

The global Catholic Church is going to face some big challenges at the start of the new millennium. Pope John Paul II has profoundly influenced Eastern Europe and is credited with assisting the collapse of communism. But the Muslim influence is continuing to grow and needs some direct dialogue. The Palestinian question remains alive in the Holy Land. India and Pakistan have moved closer to a very ugly confrontation; regions of Africa still have basic needs like adequate food and water; and violence in Latin America continues while many Catholics there are investigating more charismatic-based versions of Christianity. It's exciting to be part of a global church, but it poses some difficult dilemmas for us and our leadership. On Trinity Sunday we celebrate the faith in God which unites Christians; next Sunday we celebrate the Body and Blood of the Lord, the faith in the eucharist which unite us as Catholics. We treasure that faith, but it carries with it the responsibility to care for all those in need in our Catholic and Christian families.

As we celebrate St. Regis Day, 1998, our community has grown into a multi-ethnic one which surpasses what we had at our founding thirty-four years ago. In our neighborhood now we can find African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Muslim families in greater numbers than there were when mostly white families started up this parish. I grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood in Kansas City; I did not have an African-American classmate in my Catholic school until I was in eighth grade. Our kids have opportunities for a dynamic inter-personal experience going to school in this part of town. It's exciting to be in a neighborhood where people can have a multi-ethnic experience of life. But it carries with it similar tensions and responsibilities which exist on a global scale.

At St. Regis our community is growing ever more committed to a stance which welcomes; we realize the more we learn about our neighbors, the more we learn about our humanity. The more we celebrate our diversity, the more united we become. We become an expression of Holy Trinity, multiple yet one.

In recent years we have also extended that commitment to other communities. We have sister relationships with St. James Parish in central Kansas City and with Comunidad Ita Maura in rural El Salvador. St. James continues to thank us for the support we give them; we make regular financial contributions to them and we help supply their food pantry. Ita Maura has also received financial assistance from us for many years, which has enabled them to construct buildings, expand their resources, and purchase property. But, quite honestly, our contact with them has been difficult to maintain. They do not have electricity 24 hours a day, much less phone lines or fax machines. Recently we've established e-mail contact with an office in the capital city, San Salvador, which has helpfully supplied us with more information about our brothers and sisters there. They have a new leader in the community, and they continue to keep us in our prayers for the support we give them. Supplies which we have been trying to get hand-delivered for over a year are finally on their way. Our social services ministry council hopes to have a delegation from St. Regis visit Comunidad Ita Maura in March of 1999. At that time, we hope to improve our information on the progress of that community.

Meanwhile St. Regis continues to distinguish itself as a community which promotes local concerns and global ones as well. This expansive vision is what makes us good Christians and committed Catholics.