

St. Pius X School, Santa Fe Springs, CA – Honors Sisters of Mercy



In 1955 the Sisters of Mercy founded the school and over the course of the next thirty-three years, sixty-four Sisters were involved in administration, teaching, mentoring, counseling, and caring deeply for thousands of students. For many years the school accommodated over 800 students in double grades during the week and provided two sessions of 800 each for public school students to attend CCD classes on Saturdays. In 1964, the first principal, Sister Mary Hilary/Dolores Carroll, was named superior of the new Mercy mission in Peru. The Sisters sent forth generations of us as good Catholics and good citizens. Many are now enjoying their reward in heaven; but for the work they did, they will surely, as the prophet said, be “shining like stars for all eternity” (Dn 12:6).

A few years ago, while attending a 40th anniversary Mass for his classmate, Fr. Richard Benson, C.M., Mercy Associate Marcel Viens (both attended SPX 1957-65) noticed nothing at the parish or school spoke of the love and labors of the Sisters of Mercy. Marcel initiated a plan, but Covid caused a four-year delay. However, it did allow for a few more years of research. Numerous emails later and assisted by visits to Burlingame to query some “marvelous Mercy minds” (thank you Sister Marian Clare Valenteen), a plaque was made with the names of all 64 Sisters that also includes the Mercy vocations from the parish.

On Sunday, January 28, the church was filled with alumni, family, friends, and parishioners to celebrate and honor the Sisters. Fr. Benson gave a rousing homily that highlighted the Sisters and spoke of the value of Catholic education on the opening of Catholic Schools Week and Open House at the parish school. Seated in the front chairs, just like it once was, were the Sisters of Mercy who received several ovations from the packed church. After Mass, the crowd assembled in the courtyard of the school adjacent to the statue of our patron, St. Pius X. Fr. Benson blessed the plaque along with a beautifully mounted picture of Mother Catherine McAuley. Marcel gave a brief history of the Sisters and their years at the school. There were posterboards all around the statue base with photos showing many of the Sisters throughout their thirty-three years at the school. The current principal, Mrs. Heather Haigh, eager to bring back Mercy history, was presented with a small replica of the plaque for her office. SPX students gifted the Sisters with a basket filled with

artistic handmade notes and cards with messages of gratitude to share with the Sisters living in the Motherhouse and Marian Convent who were unable to attend due to age or infirmity. The event was followed by brunch in the parish hall, thanks to the parents of current students.

We were thrilled to have with us that day; Sr. Vickie Brady, Sr. Diane Clyne, Sr. Toni Lynn Gallagher, and Sr. Bernie Hart who drove south from Burlingame; along with Sr. Yvette Perrault, and vocations from SPX; Sr. Gloria Mary Avila and Sr. Beatrice Marie Garcia. Thanks, in no small way to the SPX student government leaders and the St. Paul High School students who helped immeasurably. The event was beyond expectations apart from missing the Sisters unable to make the trip to Southern California. Fr. Benson's homily was a hit out of the park and held the congregation awestruck! It was such a joy to see the Sisters smiling from ear to ear, engage with so many friends showing appreciation, and receive hugs from former students and parents filled with affection and gratitude. Every ounce of it was long overdue, well-deserved, and definitely appropriate. It was truly a day filled with Mercy!

Marcel Viens - Mercy Associate, St. Pius X '65, St. Paul '69.