

ST. ANN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH 200th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

July 30, 2023

by

Deacon Dr. Denis Griffith

St. Ann's Catholic Church, 42 Barren Spot, St. Croix, USVI celebrated the 200th Anniversary of St. Ann's Chapel, built in 1823 by Christopher McEvoy, and the 53rd Anniversary of St. Ann's as a Parish. The Chapel was dedicated on March 17, 1823. St. Ann's became a Parish in 1970, when Bishop Edward Harper ordained Fr. Michael Kosak as the first Diocesan Priest and the Parish Priest on July 26, 1970.

The Anniversary is held on the Sunday of the 26th of July, or the Sunday closest to July 26. This year, the celebration was scheduled for July 23. Because of the Fourth Annual African National Eucharistic Congress from July 21 to July 23 in Washington, DC, our pastor rescheduled the celebration for July 30. Extenuating Diocesan Business did not allow our bishop, His Excellency, Bishop Jerome Feudjio to be with us.

What a wonderful celebration we had! On that day, we had only one weekend mass at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday. The day began with the Holy Rosary, in the Chapel, led by Rev. Fr. Thabang at 8:15 a.m. Following the recital of the Rosary, the ceremony began in the Chapel with opening prayer and incense by Fr. Louis Kemayou, pastor. Then, there was a grand procession from the Chapel to the Sts. Joachim and Ann Church. The choir chanted.

Leading the procession were our altar servers of Amir James, Matthias Claxton, Kareem Henry, Sedrick Flavius, Adrianna Sage, Fantesia Alexander and Earlan Gilbert. They were followed by two representatives from each of St. Ann's Organizations: The Franciscans SFO, The Carmelites, Stewards of Christ, Sacred Heart Society, Fountain of Life Prayer Group, Family of Faith Prayer Group, Humble Servants Prayer Group, Knights of Columbus and the Youth Group and those who participated at the prayer of the Holy Rosary. The two Lectors, Adele Gilbert and Frederika Leonce followed. Our acolyte, Aldon Rogers and our seminarian, Gills Phillips were next in line. They were followed by Deacon Denis Griffith carrying the Book of the Gospels. Our concelebrants, Fr. Thabang Izrael, Associate Pastor, and Msgr. Michael Kosak, our first Parish Priest, were right after. Immediately after them was the main celebrant, our Pastor, Fr. Louis Kemayou.

In the Church, Fr. Louis gave the Apostolic Greeting from His Excellency, Bishop Jerome. In his homily, Fr. Louis gave a synopsis of the History of St. Ann's from its humble beginnings to becoming a parish. He reflected on the Gospel message of buried treasure in a field, the finding of a priceless pearl and the outcome of fish caught in a net. Just like the individual found the treasure and the priceless pearl so too we have found Jesus, and we must live according to what Jesus tells us. Just as the good fish will be saved, and the bad ones thrown away so too will those who follow Jesus be saved.

We listened to the beautiful rendition of hymns by a choir made up of our regular song leaders, and church members who had participated in our Concert held on Sunday, June 25, 2023. When mass ended, those who had signed up to be part of the fellowship ceremony gathered in the Marian Hall. Those who had signed up for a Grab and Go Lunch collected their meals at the kitchen.

The Marian Hall was transformed by Karisma Rogers and her crew, *Breathless Occasions*, with assistance from Teddy's Catering. There were three Masters of Ceremonies for the occasion: Susan E. Wells, Theresa Moses and The Honorable Sinclair Williams. They carried out their roles with finesse. A delicious meal prepared by Teddy's Catering was served buffet style. Everyone was delighted with their meal.

After the meal an awards ceremony was held. Melissa Griffith and Keanna Alphonse assisted in handing the awards to Fr. Louis. Fr. Louis distributed fifty-four plaques and certificates to members of the parish. Everyone was amazed at how well Fr. Louis knows his parishioners from those who attend 5:00 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. Saturday evening masses, 7:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Sunday morning masses. We recognize Fr. Louis' immense contribution to his parish. Fr. Louis paid tribute to our first pastor, Msgr. Kosak and all other pastors, associate pastors, administrators, visiting priests, who have labored in this St. Ann's vineyard. This could not have been possible without the support and blessings of the following Bishops: Bishop Edward John Harper from (1977 to 1984) , then Bishop Sean O'Malley (1984-1992), Bishop Elliot Thomas (1993-1999), Bishop George Murry (1999-2007), Bishop Herbert Bevard (2008-2020) and today Bishop Jerome Feudjio (2021- n).

It was heart warming to hear four of the youth, Keanna Alphonse, Kayla Morton, Kiarah Austrie and Anirah Austrie, speak in glowing terms of endearment

when Ms. Patricia Browne received her plaque. They mentioned how Ms. Browne has helped them to grow spiritually, emotionally and educationally.

We thank everyone who has helped to make this event a spirit-filled one. We thank the 200th Anniversary Committee members, The Liturgy Committee, The Food and Catering Committee, The Decorating Committee, The Maintenance Committee, The Fundraising Committee, The Office Staff, The TV Station Staff and all those who have given of their time, talent and treasure, and everyone both locally and on the mainland, and anyone who worked diligently to make this event a fruitful one. Special thanks to Ms. Patricia Browne who coordinated all these activities with assistance from Ann Marie Carr and Damian Marius, and to all the youth who assisted, we say THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

To God be the glory great things He has done for us!!!