

January 22, 2017
Third Sunday of Ordinary Time

Today I am here to talk about the new directions that our parish is taking after over two years of preparation. First, why do you come to St. Louise? Isn't it true that we come so that we can be saved, to experience the living presence of our Savior Jesus Christ in word and sacrament? That is a good place to start, but if we focus primarily on what we get, then we can very easily fall into approaching our faith as consumers instead of disciples. In baptism we receive the light of Christ. If we are going to be people who live Christ's light we need not only receive his light, we also need to share it, to be truly missionary disciples and to move as a parish from maintenance to mission.

The book *Rebuilt* suggests that one way to understand the history of the Catholic Church in the United States is through the lens of consumerism. For the first two centuries the Church's mission was to maintain and care for the waves of immigrants that came to this nation as needy consumers. We built not only parishes, but schools, hospitals and amazing Catholic Charities organizations to meet their needs. After WW II Catholics began to move into the mainstream of society and they became compliant consumer Catholics. In under their pastor's leadership in the 40's 50's and 60's they built parishes and schools like St. Louise. They knew that a strong faith and Catholic Education would help their children to be successful in society. Build and maintain a parish, a school and a strong faith formation program, and they will come. Sure, young adults may drift away for a few years, but they will come back when they get married and want to baptize their children. Sometime in the late 60's things began to shift and Catholics became demanding consumer Catholics. No longer compliant, they often asked, "why?" and sadly, the Church was often thrown off guard and didn't provide a clear answer. With no compelling reason to stay, more

and more left, we have slipped to the point that now most young adults leave and don't come back, if they get married at all, they don't get married in Church and most don't choose to have their children baptized.

Moving from maintenance to mission is important because across the U.S. the number of people who attend any church is falling dramatically. The only religious group that has grown in the United State is a group commonly called the "Nones", not the religious sisters, but those who when answering a form about religious preference will choose "none". They often believe in God they just don't see the need to be a part of a Church, which is a natural response for a demanding consumer. The number of Catholics in the U.S. is maintaining due to immigration. We see that reality right here at St. Louise. If we don't take drastic measures we could in a generation be like the nearly empty Churches in Europe. We have to move from maintenance to mission, from being consumer Catholics to missionary disciples.

Let's take a look at our new Parish Mission statement, *Ignite Faith and Witness God's love*. See how these simple words call us to live our faith with a sense of Mission? In 2016 we began Christ Renews His Parish at St. Louise which is the main way our parish will ignite the faith of our parishioners. I strongly encourage to attend a weekend. CRHP will help our parish to be stronger as missionary disciples.

Now I would like to talk about the reorganization of our parish. During our two-year process of prayer, reflection and discussion, Mary Beth Celio, who designed our parish survey that many of you completed, said to me, "Your parish has an untapped resource of talented people who are ready to serve." The reorganization of our staff and parish leadership is meant to raise up the gifts and participation of the parishioners. **The goal is to move from maintenance to mission.** Now, I would like to show what I mean. If you look at the screen you can see

that parish leadership and ministries will flow from four commissions: Worship, Community Life, School and Evangelization. The chairs and vice-chairs of each commission will serve on the Pastoral Council. These commissions will meet the Wednesday before the Pastoral Council meeting so that we can move ahead on important new initiatives in a more efficient way. The staff will be structured to reflect this new organization of parish leadership. My bulletin column and the bulletin insert explain the reorganization more in detail. One of the pillars of our Strategic Plan is to hire the appropriate number of staff for our parish. Our goal is to hire three new staff members with the focus to give stronger support to the ministries of our parishioners.

There are three areas that I need your help as we move forward. First is your promise of daily prayer for our parish. Second, I need your participation. If everyone makes a commitment to serve, we will be stronger in living our mission. Finally, I need the strong commitment of financial resources. The good news is that we already have the money to all the staff we need. The bad news is that it is still in your pocket. If you haven't made your pledge for Sacrificial Giving to the parish yet for 2017, please do so today. With all hands on deck and with God's grace our parish move forward as true missionary disciples. It truly is my honor and joy to lead you on that journey.