

Mission in Motion: Envisioning Our Future

(the following is the text of Fr. Aaron's announcement on Sunday, 11 June 2017)

Our **Mission in Motion** initiative to formulate a *program-oriented budget* based on *parish-wide input* continues. Today I want to outline where we've been - and why - and encourage you to attend our gathering on Monday evening, June 26, at 6:30 pm.

First, I must ask an all-important question of you as we move along in this process: How do you see your membership here at Holy Family Catholic Church? Do you lean more toward being a consumer kind of member? or would you see yourself as being more an **ACTIVE member?** **Where, on this long, long continuum, have you positioned yourself?**

If you come more as a consumer, the rest of us need to know that - so that we can better provide for your needs: we want to have enough good Readers and Eucharistic Ministers (extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion) so that there aren't too few to serve in this very important ministry, and so they don't burn out from over use. Of course, we need to provide a healthy and viable music ministry, so that, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, you will be better able to participate ***actively, consciously, and fully***. As **consumers**, we also want to provide for the developing Faith Formation needs of your children: adequate classroom space, sufficient learning materials, an adequate team of catechists and classroom aids, a team of parents willing to be available when special needs arise. We will need to have sufficient ministry volunteers to minister Holy Communion to you when you are homebound, hospitalized, or needing special care.

We want to provide for all your pastoral and sacramental needs as fully as possible, and that this be sufficient for the care and salvation of your soul.

As a consumer, then, we would ask that you support these effort with as generous a contribution as possible in your weekly offering, to support the diocesan Catholic Services appeal, and, when you can, contribute to our Building Maintenance Fund (which provides for long-term upkeep of our Church). (*I thank you for this longstanding and continuing support that you do offer!*)

As you can see, **membership** can - and sometimes does - lean toward a ***minimalist*** position.

If, however, you see yourself as a more **active** MEMBER of Holy Family Catholic Church, then I must ask, are you engaged as you most want to be? What would be different to deepen your membership? And if you find yourself leaning more in that "consumerist" direction, what

might you be feeling inclined to do to be a more active member? Liturgical Ministries? community service? calling or writing letters? volunteer office help?

This continuum is wide. In its furthest extreme, "consumer membership" is - but certainly not quite - almost a "**purchase of service**"; the extreme of active membership is much different, all the way to giving of oneself "**without counting the cost.**"

So, where do **you** stand? Where do you **want** to be standing? And the age-old question: How do you **feel** about your stance?

Allow me to shift gears and - to switch metaphors - to drill down *deeper* into **membership**: It would seem from his closing thought in his Second Letter to the Corinthians - which we just heard - that St. Paul's entire message to his beloved Corinthians leans clearly *far from that minimalist position. He writes:*

Brothers and sisters . . . Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

In fact, hearing the opening words of today's Gospel, it's hard for *every one of us* **not** to be challenged:

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

God, loving Father that we celebrate, **has given all** for **us**. Jesus, loving Son that **he** is, throughout this past Easter Season, has invited each one of us into that same relationship with the Father, with him . . . and with one another as the living Body of Christ. In other words, every one of us is called - invited - to move every day of our lives into ever more perfect union with Jesus - and with one another.

Here's where, in particular, today, I'm inviting you to an opportunity to help us help you. **Switching gears once more:**

REMEMBER: Something we may not think to apply to our everyday life: There is no such thing as a perpetual motion machine. Everything, from our cells to our families and communities to the entire universe itself, moves **only** toward disintegration - unless the Gift of Life - infused by the very Breath of the Holy Spirit - reverses it. Everything moves either **toward life and growth** or death and destruction.

Building or breaking down? Growing or withering? Every challenge moves one way for the other. Two of the **most obvious challenges** we face here at Holy Family: **we are**, everyone

knows (and to put it nicely), **not getting any younger** and there is a sizeable **absence of**, now, **several generations**. The entire Catholic Church - and other churches and organizations - are facing these same challenges. **What are we here at Holy Family willing to do about this?**

Needless to say, I've done a whole lot of thinking - and praying - on my knees, driving along, as I fall asleep and when I wake up, about everything I've said so far.

Above all, I found myself asking two questions: how can we, as Holy Family Church - ***every one of us*** - come to know, love, and serve God better (the second catechism question!)? and, what **can, must, may** I do better to make that happen, not only for you but for myself? Yes, I've been working on this for a while.

So, here is the brief summary of how we got here and where we're headed. In bullet points.

- For at least three years, I have wanted to move toward a parish budget based on a Strategic Plan, in line with our Mission Statement; I knew we could benefit from outside help.

- We are at a very critical stage in our life here at holy Family: By the grace of God and your continued generosity and sacrifice, we stand entirely debt-free. Statistics of both Catholic and non-Catholic churches tell us this post-debt period is a critical, even precarious, spot: the danger? **creeping complacency**.

- What is our "parish identity"** in this next stage of development? Those of you who remember, our first "task" was to learn to see ourselves as "Holy Family Church." Then energies focused on building this church. Then, retiring the debt. **So, now, what?** It is time for the Holy Spirit, with Consultants' help, to guide us.

