

# MISSION INTENTIONS

JANUARY 2023-2024

We pray that the Holy Spirit may help us recognize the blessing of having different gifts in the Christian community and discover the richness of the different traditions and rituals in the Catholic Church.

## Country Focus: Puerto Rico

If you had to guess the location of the oldest Catholic church on American soil, where do you think it would be found? If you answered Puerto Rico, you would be correct. Puerto Rico has been a commonwealth of the United States since 1898. However, Catholicism was present in Puerto Rico centuries earlier; there were Catholic churches in Puerto Rico before the pilgrims arrived on the Mayflower. Its Cathedral of San Juan Bautista was built in 1521. Not only is it the oldest church on U.S. soil, it is the second oldest church in the Western Hemisphere.



Hemisphere.

Puerto Rico is culturally diverse, due to the number of countries that colonized it over the centuries. This has resulted in vibrant celebrations of the liturgy that reflect the community's

cultural traditions. One example of this is Bomba, a drumming and dance tradition that originated in Africa and was brought to Puerto Rico by African slaves. We will learn more about Bomba in this newsletter.

## Leading to Knowledge of the Faith

One of the goals of the Second Vatican Council was unity in the Church. This is also a goal of Pope Francis. In his homily on Pentecost Sunday in 2017, the Holy Father encouraged all believers to find unity in the Holy Spirit. This means avoiding **diversity** without **unity**, which Pope Francis said happens when “we take sides...belonging to this or that group before belonging to the Church,” and **unity** without **diversity**, which Pope Francis described as uniformity, where “everyone has to do everything together and in the same way...” Instead, Pope Francis asks Catholics to work toward “unity in difference,” where everyone’s gifts can be used to create an open and welcoming Church.

## Saint Spotlight

## Saint John XXIII

By all accounts, Saint John XXIII was not expected to bring new ideas and innovations to the Church while he was the Holy Father. Elected to the papacy when he was 76, many saw him as a compromise pick—someone who wouldn’t live long enough to make significant changes, who was neither too progressive or too conservative, and someone who would be happy to quietly oversee the Church for the rest of his life.

But Saint John XXIII proved them all wrong. While his papacy was short—he was elected in 1958, and was only the pope for about five years before his death in 1963—it was anything but quiet. Having traveled extensively as part of his appointments prior to being elected Pope, Saint John XXIII was aware that the world was changing, and he believed that it was necessary for the Catholic Church to reflect on how



it could best represent Christ in this new world. So he did something that surprised everyone: he convoked the Second Vatican Council, which officially began on October 11, 1962.

Saint John XXIII hoped this council would inspire all Catholics to find new ways, and a renewed energy, to share the Gospel. Although Saint John XXIII didn’t live long enough to see the results of the Second

Vatican Council, we know today that it did have a profound effect on the Church. We will learn more about the Second Vatican Council on the second page of this newsletter.

For someone who was just supposed to be a caretaker of the Church, Saint John XXIII had a considerable affect on its history. He was canonized in 2014 by Pope Francis. His feast day is October 11.

## Formation for Life in Christ

It didn't take long for then Pope John XXIII to announce the Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II. He had only been pope for three months before he made the announcement on June 29, 1959. After three years of preparations, Vatican II officially opened on October 11, 1962, as we learned on the first page of this newsletter.

One of the goals of Vatican II was to identify ways for the Church to be the light of Christ in a world that was quickly becoming more modern. After decades that included two world wars and the Great Depression, global society had changed. Vatican II aimed to help the Church learn how to share its teachings and modify its practices, while still preserving the truth of Church doctrine, so that the Gospel message could be more accessible to contemporary society.

Vatican II closed on December 8, 1965, after about three years. In that time, there were four sessions that each lasted between 8-12 weeks. Participants included clergy and theological experts. For the first time in Church history, lay people and those from other religions were invited to observe.

At the end of Vatican II, 16 documents had been issued on topics including the Church's structure, ecumenism, the laity, religious freedom and liturgy.

Of these 16 documents, four were called "Constitutions", which means they were the most important of the 16 documents and had the authority to define Church teaching and change canon law and Church structures. One of these four documents, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), speaks to the richness of different traditions, like Pope Francis does in this month's prayer intention.

*Sacrosanctum Concilium* sought to restore and promote "full and active participation by all the people" to the liturgy (no. 14). It recognized that celebrating Mass in a community's native language and using their cultural and musical traditions in the liturgy could better help the faithful enter into the Eucharistic celebration, so long as any changes "harmonize with its true and authentic



spirit" (no. 37). Encouraging all Catholics to share their gifts creates a richness that is a blessing to the Church.

In this month's video, we will learn more about Bomba, a form of music that is fundamental to Puerto Rican culture. As you watch the video, think about how cultural traditions help people become more engaged in the Mass.

## Celebrating the Mystery

We gather as one family at Mass. The Eucharistic Liturgy brings us into communion with God and one another—not only with the people of our own parish, but with all Catholics around the world who also celebrate the same Mass. While the Eucharistic Liturgy is foundationally the same in every Catholic Church on Earth, each community brings its own liturgical and cultural gifts to this celebration. Sometimes, we have the opportunity to celebrate Mass with cultures different from our own. This gives us the opportunity to experience how the gifts of other communities help us draw closer to God. You don't have to look far to find a Mass that incorporates the gifts of a variety of cultures. Many communities are represented in our own archdiocese. Use this list to find a parish where you can experience a different liturgical style.

### Teaching Prayer: Devotions

Devotions are a type of prayer that are as varied as the gifts we find in the Church. They are a result of a community's faith and culture, and they help us engage in prayer. When used correctly, they also help prepare our hearts to fully enter into the Sacred Liturgy. Examples of popular devotions include the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, the veneration of relics, and pilgrimages. To learn more about devotions, [click here>>](#).

## "La Bomba:" Catholic Puerto Rican Ritual, Click Here>>



✚ What are some of the different gifts present in your own parish?

✚ How do these gifts help all parishioners grow closer to God?

✚ When appropriate, the Church allows diversity in the liturgy. How does this help in its mission to bring people to Christ?