

## February 10, 2019 - THE LIGHT OF CHRIST ENTERING OUR RENOVATED HALL!

Last Saturday morning (February 2nd), we were honored by the visit of Bishop Fisher as we celebrated **Candlemas**, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, exactly 40 days after His Nativity (Christmas). It was a triple celebration as we chose this great Feast to have the blessing of the renovated Social Hall, and it also happened to be a First Saturday (Devotion to our Lady of Fatima) this year.

Bishop Fisher had asked me how many people we could expect to attend. My response was "from 50 to 100, depending upon the weather". Snow began to fall on the day before our celebration and the wind chill temperature fell to the teens... The snow on some of the roads had turned to ice. However, God had a different plan: people turned up in large numbers!.. **a total of 300**, which made **our largest ever attendance at a Saturday morning Mass!** Mary must have been smiling upon us from Heaven. The First Saturday devotion began 8 years ago, shortly after we introduced a weekly Saturday morning Mass, and the number of participants had so far varied from a low of 20 to a high of 100.

Many of you have let me know how much they appreciated Bishop Fisher's homily. For the sake of the 1,000 parishioners that could not make it last Saturday, I will try to summarize the main points and provide some quotes. Bishop Fisher first referred to the irony of **Groundhog Day** and **Candlemas** always being on the same day; therefore, a day of both light and shadow. Both **light** and **shadow** are a reality of any day of our lives... even when we choose the shadowy places, they are always uncomfortable. That discomfort is the light shining in the darkness; no matter how large the shadows, or how dark the night, the light is still present. This was symbolized by our candlelit procession through the renovated Hall and then through entering the church before Mass began. That lit candle we carried was the reminder that "**Christ, a light for revelation, is with us**". When we extinguished our candles, the light did not go away. It is within us and always will be. But like Simeon who met Jesus in the temple, we must see with eyes of Faith; the light of God's love consumes the darkness, fills us, and frees us to go in peace, just as God promised.

In closing his homily, Bishop Fisher said, "Today, we also celebrate Father Narcisse Martin, a wonderful priest-shepherd for the Lord, who led many people of the Waldorf area to Christ" (for a total of 29 years over 100 years ago, baptizing 2,375 people at a time when Waldorf had a small population). "Fr. Martin is an example for all of us and a reminder that the work must continue. **We are the true candles that were blessed today. We are the lights in the world of shadows that need to see Christ's love more than ever.** Congratulations on your renovated hall (now named Father Martin Hall) and **may Christ always be present among you** guiding the good work of your pastor and parish family."

Bishop Fisher also expressed his appreciation for the warm welcome our parish gave him. He enjoyed the three hours of celebration he spent with us. In blessing our renovated "Father Martin Hall", Bishop Fisher not only blessed 300 of us present last Saturday morning, but he also **blessed all the people who will come to our Hall in the future.**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank God for all the volunteers that made this wonderful celebration a reality and list some of the key groups that helped: Parish Council, Marian Group, Altar Servers, Music Ministry, Altar Guild, Knights of Columbus, Couples for Christ, Building Committee, Hispanic Ministry, Lectors, Father Martin Society, last and not least the Project Committee which on my behalf led the preparation and implementation/supervision of the Hall Renovation Project.

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide the ongoing **spiritual renewal** of our parish and of each of us. May our future use of the Father Martin Hall be an integral part of our spiritual renewal programs, including the six-week **GIFT OF THE MASS** beginning Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, March 9, and ending just before Palm Sunday.

May the Light of Christ shine in our parish and in our hearts! May each of us share that Light of Christ within the Waldorf area and beyond! May the Holy Spirit help us to see Christ in everyone we encounter, especially those most in need!

One in Christ,  
*Fr. Alain*