- Fr. Jim Hoffman, just in passing, made a comment about his appreciation for the work the Meitler Consulting Group had done in helping to form Holy Family Parish out of St. John's, St. Patrick's, and Our Lady Queen of the Universe.

- Already wondering about finding the right help we needed, now rather than re-invent the wheel, I soon after called the Meitler Group, t least to check them out. I learned they also had grown and were now assisting mostly Catholic churches with Millenial and Twenty-first Century, church-wide problems. Just like ***ours!*** I knew many of you would remember them.

- I floated the idea with a few, got a proposal from Meitler and presented it to the Finance and Pastoral Councils, in October, receiving their approval, some, reluctantly.

- Then, as only the Holy Spirit can do, I received a large, unexpected, financial gift from an anonymous donor, who did not know these plans were in the works; when informed of this project, their intent has been to underwrite these contracted services enabling us to achieve a Strategy-based Budget, please with Holy Family's effort to continue sound financial management.

- The Meitler Group's First contact with Holy Family was during a week-end in December when Alan Meitler and his consulting partner Mark Kemmeter met with staff, parishioners, and

leaders in focus groups to begin their parish analysis; they also examined past, present and future demographics of our Northwoods Community.

-In late February, you will remember, Christine Newkirk, Director of Ecclesial ministries in our Diocese (your CSA at work!), and Mark Mogilka, also a Meitler consultant, led a Saturday morning Parish Visioning Event (despite severe inclement weather!), but including about 40 people, to build community, affirm strengths, and consider future possibilities.

-Intermittently, a planning group of about 14 members, broadly representing the parish has continued to meet to guide this Process, aided by an Executive Committee of Sr. Elizabeth Ammen, Joyce & Karl Kontyko, Mike Krutza, and Lee Ann Niebuhr.

-We named this nine-ten month project MISSION IN MOTION to reflect our venture being grounded in the Gospel - we are all called to be MISSIONary Disciples, and we are on a journey, an active one, IN MOTION!

-This process has already yielded a significant result, in creating a new staff position: We will very soon be seeking a Parish Administrator oversee the general operation of the parish; coordinate all parish ministries, and undertake administrative duties. Our intent is to allow me more time and availability for pastoral and sacramental ministry throughout the parish (more about this in coming weeks).

-Initial demographic and parish data and affirmations are available to you today - here and on our website for your examination.

-As you read last week in the bulletin - and again this week, we are ready now for the absolutely, definitely, most important step in this entire process:

Your presence and participation in our gathering on MONDAY, JUNE 26, @ 6:30

The bottom line is: **involvement**. I'm asking your involvement in this most important process.

-We want to help you on your road to Salvation, deepening your relationship to Jesus Christ. AND, we want to do that with the most responsible use of our programming and parish resources - **a parish-wide Strategic Plan**.

-All of you are invited. This Church was built **from the beginning** to include **all** of you.

And so **all** of you who make this **your parish away from home** are also invited!

All of you seeing yourselves as ever more active members of Holy Family, whether as year-round or seasonal - or frequent members - **are invited!**

All of you not sure where you fit - are invited, too!

All of you who never thought much whether you are mostly **consumer** or active members

- you're especially invited!

I want to see a packed house!

That's also why we ask for a sign up or call - to know you're coming!

In closing, returning to this Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity . . .

a Twelfth Century theologian (not too well known) we know as Richard of (the Abbey of) Saint Victor (d. 1173) wrote, "For God to be good, God can be one. For God to be loving, God has to be two because love is always a relationship." But his real breakthrough was saying that "For God to be supreme joy and happiness, God has to be three." Lovers do not know full happiness until they both delight in the same thing, like new parents with the ecstasy of their first child.

-Remember, any relationship with Jesus Christ is founded upon **love**, maintained by **love**, nourished by **love**. We don't hear over and over that **God so loved the world . . .** for nothing. God loves you. I love you. St. Paul urges us to love one another (and, keep in mind, there's also a donor who *I know* loves you!, supports you! and believes in **you - and your future!**)

-This isn't just about Holy Family - us. it's about our children, grandchildren, great grandchildren who are already coming after us; it's about creating a community of believers who will attract our "nones"! And it isn't just about our little parish, nestled in this little tiny diocese, here in upper Wisconsin. It's about how we see ourselves in a world-wide changing church: in our Northwoods, in our diocese, in our State and country. Do we see ourselves as a part of our larger church - or not?!

On this larger scale, do we want to be consumer or active members?

What responsibility do we have to be a **witness** for Christ **to the future**?

In the end, my allegiance, of course, is first to Jesus Christ, to his church, to Bishop Powers, then, of course, to you.

In fact, during my three months of sabbatical, with thirty-three other priests,
I surprised myself one day to notice that never once had I wished or wanted
to be anywhere else but here in this Diocese, with this Bishop,
in these Northwoods, here at Holy Family.

How about you? Come on Monday, June 26.

Let our love for one another, as a parish Community, indeed reflect our love for God **who so loved us**. With our prayer and the Holy Spirit's guidance, we will then produce a path to our future grounded in our ever-growing Love of God.

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