

# LEGACY FOR OUR MISSION:

*For Our Children and the Future*

## PARISH GROWS WITH SPANISH MASS, HISPANIC MINISTRY

THE SEATS AT ST. MONICA CHURCH ARE OFTEN FULL DURING THE WEEKLY SPANISH MASS. But it's a sign of joy rather than a concern about how many people need to stand.

A vibrant Catholic community on the northwest side of Indianapolis, St. Monica was founded in the 1950s. St. Monica has parishioners from many countries of the world including East India, the Philippines, Jamaica, Hungary, Ireland and African nations. The parish continues to evolve as its surrounding neighborhoods are transformed with new residents.

That pace of change continues as St. Monica diversifies even further. Nearly 20 percent of the 2,900 registered parish households are Hispanic families and individuals, according to Msgr. Paul Koetter, pastor of the Indianapolis West Deanery parish since 1997.

Benedictine Sister Anna-Marie Megel, St. Monica's pastoral associate for Spanish ministry, says parishioners and staff members welcome Latino families and individuals with a number of outreach efforts and ministries. Among them is a weekly Spanish liturgy, which has been offered since it celebrated the first such Mass in 1999 for the Indianapolis West Deanery.

St. Monica celebrated that first Spanish liturgy with a small gathering at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School's chapel. The congregation quickly outgrew the chapel and moved to St. Augustine Hall on the St. Monica campus. Within two years the demand was so great that the parish moved the Mass to St. Monica Church, where it continues to be offered today.

Even with a church capacity of nearly 800, the Spanish Mass sometimes draws a standing-room-only congregation.



It's a sign that St. Monica is successfully meeting a need of the area's growing Hispanic population. Congregants include longtime Latino parishioners as well as recent immigrants from Mexico and various Central and South American nations.

But parish outreach doesn't end with the Spanish liturgy. St. Monica offers Spanish editions of the Christ Renews His Parish spiritual renewal program, the Rite of Christian Initiation process and marriage preparation for couples.

Thanks to a collaboration with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the parish also serves many Hispanic families who need assistance with food, clothing, utilities, and other items. Sister Anna-Marie and a group of volunteers visit households in need to deliver the vouchers.

"The parish has been very generous, plus some people in the community have made extra donations to St. Monica

to support us in these efforts," Sister Anna-Marie says. Benefactors include owners of a panadería—a Mexican-style bakery—who have contributed breads, other baked goods and other food for holiday gift boxes.

Last fall St. Monica parishioners were equally generous when the parish completed its phase of the archdiocesan *Legacy for Our Mission* campaign. Some of the funds raised will help the parish continue delivering its Hispanic outreach as the population continues growing as a larger part of the overall parish community.

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"We're working to help people integrate into the parish while allowing them to maintain and celebrate their culture and their traditions," Sister Anna-Marie says. "It seems like we grow every year in our numbers, and we continue to get more interest from parishioners who wish to contribute in some way. It's just amazing how many new people have joined us and become involved."

*Legacy for Our Mission, the archdiocesan capital campaign, is guided by the principles of Christian stewardship and addresses the local and changing needs of parishes such as Hispanic outreach. By contributing to the Legacy for Our Mission campaign, you are helping your parish address its most urgent capital, operating and ministry needs as well as those of our larger archdiocesan church community.*