

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

I hope that you have enjoyed our celebration of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord today! In some ways, as this Feast occurs forty days after Christmas, we might consider it the “final closing” to the echoes of liturgical Christmas Time in our liturgical calendar, as we settle in for a period of Ordinary Time until the serious days of Lent begin.

In the days ahead, continue to turn toward Jesus as the Light to the Nations, and rejoice in the ways you, like Simeon and Anna, see the salvation of God appearing in your own life!

Catholic Ministries Appeal 2014

I thank everyone for your positive response so far to our launching of the 2014 Catholic Ministries Appeal. I hope in my presentation to you last weekend I make clear why everyone’s participation in the Appeal is so important. As I mentioned, I myself contribute because I believe in the good work it does and because of the ways it benefits our own parish. I respectfully ask that all families contribute to the Appeal.

Liturgical Minister Training

It’s that time again, when we are recruiting new liturgical ministers. Liturgical minister training will be taking place for new Readers, new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and new Ushers; look for the information elsewhere in the bulletin. Recruitment for new altar servers will take place separately in the not-too-distant future.

We have made real progress in moving toward achieving the number of ministers we need to adequately cover all our Masses without overburdening people, but we still have a way to go in that area. Sunday Eucharist is at the heart of our life together, and it is important for everyone to be committed to helping to create the proper, reverent and engaged context for the celebration of the liturgy. Each and every member of the assembly, insofar as each person is a member of the Body of Christ participating in the offering of the Sacrifice, is an important part of the celebration. It is also true, however, that it is important to have members of the assembly who offer themselves as liturgical

ministers to serve the assembly, so that all the liturgical roles needed for the full celebration of the liturgy can be fulfilled.

We WANT YOU and we NEED YOU to step forward to offer yourself as a Reader, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, or as an Usher. Please consider doing so and respond as described in the information elsewhere in the bulletin.

Parish Visitation Report

As you will recall, on the weekend of December 7-8, 2013, Msgr. James McNamara, Vicar (meaning he is Bishop Murphy’s representative) for the Central Vicariate made his Pastoral Visitation to OLP, preaching at all the weekend Masses and meeting with the Pastoral Staff, the Pastoral Council, the Finance Committee, and with representatives from the various ministries, organizations and societies of the parish. I wanted to share with you some of the information from the report which he submitted to Bishop Murphy, which was also sent to me.

I am pleased to announce it was a very positive report that acknowledged the progress we have all made together over the past year and a half. Msgr. McNamara wrote about the sense of new life that has come into the parish and affirmed the direction we are taking. He pointed to the positive energy and all the new ways people are becoming involved in the life of the parish.

There are some areas of growth that we can work on, mentioned in recommendations that were made at the end of the report. The first recommendation focuses on something that we ourselves had begun to notice and will begin to address, and that is the fact that there are many different “bailiwicks” in the parish — in other words, that there is a certain degree of fragmentation among the many different groups and organizations, with each focused on their own little piece but none really having a sense of or strong commitment to the whole. The challenge, then, is to develop a stronger **parish** focus and vision and identity as everyone moves into the future **together**, bringing people together to see the larger picture. We want to see if we can improve the ways everyone works

together for the common good of the parish instead of just for one's own group.

We will indeed act on that recommendation, and, in fact, have begun to do so. We are planning a special **Parish Leadership Meeting** for all leaders and heads of parish ministries, societies and organizations which will take place in March. You'll be hearing more about that in the future.

A second major recommendation mentioned the need to do an updated census of the parish, which we have also begun; it is in its infancy stages and will be rolled out over the course of the upcoming year. This census will help us to serve you better as it will give us valuable current information about who our parishioners are and what the needs are. Look for our big census initiative to be announced, explained and promoted in the weeks ahead.

Other recommendations had to do with some specifics about enhancing the work of the Pastoral Staff in its collaboration and planning as a group, and these recommendations will be explored too.

The Parish Visitation Report has been reviewed and discussed by the Pastoral Council and will be reviewed and discussed at our next Pastoral Staff Meeting, as both groups will use the information in that report to guide us into the future. If you would like to read a copy of the full report, please feel free to contact me and I will be happy to send it to you.

Member Engagement Survey Report

Recall too that back in October our parish participated in the Member Engagement Survey (the ME-25). We have received the results of that survey, and that information is in the process of being reviewed and discussed with the Pastoral Council and the Pastoral Staff so that we might ascertain how to best use that information to build up the sense of engagement among all our parishioners. Because of the nature of that information, it takes more time and work to go through and digest that material. Rest assured, however, that we are in the process of following up on it. You will receive information about it and hear about how that report will help us move into the future in upcoming bulletins.

In conclusion...

Together, let's aim high in Christ.
Together, let's bring out the best in each other.
Together, let's be the best we can be in Christ.

And let's always remember: LOVE IS A GIFT.

Sincerely,