

The History of Our Lady of the Assumption Parish and Our Sister Parish,

St. Joan of Arc

The idea to support a mission church was generated in an OLA Small Christian Community. There was a desire among the members to do something more. After much discussion it was decided that a mission outreach was their goal. Typically, many churches will adopt a mission church in a foreign country, but this group wanted to stay in country. Research led the parish to Glenmary Missioners in 2010. After approval by the Social Justice Committee, Parish Council and Parish staff, the covenant with St. Joan's moved forward. On May 21, 2011, Our Lady signed a covenant agreement with St. Joan of Arc. The covenant relationship is one of mutual support and prayer, sharing our faith and prayer and striving to maintain an ongoing dialogue with each other. In addition, Our Lady of the Assumption pledged a yearly financial support of \$2400 per year. This money goes directly to their operating budget which keeps their doors open. Glenmary covers the cost of the outreach ministries, religious education classes, Mass supplies, pastoral associate salary, building maintenance, and other community needs. Weekly envelopes by the parishioners proved the balance of their budget. 25% of the counties residents live below the poverty line.

Since 2011 OLA parish members have traveled to St. Joan's three times to work with their parishioners on projects around the church. The projects included painting, landscaping, electrical, minor building projects and an extended playground area. It is an 18 hour drive to Plymouth so it is a challenge to make the trip every year.

In 2005 when Glenmary officially took on the responsibility for St. Joan's, there were 140 Catholics in the county. In 2011 they had 226 registered members with 66 families. 44 were Hispanic and the balance was mostly retired couples. In 2018, there are 200 active, registered members with 53 families actively attending church. 87% of their members are Latinos. The majority is from Mexico, but they also have members from Honduras, Columbia, Peru and Guatemala with one Asian and one African American family. Their remaining members are Anglo Americans. Father Aaron Wessman conducts one Mass each weekend in English and the other Mass in Spanish. Many in the Latino community drive 40-60 minutes to celebrate with their parish family at St. Joan's. 70% of their members are actually from other counties.

Each year, a parish from Baltimore provides all that is needed to run Vacation Bible School for St. Joan's. Typically they have between 50-65 children in attendance

The parish also has an outreach program in the summer for migrant workers who work in a coastal seafood factory shelling crabs and oysters. Members of St. Joan's bring a Catholic presence to these folks who would not otherwise have an opportunity for Mass, prayer and gathering as a faith community.

It is unlikely that St. Joan's will be handed over to the dioceses in the near future (a minimum of another 3 years of Glenmary presence is likely). Glenmary will not return the parish to the care of the diocese until they are sure that the community can continue without the financial subsidy provided by Glenmary, and the assistance of us, their sister parish.

