

## **OLA Spanish-Speaking Community**

There has been a Spanish-speaking presence in Claremont since the founding of Sacred Heart chapel in the barrio in 1928. The current Spanish-speaking community at Our Lady of the Assumption has been an active and vibrant part of this parish community since 1990 when Fr. Charles Ramirez was assigned to OLA as associate pastor. His bilingual fluency helped the community coalesce and find its own identity and leadership.

Currently there are about 860 registered individuals who have identified themselves as having Spanish as their first language of preference – and there are probably half again as many more who are not registered, for one reason or another. There is one Mass in Spanish each weekend and the worshippers generally fill the church – about 500 or so at each liturgy.

The Spanish-speaking community at OLA has been served for many years for Baptism preparation and for the administration of the Sacrament itself by a Spanish-speaking deacon who retired last summer. They currently have a visiting priest – the fourth in a series of visitors – who does Quinceañeras and Baptisms one Saturday a month and who will hear a few confessions before or after Mass on Sunday but who is not available for weddings, funerals, or emergency sick calls.

A variety of ministries serve this community. There is a choir of eighteen voices with a director who is paid a per Mass stipend by the parish. In addition, there are currently 27 Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, 13 lectors, 14 altar servers, 4-5 ushers, Children's Liturgy of the Word which serves about forty children, 6-12 years old, each week, a prayer group that meets weekly for adoration and intercessory prayer, a new outreach ministry to an orphanage in Mexico (Los Niños de Salamanca de Mexico), and lay sacramental preparation teams for Baptism, Quinceañeras, and weddings. The parish also offers elementary religious education classes in Spanish, organized and coordinated by a paid Spanish-speaking staff member as part of the overall parish religious education program overseen by our bi-lingual Faith Formation Director.

This community serves the parish-at-large with its ministry of service, preparing and celebrating with the whole parish their special feasts and festivals – Our Lady of Guadalupe and Mexican Independence Day, for example. They also assist in the preparation of bi- and tri- lingual liturgies for our patronal feast, Our Lady of the Assumption, and communal penance services, and they participate actively in the annual parish Fiesta, providing food and game booths, music and folkloric dancing.

One of the primary Synod initiatives is evangelization. And although they are already a busy, active, independent community, OLA's Spanish-speaking community is hoping for a community-wide re-evangelization and rejuvenation with the coming of a new pastor. They are praying fervently that the man selected will be fluently bi-lingual and thus better able to enter fully into the life of this vital parish community.

Prepared by: *Spanish-speaking Community Leadership Council*