

A perspective on embracing diversity

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Editor, The Witness

DUBUQUE — When our ancestors came to the United States, they settled in areas where their acquaintances spoke the same language. It's human nature and part of our country's history. Irish farmers bought land in Garryowen in Butler Township of Jackson County. Soon the population of the entire township was Irish Catholics. German Catholics from Ohio founded New Vienna in 1846. Eventually this nationality was the major population of western Dubuque County.

The pioneer Dominican priest, Father Samuel Mazzuchelli, and the first bishop of Dubuque, Bishop Mathias Loras, helped newcomers build churches and ministered to their spiritual needs. They dealt with daily tensions between the Irish and Germans who culturally had little in common except their Catholic faith.

Throughout our history, all new groups of immigrants coming to the United States have experienced prejudice and challenges as they searched for a better life for their families. The church today, through Catholic Charities, other social service agencies, schools and ministries at the parish level, continues to welcome new-



Marco Medellin from Dubuque and Francisco Rodriguez from New Hampton carry the treasure chest containing the Proclamations for the 175th anniversary in the entrance procession of the opening Mass at St. Raphael Cathedral, Dubuque.

(Photos by Deacon James Pfaffly)

comers and helps meet their human and spiritual needs.

The document "Justice for Immigrants" by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops expresses the stance of the church. "Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity which should be respected. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary."

For the Archdiocese of Dubuque, the Hispanic influx began in Marshalltown as people from Mexico arrived to work in the Swift Meat Packing plant in the early 1990s. To meet their spiritual and human needs, Archbishop Daniel W. Kucera, OSB, assigned Father Lloyd Ouderkirk and Sister Anna Marie Manternach, OSF, to begin an Hispanic ministry program. Like the early settlers, the Hispanics moved to places where there were jobs and others who spoke their language.

Today there are over 3,000 Catholic Hispanics in Marshalltown. They and Hispanics in other parts of Iowa and throughout the U.S. enrich the church and society with their commitment to family and their devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

whose members were arrested and later deported.

Other industries also brought economic, demographic and social changes to Iowa — a state that had seen little immigration in most residents' lifetimes.

Ten parishes now have active Hispanic ministries. A Vietnamese community gathers at Blessed John XXIII in Cedar Rapids with the Vietnamese pastor, Father Dustin Vu. A Filipino community gathers at Immaculate Conception Parish in Charles City and a Burmese community is welcomed at Sacred Heart Parish, Waterloo.

The opening Mass for the 175th anniversary highlighted the diversity that exists today in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

Socorro Quiles, the wife of Deacon Horatio Quiles who also served at the liturgy, gave the welcome in English and Spanish. The archdiocese now has two Hispanic priests and five Hispanic deacons.

(Please turn to Page 5)

DIVERSE COMMUNITIES IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBUQUE

Burmese

Waterloo - Sacred Heart

Filipino

Charles City - Immaculate Conception

Hispanic

Ames - St. Cecilia

Cedar Rapids - Immaculate Conception

Clarion - St. John

Dubuque - St. Patrick

Hampton - St. Patrick

Marshalltown - St. Mary

New Hampton - St. Mary

Postville - St. Bridget

Tama - St. Patrick

Waterloo - Queen of Peace

Vietnamese

Cedar Rapids - Blessed John XXIII

Archbishop Jerome Hanus, OSB, who speaks Spanish, succeeded Archbishop Kucera in 1995 and expanded Hispanic ministry as the need arose. He also appointed a Vicar for Hispanic Ministry and established the Office of Hispanic Ministry at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center. Parishes hired Spanish speaking staff to assist the Hispanic population and priests studied Spanish in order to provide Mass and sacraments.

Meatpacking operations, including Tyson Foods in Waterloo and Agriprocessors in Postville, continued to bring an influx of immigrants from several countries.

The May 2008 raid in Postville prompted a dilemma for the local parish as well as the church nationally. Although the church does not condone illegal activity on the part of companies or individuals, the staff of St. Bridget Parish, and archdiocesan offices, gave months of spiritual and moral support as well as humanitarian assistance to the suffering families



Socorro Quiles, Dubuque, welcomes the congregation at the opening Mass.

A perspective on embracing diversity (Con't. from p. 4)



Waterloo residents, Peter Gonzales and Betsy Martinez, natives of Bolivia, carry candles for the altar.



Representatives of the Hispanic and Filipino communities carried items in the entrance and offertory processions of the Mass.

The entrance procession paused as men from the Burmese flute choir in Waterloo, played traditional music from their culture. This was the first introduction to the Burmese community for most people attending the Mass.

Parts of the worship aid were printed in Spanish. The second reading was transcribed into Braille and proclaimed by Gaby Nesler, a native of Mexico.

Phrases to respond to the Prayers of the Faithful were in Tagalog (language of the Philippines,) Vietnamese and Spanish.

The official 175th anniversary prayer was printed and distributed for the first time in five languages — Tagalog, Vietnamese, Spanish, Burmese, and English.

As our country struggles with an inadequate immigration system, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the state Catholic Conferences continue to be strong advocates for comprehensive immigration reform. That will be a slow process at the national level.

But at the parish level, it means accepting the challenge to become a welcoming community that tries to blend the gifts and talents of people from other cultures into parish life.

It helps to remember that all of our family ancestors were once immigrants.



Eduardo Concepcion and his wife, Evelyn, from the Philippines now live in Charles City.



Heriberto Rodriguez and his wife, Maria, from New Hampton carry the cloth for the altar in the entrance procession. (Witness photos by Sr. Carol Hoverman)



Dubuque resident, Gaby Nesler, proclaims the second reading from the Braille text she transcribed.