

Multicultural Potluck Dining at Mary, Mother of the Church

by Jeannette Timmerman



Sunday, May 15 was a windy, cool day splattered with rain. However, the weather didn't interfere with the fourth annual multicultural potluck lunch at 1 p.m. at Mary, Mother of the Church parish hall.

The parish has 1800 families registered with people from many parts of the world. At the 10:30 Mass that morning, praise at Communion and the Recessional was sung in

21 languages: English, French, Yoruba (Nigeria), Tagalog (Philippines), Spanish, Portuguese, Luganda (Uganda), Fanti (Ghana), Swahili (Kenya), Tamil (India), Malayalam (India), Indonesian, Latin, Italian, Polish, Ukrainian, Mandarin (China), Cantonese (China), Korean, Flemish (Belgium) and German.



Everyone was welcome to attend the lunch whether they could bring food or not. Those who brought food came with a dish relevant to their cultural heritage. Two areas with several long tables at each soon were weighed down with offerings from far and wide.



Some of the dishes were deep fried chicken balls, baked beans, Vietnamese spring rolls, garlic sausage, perogies, devilled eggs, dill pickles, cooked red cabbage, rice dishes, fried plantain, vegetable dumplings, fish cutlets, scalloped potatoes, pork empanadas, chicken tacos, vegetable pulao, and many salads.

Several dozen desserts ranging from a variety of cakes, fruit, squares, loaves, mini cream puffs, to three different Filipino ice cream varieties topped off the meal.

Thirty tables, most seating eight, accommodated well over 200 people, many of whom made new acquaintances as they joined strangers at the tables.

A number of those attending came in their cultural dress adding splashes of bright colours to the gathering.

Before the meal, people stood and joined in saying the grace led by Fr. Kevin Bettens, pastor.



Next table numbers were called and everyone filled their plates with delicious food. It was a wonderful opportunity to try dishes never tasted before. At the table where I sat, people helpfully explained some of the offerings. One was sticky rice with coconut wrapped in banana leaves and boiled. Naively I asked if the leaves were eaten, which brought much laughter. They aren't.

Volunteers are the backbone of the parish and they were very visible at this event bringing food, making as certain as possible that both self-serve areas had similar items, preparing coffee and other drinks, cutting up the desserts into serving pieces, arranging tables and chairs beforehand, packing up leftover food at the end, clearing tables, washing up containers, serving utensils and other items, and tending to many other tasks.

Like the parable of the loaves and fish, everyone ate and there were leftovers.

