

Queen of Apostles “Be the Church” Event

By Mary Rice

How can we live out our faith as Jesus has taught? How can we Be The Church? For some, this is an easy task; sort of a natural occurrence. For others it is not so easy. Some struggle with where to begin or how to offer their help. In the end, there are a wide variety of ways to do this and no one way is better than others. However, Queen of Apostles Community (QAC), in Dayton, Ohio has put a new twist on this ministry. This article will highlight their efforts in hopes of sharing their accomplishments with other parishes.

QAC is a small, non-territorial parish rooted in the Marianist traditions. Service to others is a key component of their Christian mission and very important in their faith journey. They have a very active Social Justice Committee that is involved in many ways throughout the Dayton region. However, on this particular day, a larger number of their members reached out to perform service for others.

This community has just one Mass on Sunday morning. For their Be the Church weekend, that Mass was moved to Saturday evening in order to allow all members to spend Sunday actively living out their faith with their actions rather than by their words. The goal was to have as many members out serving others on Sunday as possible. Some of the activities happened at different times over that same weekend, some activities happened during the day Sunday, and one activity happened for three weeks before and after that weekend.

This year they had members host a Halloween Party for youth at the Dakota Center in Dayton, prepare and serve lunch for the Interfaith Hospitality Network (Homeless Shelter) in Xenia, Ohio, prepare and serve lunch at the Clark Group Home in Dayton, sing to the residents of St. Leonard’s Assisted Living Facility, play violin music for residents of Mercy Sienna Assisted Living Facility, rake leaves for elderly parish members, work in the Nassau Street Garden in Dayton which is a neighborhood garden that supplies food to the neighbors and to a local food bank, assemble jars of cookie ingredients that will then be sold as a fundraiser for the Homeless Shelter in Xenia, and repair, paint, and clean at Heather’s house. Heather is a single mom with five children and her home was in great need of repair. There were also some other community members who participated in a demolition of a house in Dayton.

As you can see, an attempt was made to have activities in which all ages could participate. The goal was to work together as a family or in a small group at each location. If a member was not available that weekend, or unable to do physical labor, they were encouraged to support this event with a monetary donation, a donation of supplies, or as a prayer partner.

Ninety-eight community members participated in this Be The Church event. The number of hours worked totaled approximately 70. All in all, the QAC community worked approximately 600 man hours in the Dayton community. By targeting a single weekend, and providing many, many opportunities, a greater number of community members were able to find a way to participate.

Many of the people who participated in this activity stated that they felt 'great' when they were done. They appreciated that there were many ways they could help others and that it was organized in such a way to encourage participation. The Dayton area members benefited, the workers grew in their faith, and, I would like to believe they made God smile!