

St. Dominic Reaches Out to Help All Saints

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A Lenten outreach has brought two parishes together, far surpassing the kindness of offering a helping hand. Unlike many parishes, St. Dominic in Brookfield does not have a sister parish to support; so each year they choose a parish within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to help financially and with other needs around the church.

What happened this year exceeded their expectations. A record number of volunteers stepped up to help and, through this outreach, the two communities spruced up the church building and formed friendships.

According to Pastoral Associate Mary Lestina, each year for the past eight years, the human concerns committee not only reaches out financially to various parishes, but also visits the site and assists with renewing, renovating and needed repairs.

"This year when we worked with All Saints Parish, we had an increase of 300 percent in our volunteers," she said. "The weekends we worked together were spirit filled. In light of the current unrest, our parish models are what is needed at this time."

To determine which parish to assist each year, Lestina said they consult with archdiocesan leadership to learn which parishes are in need. They chose All Saints this year due to their affiliation with St. Martin de Porres Parish and the expressed needs for projects on their campus.

"We invite members of their parish to join us in projects such as painting, repairing, cleaning, organizing, etc. It does not only help them to see how they can help to care for their facilities but above all, it is about developing relationships, to share our stories, to



▲ The Lenten Outreach project for St. Dominic this year was to assist at All Saints Parish. (Submitted photo)

pray with one another and to enrich one another with culture," she explained. "All Saints is exactly nine miles east of St. Dominic. There are so many ways we can help our brothers and sisters by lessening their burdens and providing help in their ministries. (For) example, we had two food drives for their food pantry. We also provided gift cards to help their patrons purchase fresh meat, milk and perishable foods."

All Saints' membership consists of primarily African American members and Lestina credits this to the huge increase in volunteers, who ranged in age from 2 to their mid 80s. She said St. Dominic, a predominately white church, is a parish known for its care and giving, in its generosity and outreach.

"At the beginning of our work together and following our opening prayer and blessing by Fr. (James) Arthur, pastor of All Saints Parish, I invited everyone to make sure they have conversations during their work with members of the other parish," she said. "To my great joy, at lunch the 18 tables of more than 90 people were all mixed with folks from both parishes. The atmosphere was

amazing: people engaged in conversation, storytelling and above all, sharing about their parish life. In previous years, our numbers of volunteers were much less but this year it was an outstanding outcome from both parishes."

Among the work completed at All Saints was the purchase and replacement of nine toilets, shower repair for the sisters in the convent, installation of new shower heads, nine bathrooms painted, removal of the pews in the church for deep cleaning, and cleaning the 15-foot high Stations of the Cross. They also painted the hallways and staircases, as well as the large hallway and meeting space where the parish gathers and serves their community meal.

"We removed all the candle wax from their pews from previous Holy Saturdays, repaired some of the kneelers, cleaned all statues, altar and choir loft, cleaned and organized their entire narthexes, thoroughly cleaned the kitchen, repaired plaster on several walls, installed curtains to divide the intake for their food pantry, installed corner guards to protect walls, removed a large tree on their grounds that posed a danger and

created and installed a new outdoor sign indicating All Saints parish," said Lestina, adding, "Above all, we built relationships."

Fr. Arthur agreed and enjoyed having the two communities join together in work and fellowship.

"The people of my parish said the Lenten Outreach with St. Dominic was a spiritual exercise that led them to a deeper spirituality in our communion with one another," he said.

Working side by side, the two parish communities joined efforts to maintain the beauty of All Saints, a building, Lestina said, that is decorated to spiritually nourish their faith community. Volunteers worked elbow to elbow, adding multiple coats of paint, statuary facelifts and deep cleaning,

"We worked with members of the choir, staff, parish council, and many volunteers that helped where needed," said Lestina. "I met several people who said that All Saints gives them a purpose for living. They love to volunteer and feel needed. We had two women who welcomed us and made sure the group was hydrated. They provided coffee, prepared the lunch that we brought, cleaned the kitchen so teams could return to their jobs. Everyone worked together flawlessly. People were hugging, laughing, sharing equipment, and above all enjoying the challenge of tackling new projects. Our parish learned that this community blessed us by their outstanding warmth and hospitality. We learned how hard working this parish family is to serve."

Lestina hopes other parishes in the archdiocese will utilize their time and talents to reach out to parishes in need. She invites others to use them as a model to assist those communities who are struggling financially.