

April 19, 2020

Dear St. Raymond Family:

Our movement toward renewing our parish leadership and ministries has been challenged by the health crisis that we are facing. Staff members in both parish and school have been striving to continue to provide creative ways for us to stay connected. But we can still work on developing an awareness of the different components of renewal. The Easter season is a time to focus on mission. What does it take for our mission to grow and flourish?

There are five components of physical fitness: (1) cardiovascular endurance (2) body composition (3) muscular strength (4) muscular endurance (5) flexibility. The five essential elements that we have been emphasizing as we have been seeking a renewed vision for our parish community can be seen as **five components of spiritual fitness: (1) supporting (2) healing (3) learning (4) praying (5) sharing**. Like the components of physical fitness, one component is not more or less important than another. When all are present and working together, we can say that a person or a community is spiritually fit.

We want you to know of the grace of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia. For in a severe test of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their profound poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For according to their means, I can testify, and beyond their means, spontaneously, they begged us insistently for the favor of taking part in the service to the holy ones.
(2 Corinthians 8:3-4)

The apostle Paul organized a relief project for the church in Jerusalem, which suffered from poverty and particular need as the epicenter of the Christian movement. He writes especially of his gratitude toward the Macedonian church and presents them as a model of continued generosity and sacrificial giving.

SUPPORTING is the component of spiritual fitness that we least like to talk about, but we have to be honest that it is fundamental. As cardiovascular endurance is the capacity to keep oxygen flowing through the blood at all times, so supporting is the capacity to keep the ministries of a community supplied with adequate resources to function well. Without financial support, a quality ministerial staff cannot be retained, quality resources cannot be obtained, and the care of our parish home cannot be maintained.

We are now living through our own particular time of affliction. This health crisis has had, and will continue to have, serious impact on the finances of many families. This is also true for the St. Raymond parish family as a whole. While this is a time to empathize with the challenges we all face, it would be irresponsible not to remind ourselves that the continuation of regular collection income is vital to the continued functioning of St. Raymond Parish and School. As you know, we are in the process of Renew My Church in the Archdiocese of Chicago, which has involved the merger or closure of many parishes and schools. The financial difficulties generated by the COVID-19 crisis will accelerate and intensify this process for all parishes and schools.

We are receiving no assurance of financial aid coming from the Archdiocese of Chicago. The fact is that there is little saved by closing down our parish campus. We are mandated by the Archdiocese of Chicago to continue to pay our staff. Payroll is the largest part of our budget. In addition, basic maintenance costs continue, and service contracts must be honored. We have applied for, and have received, federal assistance to support the fulfillment of payroll obligations

to our parish and school staff. Thanks to Dean Hoppesch and Mary Eileen Ward for the many hours they spent on the applications for this assistance! However, we know that a federal assistance check will not solve the financial problems of working families. In the same way, this assistance will not solve the financial difficulties and potential consequences that this crisis will create for the parish and school. These are all realities that many of us have already begun to think about.

I want to express gratitude to all whose faith and dedication to St. Raymond has been overflowing in a wealth of generosity during this time of crisis. As we continue to receive donations through envelopes and on line giving, I am well aware of the sincere effort on the part of so many to keep our community strong. Together we will discern how best to move forward on the other side of this critical moment for our life and ministry as a community of faith.

Peace be with you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Scott Hebden".

Fr. Scott Hebden, Pastor