

Brooklyn Archdeaconry Welcomes Bishop Provenzano in a Big Way

Hospitality by Brooklyn churches yields new web of relationships

By Susan McHenry

We had a successful October 3 event welcoming Bishop Provenzano back to his native Brooklyn. "It was simply the icing that topped off a very rich cake!" observed Brooklyn's Archdeacon, the Venerable Canon Howard K. Williams, who is also rector of St. Augustine's. "For me," he said, "the most significant thing is that there was 100% participation of all the Brooklyn parishes not just in attendance that day and in financial support but in the enormous amount of preparation they accomplished since the summer. Every single parish contributed something that made welcoming our new bishop back to Brooklyn uniquely special."

The turn out to greet Bishop Provenzano at the Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, the center for the celebration, was impressive. "I believe there were more than 1,000 people there," according to Archdeacon Williams. "We printed 1,400 journals and gave them all out."

And that rich cake to which the Archdeacon first referred? He was talking about the beautiful new web of relationships among Brooklyn's Episcopal laity that emerged from their cooperative effort of putting the celebration together, which extended significantly beyond the dedicated planning team that was chaired by the Very Rev. Canon Glenworth Miles.

"Lay people took charge and performed magnificently. This was no catered affair, you realize, this was good home-cooked food, personally prepared by both women and men. I know men gathered in groups here at St. Augustine and at St. Barnabas, to name just two of many parishes where men got busy in our kitchens. They borrowed church buses to do big shopping runs. They cooked steaming trays of rice and peas and delicacies."

Everything that went into the set-up, from tents and tables to the paper goods was gathered by two archdeaconry-wide lay organizations, the Brotherhood of St. Anthony, chaired by Antonio Pilgrim, and the Episcopal Church Women in Brooklyn, Birdie Blake-Reid, president."

The archdeacon said that Brooklyn owes so much to the hospitality of the rector Father Richard Brewer and the people of the Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew. "It's no small thing to share your beautiful church grounds with more than 1,000 people for a special event, and in the days before to get ready. What else is that but true Christian hospitality?"

And how does this all connect to the ministry of the Brooklyn Archdeaconry? Archdeacon Williams said, "This is what I teach: we exist as a group to do that which one member of the group cannot do alone. What one parish cannot do on its own we can accomplish together within the Archdeaconry by providing and connecting human resources. The Brooklyn Archdeaconry includes 33 parishes organized into 4 deaneries. Once a month, the clergy within each deanery meet, providing an opportunity for fellowship for clergy, whose work can be very lonely. And I, as Archdeacon, meet regularly with the deans as a group. The deaneries provide seasonal programs to bring lay people together within each deanery for worship, study and service."

"Our future plans are now in formation as we look forward to working with Bishop Provenzano. But I will say this about the spirit we've experienced at this event: Once you've planted such excitement, I don't know how you kill it. Bishop Provenzano is a real symbol of unity in the Diocese of Long Island. So his coming to Brooklyn was an opportunity to bring together the entire Brooklyn Archdeaconry to share in that kind of unity. This was a unique time. We could celebrate him and we could celebrate ourselves, too. The relational bonds that were made and energized are key. Those bonds are primed for our wonderful journey ahead in renewed ministries with Bishop Provenzano."



Young Brooklynite greets Jeanne Provenzano, Bishop Larry and Archdeacon Williams.



Brooklyn scouts meeting the bishop.

Rudy Flores Photos



Bishop and event chairperson, Dean Glenworth Miles.



Bishop Larry and Nancy Lam, chair of event communications.

1,000 diverse participants enjoyed a full day of celebrating

By Canon Diane M. Porter

The sounds of drums and bugles filled the air. Instead of the call to worship that usually comes on Sunday morning at 10:50 am from tower bells, the call came from the International Panamanian Marching Band. And come we did. St. Luke and St. Matthew was teeming with representatives of every congregation from the Archdeaconry of Brooklyn on Saturday,

October 3, 2009. I arrived during the last of the selections of the Breezy Point Pipes and Drums. Everyone oohed and aahed over the St. Augustine's Vessels of Praise, a liturgical dance group complete with four little angels. The Edward R. Murrow High School Gospel Choir received hearty Amen's from the entire congregation. After some more music and the singing of *Veni Creator Spiritus*, the coadjutor knocked on the great east doors and they were opened to him for his welcome back.

After a very spirit filled Passing of the Peace, Bishop Coadjutor Provenzano was presented with proclamations from many civic leaders and heard letters from Governor Patterson, Mayor Bloomberg, Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum, and Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz among others. Congresswoman Yvette Clarke (NY-11) presented a citation that had been introduced into the US House of Representatives. I was seated with Assemblywoman

Annette Robinson (NYS-56) who thoroughly enjoyed our liturgy.

The service was so representative of the Archdeaconry. I have written elsewhere in this paper about the wonderful music and it would not be redundant to restate the gloriousness of the joyful strains from the combined choir. The lessons and prayers were offered in many of the languages heard around Brooklyn including Chinese, Spanish, French, Creole and Ga. Bishop Provenzano's sermon offered us a challenge to become a church of mission to and for all and to fill all our sanctuaries as this one was filled that Saturday.

After the service the great street festival was uprooted by a great rain storm but that didn't dampen the spirits of those gathered, as Lion Dancers and the great red drum of the Chinese Freemason Athletic Club, the CASYM steel band and other performing cultural groups that included East Indian Dancers, Ballet Foklorico Dancers and Garifuna Cultural Singers, along with the sumptuously prepared feast, all moved inside.

Many thanks are due to Archdeacon Howard Williams, the Regional Deans especially Dean Miles, the entire Planning Committee, the people of St. Luke and St. Matthew and their rector the Reverend Richard Brewer for welcoming all as we welcomed the Bishop Coadjutor and Mrs. Provenzano in true Brooklyn style.

Canon Porter lives in Brooklyn within the sounds of St. Luke and St. Matthew.