



2026 STATE OF THE PARISH ADDRESS

Dear Friends,

It is hard for me to believe this, but it has now been a little over two years since I began serving you as your pastor here at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Time truly has flown by, which must mean I have been having a great deal of joy and fun serving among you. I'm blessed!

This July 20, God willing, I will be celebrating 35 years of my priesthood. During these years I have been blessed to have served as a high school principal and a university professor in Uganda, and as a pastor in three parishes and a Dean here in our diocese, among others. I am very grateful that at this stage of my priesthood in His divine wisdom the Lord brought me here to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a parish where my love for my priesthood and for education beautifully come together. He certainly knows what He is doing!

I am deeply blessed to serve not only as your shepherd, but also as the shepherd of our school children and of our young people here in our parish. And as I have told you many times before: I truly love each and every one of you.

While the responsibility of being your pastor is very rewarding, the mission of helping lead souls to heaven is not a small task, and, therefore, humbling. But I am strengthened daily by the grace of God and by your love, your encouragement, generosity, and support. You are a very good family. Even visitors who come to OLMC for only a short time often tell me how welcoming and faith-filled this parish feels. That is a reflection of who you are and the beautiful community we continue to build here.

At the heart of our parish is one simple mission: to help everyone who walks through our doors grow in holiness and ultimately reach heaven. Everything we do flows from that mission.

We strive to be a parish where every person is seen, known, valued, and loved; where we are all-in—taking ownership and pride in our community; and where we work together as one family, placing the mission of Christ above ourselves.

We live out this mission in three ways:

1. by forming disciples,
2. by serving others, and
3. by worshiping God reverently and joyfully.

We are also deeply committed to being an open-door parish, building holy and vibrant families, and prioritizing our youth and school students, knowing that they are the present and future of the Church.

Over this past year I saw God at work in extraordinary ways here at OLMC as we strove to do this.

Faith Formation

In the area of faith formation our sacramental preparation programs continue to flourish under the leadership of Brenden Bell and his core team.

Under the leadership of Brenden Bell, our Sacramental Preparation Programs continue to thrive in their efforts to welcome new members to the Church as well as help strengthen their faith:

This past year our OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation for Adults) Program welcomed 37 adults, who were seeking the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion). The program culminated on Easter Vigil, when most of them received the sacraments. Brenden Bell is in charge of this program with the assistance of 8 volunteers in the core team.

Our OCIT (Order of Christian Initiation for Teenagers) Program had 10 students and 5 volunteer instructors under the coordination of Jennifer Green and Miguel Nuñez.

Thanks be to God on Easter Vigil we had 34 Baptisms, Confirmations & First Holy Communion through the OCIA & OCIT programs.

Our Religious Education Program remains strong with 40 enrolled students last year from the First to the Twelfth Grade. Some of the students also received their Sacraments on May 9. Jennifer Green is the coordinator of the program assisted by 8 volunteer Instructors.

Our Infant Baptism program helped prepare parents wanting to baptize children under 7 years old. Thanks be to God until the end of April 2026 we had 50 infants baptized. Our Deacon-in-training, Peter Parian, is in charge of this program.

Service

In the area of service our parish now has 37 ministries, with several new ministries launched this year alone:

Our Perpetual Adoration ministry Chapel continues to thrive with hundreds of adorers spending time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. In fact, we already have over 650 registered adorers. Deacon Chito Zamora and Bea Zamora are in charge of this ministry.

We also established a Security Ministry to keep our worship environment safe and also to assist during emergencies. Coordinated by Hugh White, it has 11 volunteers with different law enforcement backgrounds and experiences.

Additionally, in our church we have installed a state-of-the-art Assisted Listening and Close-caption technology to assist those with listening difficulties. This Ministry is coordinated by Justin Rucker. Information cards can be found throughout the church.

A new Teen Bible Study has been started, and it is doing great.

Lastly, we have begun developing “The Well,” a ministry dedicated to mental health support and accompaniment. It has been commissioned by Bishop Dolan and is temporarily coordinated by Fify Juliana, my Executive Assistant.

These ministries (as well as others who have been around longer) remind us that the Church is not merely a building: It is a people who care for one another spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Worship

In the area of worship, I am grateful for the other members of the clergy and the many volunteers who help make our liturgies beautiful and reverent.

In addition to the sacraments that I mentioned earlier, this past year we celebrated:

- 57 (School) & 13 (RE) First Communion and Confirmation
- 10 First Reconciliation through the RE program and 57 through the School
- 15 weddings
- 23 Funerals
- 30 Anointings of the sick
- 18 Home visits (including Anointing and/or Communion and/or Confessions)
- 10 Hospital visits
- Countless number of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Every sacrament is a reminder that Christ is alive and active among us.

