

## PASTOR'S REFLECTION FOR THE NEW YEAR

by Fr. Black

As we begin a new year, I would like to reflect with you, in a 2-part series, my hopes for the coming year for our parish. In part 1, I will offer some clarifications on the structure of our parish, as well as answer some questions I've received. In part 2, I will offer a deeper reflection on our vision statement and how we might live this vision as a parish.

*As a Catholic faith community, we will journey from an encounter with the living Christ to a loving relationship with Him, using our unique gifts to be intentional disciples, making church matter.*

This vision statement was established and first shared with the leaders in the parish at a gathering of staff and all chairs of committees and ministries at our first Leadership Summit in October of 2015. It was determined that better communication and cooperation between all the various aspects of parish life should be our goal. To assist in this, a new organizational structure was created. This restructuring started us on the road to where we are now. As all parish groups and organizations were given to a specific director, it became the responsibility of that director to facilitate communication with other directors and to be a support to their volunteers. We established the position of Mission Director to regularly meet with these directors to support their ministries and to improve communication. After interviewing several candidates, Paul Davis was hired for this position. It became Paul's role to meet regularly with the Directors to assist them in their ministry and to then meet with the pastor on a weekly basis in order to insure that all he does, whether it be an interaction with a staff member or a parishioner, is in line with and has the approval of the Pastor. Paul's efforts for the past year have been mostly internal, working closely with our Directors. I am pleased with his hard work and we are now focusing on his meeting with the various ministries and organizations. I know that communication and relationship building remain areas of improvement for us. I am working with Paul, that together we can make these improvements. Paul has already adjusted his work day to be more available in the evenings (balancing this time with his responsibilities as a father of two young children). He has set a goal of attending functions and meetings across the wide range of parish activities and has begun doing so.

I have been in discussion with several groups and individuals, representing the wide spectrum of our beautiful faith community. I have also sought the guidance and wealth of experience of fellow clergy of other parishes in order to evaluate our present accomplishments and challenges, as well as to chart a course for our parish moving forward.

As the church defines the Eucharist to be the Source and Summit of our spiritual lives, our Sacred Liturgy takes highest priority as a parish. It is therefore our goal to have nothing scheduled here at St. Joan of Arc that would necessitate any parishioner from not being with the community at worship. This includes our children, as they are a vital part of our worship.

In order to accomplish our goals, it is important to have in place a staff that supports the work of the parish and assists the countless volunteers needed to make everything happen. When there is need of bringing on additional staff, two rounds of interviews take place, involving staff and sometimes volunteers in the respective area. Those interviewing then share their thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate and the pastor will make the final decision. All other personnel issues, such as goal setting and evaluations are discussed with the employee, their immediate director as well as with the pastor. Privacy is of utmost importance in these matters. We use the services of the Diocesan Office of Personnel whenever we need guidance or advice. All major personnel decisions are made with the advice of the Diocesan Office of Personnel.

The Catholic Church incorporates a structure of parish leadership that places all responsibility with the Pastor. Unlike other denominations which utilize a group of parishioners, sometimes called trustees or elders, for general decision making, it is the Pastor that has all decision making responsibility. Of course, the Pastor is to consult with others as much as necessary in all decisions. This consultation is made with fellow clergy, staff, parishioner input and sometimes all of the above. Canon Law requires that each parish have a Finance Council, but leaves all other consultive bodies up to the Pastor. I will continue to utilize the structure of Parish Steering Committee established a couple years ago. This Committee is made up of all Staff Directors, as well as a corresponding parishioner volunteer that is active in the leadership of the directors' various committees and organizations. Thus, a wide variety of parishioners are a regular part of this discussion. We will continue to use the system of all groups sending in reports, successes and concerns from their respective organizations. These reports are to be reviewed by all Parish Steering Committee members prior to each monthly meeting. It is from these reports that any group can suggest an agenda item to be brought for discussion with the entire Parish Steering Committee. It will be the responsibility of the Pastor, the Parish Steering Committee Chair and Communications officer to set the agenda from these reports and suggestions. Because of the amount of discussion necessary and with respect for the time of our volunteers, these meetings will not be open to the public. However, a summary report of each meeting will be printed in the bulletin as soon as possible following each Parish Steering Committee meeting. The Parish Steering Committee will make every effort to communicate clearly and in a timely manner all matters that come before it.

As Pastor, I have found that the 3 Leadership Summits we have had provide a fruitful opportunity for the leadership of the parish to gather in support and improvement of all aspects of parish life. I will continue to bring this leadership together at least annually.

It is my hope that the above has clearly defined how I wish to move forward as a parish. I truly feel blessed to be here in our parish and know that I will always do my very best to make all decisions with the good of our parish in mind. May our future provide opportunities to encounter Christ in many ways, creating in each parishioner a valued sense of discipleship and ultimately making Church Matter in all aspects of our lives. Let us pray, through the intercession of St. Joan of Arc, for our parish. May all that we do give glory to God.