

HOW DOES OUR GARDEN GROW?

By: Fr. O'Dell

You know, flower gardens are wonderful things. Every year, when we get to the springtime, I remember the flower beds that my mother kept when I was just a young kid. She had all kinds of flowers - Violets, Irises, Daisies, Roses, and plants which I didn't even know their names. The flowers around our house were a riot of color. I can remember thinking how great they looked and how they made our house the best-looking place on the entire block.

Funny thing, I can't remember my mother doing a lot of work on those flower beds. Maybe she planted, and weeded, and watered, and fertilized when I was in school or out with my friends playing. Truth is, I don't ever remember her pattering around much at all, taking care of those plants. I just thought they grew automatically - that they sucked up the air, the sun, and the rain and grew like weeds. I suppose, when I was young, I didn't care too much how they got like they were, I was just concerned that they were there and looked good.

But, as I grew older, I came to understand all the work that went into taking care of those flower beds. It didn't just happen by magic. It took the loving care and hard work of my mother (and every other mother on the block as well) to help those flowers grow. Without that help and hard work, the gardens would just wither up and blow away. Without all of that work, none of the houses on my block would have looked half as good during the Spring and early Summer.

Well, parishes are like those flower gardens. All of the worship opportunities, educational programs, community building projects, fundraisers and youth activities don't happen by accident. Sure, the finished products look great, but the work that goes into making them look good is often over-looked.

It occurs to me that we need to keep in mind three things when we consider what makes parishes go and grow. First, there is a whole lot of work that goes into making things happen. Take for instance even simple tasks. Let's say you want to think about what it takes to get the altar and sacred vessels set up every Sunday for Mass. It doesn't seem like it would take a lot of work, but it does. One of the many sacristans who volunteer at St. Therese comes early to each Mass to get things set up the right way. They put out the wine, the water, the chalices, the hosts and the containers that we use for Holy Communion. They check the candles, set up for baptisms, spruce up the altar cloths - they do whatever is needful to get things ready. After Mass, they come and wash all the vessels and put everything away so that it will be ready for the next Mass. It takes a lot of work - and that's just one task. Now multiply that by scores of tasks, projects and programs.

Second, a lot of the work of the parish goes on behind the scenes - no one knows that it has even taken place. Most of the time we just see the end result. Because so much of the work is behind the scenes, sometimes we forget the number of people who do important things for us in our parish. We sometimes forget about those who are responsible for the music ministry, CCD, server training, landscaping, liturgical environment and decorating, ushers, lectors and Eucharistic ministers, cleanup, ministries of hospitality, educational programs, youth activities, field trips, parish councils, parish fellowship, laundry, the people who are always there to do a hundred and one "odd jobs."

Third, most of these jobs, the work of the parish, are performed without fanfare and without any expectation of being thanked. Parishioners just do the work because it has to be done. They do the work because it will make our parish a better place to be - and will give greater praise to God. Just because all of these folks don't expect any notice, doesn't mean that we shouldn't always be about the business of thanking them. So, thank you - all of you, for all of the many things you do for St. Therese.

You know, just like the flowers that my mother used to grow in her gardens, the flowers of the hard work and dedication of those who attend St. Therese make it the "best looking house on the block."
God Bless you all and Happy Easter.