

LOOKING BACK . . . AND MOVING FORWARD!

Sunday, October 9, 2017

As we approach the end of our liturgical year, I would like to reflect briefly on *where* we have been, and then focus on *where we are going*.

In nearly 2½ years here as pastor of St. Mary Parish, and only months as pastor of St. John Parish, I have been blessed over and over. Parishioners have been warm and welcoming. Many have answered the call to

share their gifts and talents. *New ministries* have been initiated - Parish Council, Finance Council, Visitation, Garden, Sacristy, Art & Environment, to name a few. Faith formation has been nurtured in numerous ways, including Adult and Family Faith Nights, active R.C.I.A. programs, Advent and Lenten Penance Services, regular Eucharistic Adoration, and Vespers. Liturgy has inspired active participation, as in Holy Week, throughout the entire Christmas Season, for special causes such as Religious Liberty. Our *people of the Parishes* have made all of the above successful by embracing these opportunities. *Thank you!*

Recently we were handed a new challenge - that of bringing two parishes together under one pastor while supporting each Parish's unique identity. I am so proud of the way, in just a few months, St. Mary and St. John parishioners embraced opportunities to collaborate in liturgies, build community, and share resources. After less than three months of collaboration, *both Parishes* came together - *over 300 strong* - in an outdoor Mass and picnic. Staff from both Parishes also spent half of a day together, both Finance Committees met together, and the Rosary and Altar Service Organizations had a *meet and greet*. St. Mary and St. John counterparts are dialoguing and working together. We even have a parishioner who works at both Parishes.

I'm looking forward to both parishes making a strong commitment for participation in our parish Mission on October 21 & 22. We have a very graced opportunity with Fr. John Sullivan leading us!

Now, a few thoughts on *where we must go - together*. I mentioned above a few of the successes we have had, each being *key* elements in becoming *Vibrant Parishes*. Yet, there is more we can do, and as your shepherd I hope, *with your support*, to lead you there.

We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything. This is why we evangelize. (Pope Francis)

Baptism calls all to ministry and discipleship. As your pastor, together with my brothers in Christ, Fr. Joe and Deacons Mike and Ken, I commit to providing relevant liturgies that nourish and challenge each of you so that you can go forth, *in mercy*, with great joy and enthusiasm, responding to people's *thirst for God*.

There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. (Pope Francis)

The Holy Spirit must fuel our evangelization efforts. So we must have prayerful encounters with our Lord. Begin by praying for the needs of others. Pray for our Parishes' Patron Saints *Mary of the Immaculate Conception* and *John the Evangelist* to pray for us and our Parishes. And also, please pray for me, *as your pastor*, that I lead with wisdom, grace, and compassion!

We must be Parishes *on a Mission* - we cannot stand still; we need to move forward - *and with joy!*

My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an "extra" or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth. (Pope Francis)

*In His love,
Fr. Craig*

