teenage retreat movement such as Kairos. Perhaps you helped with the carnival or other fund-raising activity.

If you have some happy memories of the Catholic community from your adolescence, I hope that you'll be able to support us in our present effort to reach the youth of the Church. Within a few years, one-half of all of the youth in our diocese will be Latino!

Our ministry is an effort to lay the foundation for the future of these young Catholics by starting Spanish ministry in the parishes along the Black Horse Pike.

Eventually, Fr. Rico and I hope to identify other communities of Spanish-speaking Catholics in Gloucester, Mt. Ephraim, Bellmawr, Runnemede, Blackwood and Sicklerville. You can help us by sending us only \$1.00 per week, (\$13.00 in response to this letter), or \$52.00 for the year. Please make checks out to "St. Joan of Arc Church." You may use the enclosed envelope for your donation. I thank you in advance for your generosity.

The photo of Fr. Gerard, Fr. Rico and myself was taken at the funeral of a long-time parishioner of St. Joan of Arc, Mr. Paul Panko, Sr.

He was born Paul Joseph Panko on December 7, 1922 (later to be known as Pearl Harbor Day, although in the Nicaraguan community it is the national feast day of the Patroness of the country, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, *la Purisima*).

Paul's parents were both of Russian descent, but for some reason that no one in the family seems to know, he was raised as a Baptist. He became a Catholic when he married Eleanor Paprzycki. In the year of my birth, 1947, Paul was received into the Catholic Church on October 30 [mischief night!!] and married to Eleanor on November 1, the feast of All Saints.

The priest who married them, and who gave Paul his First Communion at the wedding ceremony, was Fr. Arthur B. Strenski. Later, he became Monsignor Strenski, and lived to be 99 ½ years before his death at the end of a distinguished life as the pastor of St. Joseph Church in south Camden (the Polish parish).

Paul and Eleanor Panko had six children: Eileen [Wally Watson], Jane [Thomas Loughery], Paul Jr., the twins Doris [John Kirschner] and Donna [Ed Rawls] and Kenneth who died at birth on February 3, 1958.

Before his wedding Paul served in the US Army in WWII, seeing action at Normandy, Northern France, the Ardennes Forest, the Rhineland in Germany and in Central Europe after the war. He was discharged on December 10, 1945, which three years later became "Human Rights Day" when the newly-formed United Nations issued the "Declaration of Human Rights."

Paul was a very talented man who cooked, gardened, fished and knew how to fix just about everything in the house. He helped family members and neighbors whenever they needed it. He fed the birds every day, cut all the lawns in the neighborhood and shared the strawberries, horseradish, eggplants, tomatoes and peaches from his garden with his neighbors.

His son Paul, Jr. has continued his father's legacy by volunteering to maintain the grounds around the rectory, church and school at St. Joan of Arc. He was always a big help to me in my time as pastor and continues to be the same for Fr. Gerard. Please remember the Panko family in your prayers.

Thanks in advance for your prayers and support for the new ministry of outreach to our fellow Catholics who are continuing the immigrant tradition of enriching our diocese with their faith. Many blessings.

Peace,
Fr. Ken Hallahan
(Senior Priest)