The Oral History of San Martín de Porres Catholic Mission
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Objective
This project documents the early history of San Martín de Porres Catholic Mission, Dayton, Oregon. The congregation is unique - it is the only catholic mission in the Pacific Northwest to provide all of its services solely in Spanish.

Early parishioners and remaining founders of the mission were contacted for participation in in-depth interviews, about the early history of San Martín de Porres. A total of nine individuals chose to be interviewed, either at the church or at their homes. Some of the interviews were conducted in Spanish and others in English. The majority of participants worked directly with Father Frank Kennard to found the mission. The remaining individuals joined soon after the purchase of the second building and joined to become active members for decades to follow. (Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the respondents.)

Methods
Upon completion of the research, specific themes are used to describe the historical and cultural importance of San Martín de Porres Catholic Mission.

Early History
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Results
Father Frank Kennard worked along side the Latino community to create a safe and permanent place to practice religious and cultural ceremonies.

Purchase and Reconstruction of the Buildings
Father Frank Kennard purchases an old blacksmith shop with his personal savings. The building is used as a gathering place for migrant farm workers to celebrate mass in Spanish. As the congregation grows the need for a bigger place grows as well, leading to organized fundraising events when parishioners learn that the adjacent building is for sale. Once the building is purchased, parishioners begin work on the reconstruction with their own hands.

Results (Cont.)
“Everyone was there helping, if you were not helping with one thing you were helping with something else. Some people came from Beaverton, others from Amity, people came from everywhere. It was a lot of work but it was achieved.”
- Guadalupe

“We built the church with our own hands. Everyone volunteered their time after work and during the weekends to reconstruct our church. The men would work on the house and some women would prepare food to feed everyone that was working.”
-Juana

Strong Sense of Community
Members of the congregation describe the mission as a place with a strong sense of community, and as a family. The community welcomes new Latinos to the area with as much support as they can provide.

“I felt that everyone was very close, very united. Everyone would always help each other out, with whatever anyone needed. Everyone was always involved in something, it was the united community that we still have now.”
-Trini

San Martín as place for Cultural Expression
San Martín serves as a place to celebrate the Mexican culture of the parishioners. Special celebrations such as El Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe (Celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe, El Día del Divino Niño (Celebration of the Divine Child), Posadas and many more are celebrated annually to preserve the traditions.

Acknowledgement and References
San Martín de Porres is not only a space for religious practice but it also serves as a second home to many Latinos living in the Willamette Valley. It is a place that has been built with the work of the Latino community over 30 years ago and it continues to be strong and united. The parishioners hope to celebrate cultural and religious ceremonies for years to come.

Acknowledgement and References
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Bibliography


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