

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Left: Photo of the Paulino family on the day of their eldest daughter, Magdalena's wedding.

At 11:00 pm on Saturday July 29th my phone was inundated with texts and calls from the Paulino family. I have known them since coming to the seminary 25 years ago, back then Simon Bolivar and Rocio were a young couple with two small children.

They lived in a small apartment in the Bronx, but they soon outgrew it as their family expanded. They are open to life, that is, they believed the words of their wedding vows, which said they would “accept children lovingly from God and raise them well in the Church”. By the time they had ten children, they could no longer fit in their tiny apartment. The eldest daughter, Magdalena, saw an Ad for a house in Park Ridge. Her Dad said “You must be crazy, we can’t afford to live in Bergen County, let alone in Park Ridge!” But they came to see the property anyway, which turned out to be owned by a widow, who herself had raised ten children in that house! When she met them, with their ten children, she told them they could live there. It was an answer to prayer.

That was eight years ago. They now have fourteen children, ten of whom still live at home with their parents. My phone was ringing off the hook on the 29th because, as you by now know, their house caught fire. Thankfully no one was hurt, but the home was completely destroyed and they found themselves out on the street literally with just the clothes on their backs.

They stayed that night here at the Rectory, we were camped out all over the floor like a band of gypsies! There was an outpouring of help and support the next day. As word spread, people began bring toiletries, clothes, shoes, towels, clothes, toys, book bags, socks, underwear, water, shampoo, diapers, candy... The Rectory was like Muldoon’s picnic!

I was impressed how well the family took it. They had lost everything, but were in peace. The mom, Rocio, told me “I just need five minutes in prayer, to clear my head.” She asked her eldest daughter to accompany her, and they went to the chapel to pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

I’m not sure if she was aware that July 29th, the date of the fire, was also the Feast of St. Martha, the one who was fussing and fretting about everything, until Jesus told her: “Martha, you worry about so many things, but only one is necessary!” He was referring to her sister Mary, who instead of running around like a chicken without a head, was sat at his feet listening to him.

What did Rocio do when her house burned down, and she found herself on the street with ten children at 11 o’ clock at night? She sat at the feet of Jesus. After praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament, I heard her say “The world is full of beds and clothes, these things can be replaced. I have my children with me, thanks to God.”

On their behalf I thank all of you who have helped them. There has truly been an outpouring of love and support from the communities of Woodcliff Lake and Park Ridge. They still need a home to live in. There is a link on the Borough website and our Parish Facebook page if you would like to contribute or help them in some way.

Fr. Sean