

Dear Friends:

Today the Baptism of the Lord celebrates Jesus' solidarity with us. Jesus receives baptism for the forgiveness of sins as a sign that he has come to enter into our lives and transform them, so that we can live fully, as men and woman, created in the image of God. Baptism is the way that every Christian enters into the covenant with God and becomes a member of the Church. In baptism we are united with Christ and are given the opportunity to grow into new life that Jesus offers us.

The life of Jesus shows us that the way to growth in new life is service. As a Body of Christ in the world, the Church is called to carry forward Jesus' mission of drawing people together into a new, united human family. Every parish is called to take part in this mission, which is called evangelization. Every baptized Christian receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, and is empowered in a unique way to make a contribution to this mission. Pope Francis tells us that every member of the Church is called to be a "missionary disciple" of Jesus. **"All the baptized-whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith –are agents of evangelization. It would be insufficient to envision a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients."** (Evangelii Gaudium 120)

Over the last several months, I have been working with the two leadership councils to help renew the roles of the lay leadership within St. Raymond Parish. The following pages help to share the vision of their discernment process. These redeveloped councils and commissions offers the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to enter into our dialogue among ministry leaders and members-at-large on how best to engage our ministries, worship, and stewardship initiatives over the next several years. The changes being laid out are not simply my preferences instead of those of another pastor. Rather, they are an attempt to create space for the Holy Spirit to guide us all together toward the renewal for St. Raymond.

The councils and commissions will be focusing on ways to incorporate the 5 essential components of our faith (Pray, Learn, Support, Heal, and Share) to live a life as missionary disciples of Jesus. This will build on the positive efforts of the Parish Transformation Program, and prepare us to take our part in the Archdiocese of Chicago Renew My Church initiative currently in process. Renew my Church calls us to a broader vision than the parish renewal efforts of the past. We all should begin to ask ourselves: ***How do we take our parish from maintenance to mission? What does it mean to be on mission as Catholic Christians?*** Parishes must look beyond the neighboring streets to reach out to social and professional networks that are the new forms of relationships in the 21st century. Parishes must now see themselves as regional communities that will attract people to Christ their unique expression of Christian life.

Please continue to pray for our community as we look to the future with hope! **May the Holy Spirit guide each one of us to consider how we are called to use our unique gifts to contribute to a new vision for the future of St. Raymond.**

Peace be with you,

Fr. Scott Hebdan

Pastor

Fr. Scott will speak further on the Councils and Commissions renewed focus during the homily at each of the Masses over the weekend of January 18-19, 2020. Immediately following each Mass there will be Hospitality and Fellowship in the Community Room. **This is an opportunity to speak with various staff and council members to learn how you can be involved in the vision casting at St. Raymond's.**