

A letter from the Core Leadership Team

October 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Five years ago, the Archdiocese of Chicago launched the Renew My Church (RMC) initiative, a call for parishes to engage in renewal. St. Raymond parish is a part of Vicariate 1 which is the last vicariate to enter into the RMC process. The process has two distinct phases for parish renewal – structural discernment and spiritual renewal.

Phase I – Structural Discernment and Decisions

Last winter St. Raymond parish entered into RMC with Fr. Scott engaging in pastor sessions led by the Vicar General and Vicariate Parish Vitality team. Staff and key parish lay leaders then met with our Vicariate Parish Vitality Coordinator to share our parish successes. In the spring of 2022, we learned that based on the pre-pandemic archdiocesan benchmarks, we would not have to merge with another parish.

Phase II – Spiritual Renewal

The parish is now entering into phase two of the process, Spiritual Renewal: Building a New Reality. Pre-COVID, our Mass attendance was declining by about 4% yearly. Post-pandemic, St. Raymond is facing a 40% decline in Mass attendance as is similar to other parishes in the archdiocese. The challenge of spiritual renewal is where the real work begins as a community of missionary disciples. We are being called to prayerfully discern and implement the best means of carrying out our mission in today's context.

As many of you know, the RMC Core Leadership Team ([see August 14, 2022 bulletin](#)) was created to help lay the foundation for parish spiritual renewal - moving from maintenance to mission. Over the summer, this team spent two days of initial discernment - thinking and praying about the direction that renewal needs to take at St. Raymond. In September, the core team presented a report to the Renew My Church Executive Committee of the Archdiocese of Chicago. These are some of the highlights of that report.

1. We became aware of the need to return to a deeper sense of WHY we are engaged in parish ministries. Creating opportunities for members of our community to grow as disciples of Jesus who eagerly lead others in mission by sharing the joy of the Gospel.
2. We became aware of the need to ensure that all parishioners have a sense of BELONGING in the community. Making space within our ministries for individuals to offer their gifts and talents for active contribution.
3. We realized that we cannot measure our qualitative growth in the spiritual life by how many people attend Mass or how many people attend events. We need a committed group of people who are serious about spiritual growth before renewal can spread more widely.
4. We recognized the importance of coming together in prayer as a community outside of Mass.
5. We acknowledged that we have not been truly engaged in evangelization. We have done little in the way of outreach to those in the area around us who are not connected to any church or have been separated from the church.
6. We became aware that we need to find ways to invite people into the community other than simply inviting them to Mass. People who have been away from church may need a different way to reconnect with our church that would then prompt them to take the next step on their faith journey.

During this next step of Renew My Church, the Core Leadership Team will participate in Divine Renovations Kickstart sessions for discerning how to develop ministries that engage people now and into the future. The themes of the Kickstart sessions will include: Vision, Building a Leadership Team, Primacy of Evangelization, Structure and Hybrid Church, Meetings and Healthy Conflict, Culture, and Change.

This team will continue to share and engage our community through this long process. Please pray for us as we continue to discern how best to guide our parish on the path to renewal. We invite you to reach out to anyone on the Core Leadership Team with creative ideas and reflections on how you see renewal at St. Raymond.

In Christ,

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