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Something New / Something Old by Carl E Beyer

As any parent knows, sending our first child to school is a momentous event. That moment, when you turn your oldest child over to complete strangers who will influence your child beyond your control. Something new that year was the construction of Colinas del Norte Elementary School and the Rio Rancho Public School System. Little did I image that five years later my wife and I would be reading St. Thomas Aquinas Bulletin and notice that mass was being held at the very school where all our kids attended. I owned a store in Albuquerque until 2000; so I was oblivious of what was happening before that year. So in the year 2000 I was introduced to St. John Vianney Mission Church.

St. John Vianney Mission Church immediately struck a chord within me. Here was a small group of loyal parish members who were meeting as I imagine some did in the first Churches of old. Members entered a school cafeteria which in a short period of time turned it into a Church. A Church as defined as a group of people gathering as a community to celebrate Mass. Chairs were setup and taken down for each mass. And something I have never seen before or since, an altar was assembled on the stage and the stage was transformed into a holy place. Since there was no tabernacle, upon entering, you were asked if you were going to be receiving the Eucharist. If the count was short the priest would be breaking the wafers in half to stretch them for all the faithful and if the count was too high, we got to watch the priest consume the leftover Eucharist wafers. This consumption of many wafers always reminded me of the priest having a feast.

Usually the first person one would meet upon entering was Ed Uhrich asking if you would be receiving communion. For those who do not know, Ed has an eye for spotting volunteers. I stuck around helping pick up chairs one too many times and was approached by Ed about being an Usher. I remember asking Ed what I needed to know about being an usher and Ed telling me to come next Sunday in a tie and jacket and I would be trained. For those who do not know, Ed is laid back and I have never seen his feathers rustled. I showed up and was "trained". It wasn't long before Ed "invited" me to be head Usher and my involvement at St. John Vianney started.

I had the privilege of meeting and serving with Walter Kyse. Walter set the standards that still preside today at St. John Vianney. As Ed is laid back, Walter was hot headed. But you never doubted Walter's commitment and dedication to seeing St. John Vianney Mission Church progress with the highest standards. Personally watching this proud man come to Mass through all the pain he suffered later in life was a shining example of the dignity of man. Seldom did he complain even when you would observe a stray tear rolling down his cheek from the pain that was consuming him. I remember one of the last Masses he attended shortly before his death. He was so frail and about to meet his Maker at the age of 80. He walked in looking sickly and asked us if he looked OK. He said it was getting harder to dress and double check himself about looking proper. Walter, you are missed and you are remembered.

The person who bought my computer store was blessed in the first week of business with the sale of 20 plus PCs. These PCs was sold to St. Thomas Aquinas School. That summer a young kid, whom I instructed, ran the first wires to network this new school from the old Puesta Del Sol Elementary School. I remember reviewing the old communication room that would be turned into our present day St. Thomas Aquinas School chapel. It was decided in 2002 that it would make sense to start having St. John Vianney Masses at St Thomas Aquinas School. Ash Wednesday was our first Mass there. At that time, we were averaging just over 100 members attending the Sunday Mass. Presently we are averaging just shy of 400 members for our Sunday Masses and I am sure

with our new location we will be going over the 1000 members per weekend Masses before we know it.

Stepping back even further in time, St. Thomas School was first envisioned by Father Wolf who was working on how the school could be started. With Father Wolf's unexpected death at a young age, the dream of a Catholic school in Rio Rancho seemed to have died. But along came our much beloved Monsignor Raun in 1996 who we all know has the vision to lead the largest Church in New Mexico. Not only did he, along with Archbishop Sheehan, accomplish starting the first Catholic School in decades, they also had the foresight to purchase land next to the new elementary school of Colinas del Norte. At the time of this purchase there was only the small community of North Hills and the paved road ended there. This was purchasing land on the outskirts of Rio Rancho. But that is the blessing of foresight, to envision that Rio Rancho would be pushed past North Hills. I am unsure, but I believe the home count of Northern Meadows is now around 1540 homes. The purchase of this land, where our new parish hall resides, today would have been beyond our budget and set us back many years in the building. We also need to thank Msgr. Raun for allowing all the money collected at the Masses for St. John Vianney to be set aside for St. John Vianney use only. He could have taken these collections and put them into St Thomas Aquinas coffers and left us starting from scratch. Instead when the time came to start considering building we were able to have a quarter of a million dollars to oil the engine of progress. Many thanks and blessings to Msgr. Raun and Archbishop Sheehan for your leadership.

Assuming you are reading this after attending the Benediction Mass by Archbishop Michael Sheehan, I hope you are able to see how God's hand has been a guiding force in the creation of St. John Vianney Mission Church. Many events came together over the years that led to the blessing today of this Parish Hall and the future home of our Parish.

I was asked the other day "Where would St. John Vianney be today without you?". My reply was simple. Exactly where it is now. God's plan is bigger than any one person. There are any number of people who deserve our appreciation for their contributions, both large and small. Their hard work in combination with other people's hard work accomplished the building of our parish hall. To list all of them and forget one is not in keeping with the tradition of St. Thomas Aquinas Church. We can thank the one force that is deserving all the credit. The Invisible Hand that nudges us in His direction. The one Benevolent Force who guides us in accomplishing His work. The Almighty Being whose Providential Aid is ever with us.

We, as a St. John Vianney Community, thank all of you throughout the years that has led to this point in time where God's work is so visible for all to see.

Go forth and thank God for your blessings. Go forth and share God's grace with the person next to you. Go forth and preserve St. John Vianney Community of love. Go forth and preserve the dignity of mankind.