Liturgy is the backbone of our parish as the celebration of the Holy Eucharist remains the source and summit of our faith. I am happy to share that we have had more volunteers serving in different liturgical capacities under the coordination of Joseph Malzone:

- 65 Altar Servers
- 9 Master of Ceremonies
- 47 Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist
- 57 Lectors
- 28 Hospitality
- 6 Linen
- 8 Flowers & Decor
- 3 Video Projection and sound
- 18 Ministers of Care
- 6 Sacristy Angels (Church Cleaning)

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers our music ministry continues to flourish and our children's choir is growing beautifully as well. Under the leadership of Dan Ballinger and with Jordan Webb's assistance the Adult Choir has 22 members, the School Choir has 15 members and the School Honor Choir (newly formed by Jordan) has 10 members. We have 19 musicians in total.

Being an Open-Door Parish

One of our major priorities continues to be welcoming people into parish life. Through initiatives like the Name Tag Sunday and our new Mobile Welcome Center (both manned by our Parish Advisory Council) and continued parish welcome events as well as the new Hospitality Ministry (led by Luz Reval) we are working to ensure that no one feels like a stranger at OLMC.

Prioritizing Young People

A parish grows stronger when people move from simply attending Mass to truly belonging to a spiritual family. To help with this we have continued to prioritize our youth and school ministries. Our Edge middle school ministry, Life Teen high school ministry, young adult ministry, Vacation Bible School, preschool, and parish school are all thriving.

This past year we welcomed 60 students into our Edge (Middle school Ministry) program. Miguel Nuñez, our Youth Ministry Coordinator, was assisted by 10 volunteers.

Additionally, we had 25 students enrolled in LifeTeen with 12 volunteer instructors working with them. Last month we welcomed the latest addition to our staff: Hope Smaw, who is the High School Ministry (LifeTeen). Working alongside Miguel Nuñez, she hit the ground running and is already planning an exciting program for the upcoming school year.

In the upcoming school year Miguel will be working more closely with the Middle School Ministry (Edge) and Young Adults, especially now that we have 30 young adults participating in the program with 8 volunteers walking alongside them.

Our Vacation Bible School was a big hit last year with 68 children attending and 65 volunteers assisting. We thank Ashley Armstrong for her hard work and dedication, and welcome Roselynd Bryant as the new VBS Coordinator this summer.

Under the leadership of Dr. Kelly Shewbridge our OLMC School remains our parish' largest ministry and has grown to be one of the largest Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Phoenix, with 56 staff members serving 467 students and their families while forming young people not only academically, but also spiritually.

Under the directorship of Monica Ferrance, our Little Lambs Preschool has 66 students and 18 staff members. We continue to provide for their academic intelligence as well as their social skill developments and faith formation with weekly School Mass and School and Preschool Adoration.

I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Kelly Shewbridge and her teachers and staff, as well as our volunteers, catechists, and youth ministers for their tremendous dedication to our children.

Campus improvements

I also want to thank our Finance Council and all of you for your faithful and prudent stewardship of our resources. Here at OLMC we are blessed to have a council of individuals who are very knowledgeable and experienced in Business and Finance as well as passionate about serving the Lord through his people.

Because of your tremendous generosity, we have completed many important improvements across our campus this year, which has helped to create a welcoming environment:

- A new processional crucifix was procured
- The exterior of the church was painted
- The marquee sign was painted
- South East entrance of the church was updated
- The Prayer Garden at the school was remodeled
- New awnings and pavers were added to the school
- New bulletin boards were added to the church
- New holy water fonts were added to the church
- New vestments and liturgical items were purchased
- Closed Captioning for all of the masses and AuraCast System was put in place to assist those with hearing issues
- The roof at the convent was replaced
- The divider in McCready Hall was repaired
- The curtains in McCready Hall were cleaned and fire treated
- Security cameras throughout campus were added
- A sidewalk that can be accessed from the parking lot to the parish office was added.
- Smart thermostats were added in the church
- Curbing throughout campus was repaired

And there is still more to come this summer, including updating our speakers in the Church, making our confessionals ADA-accessible. One of the bigger projects planned for the near future is sanctuary improvements. I will give you details of this when I return from my sabbatical as final touches on the planning phase are being made.

Disciple Maker Index Survey

Finally, many of you participated in the Disciple Maker Index Survey earlier this year. I am grateful for your incredible response and for your honesty. Thanks to you our parish had one of the highest response rates with 345 surveys completed online, which comprises 23% of our average Sunday Mass goers. Your feedback is already helping us better understand the spiritual needs and direction of our parish, and it will guide our planning for the future. I will present the action items that resulted from your input after my return.

As I prepare to begin my sabbatical, I want you to know how grateful I am for you. Thank you for your faith, your prayers, your generosity and above all, for believing in the mission of this parish and in my leadership.

I leave for my sabbatical with tremendous hope and confidence because I know this parish is filled with people who love the Lord and love one another. Please continue praying for me as I will continue praying for all of you even as I will miss you.

And until I see you again in September, always remember this: I Love you.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us.

I remain yours in Christ,

Fr. Robert Seraph Aliunzi, Pastor

May 23 – 24, 2026