

COL Annual Update and Pastoral Plan Communication
Recorded Homily December 7-8, 2024 rev11/5/24

This is Fr Ken Schnipke. I'd like to share some brief updates with you on Christ our Light family of parishes: where we have been, where we're at today and where we're looking to go with priorities and goals for the next three years.

Advent is a time of joyful anticipation, patiently awaiting the coming of Christ, our Savior, the light of the world. I have joyful anticipation for our family of parishes and believe we have been patiently moving forward while also being attentive to the unique richness of each parish in our family.

Where we have been - We came together July 1, 2022 as the Northwest 8 family of parishes. Our first major milestone was the installation of pastor and clergy along with the people of God gathering 120 choir members from all eight of our parishes and over 500 parishioners in the church below giving praise to God and committing ourselves to living and sharing the gift of faith together. In 2023, we chose Christ Our Light as our family name and were enriched by a parish mission with Fr Leo. A group of 60 parishioners came together from all eight parishes to discern and create our vision for the next 10 years and a unified pastoral council was formed while also maintaining pastoral councils in each parish that oversee maintenance and local operations.

Where we are today - Christ our light has the most churches of any family in the archdiocese, but is not the largest family. There are several with more parishioners, one with twice as many, and yet Christ Our Light has the highest average weekend attendance of all families in the archdiocese, nearly 4,600. That's a testimony to the vitality of faith, the strength of families and the values important in our local area. The response to the Disciple Maker Index survey earlier this year was well beyond any projections and a good barometer of where we are on the journey of faith. Our leadership team has spent a good deal of time developing goals from this survey I will mention momentarily. The Christ our light Eucharistic pilgrimage was a wonderful witness of how we walk together with the Lord Jesus and our call to share the gift of faith with others. It included parishioners from all eight of our churches as well as many other participants. The Northern area priests offered a special thanks for the pilgrimage. The Christ Our Light parish directory is coming together including pictures of over 1,000 families to help us know one another better.

Where are we going? - Christ Our Light Family shares a vision of where we aspire to be in the next 10 years. In the short term we know that it will take all of us focusing on some common goals to take meaningful strides, so we narrowed the focus of our activities to three main areas.

The recent survey alerts us all that there are a sizeable number of people who attend Mass but don't feel that they have a personal relationship with Christ. This makes our first area of focus "Knowing God". Over the next three years we ask that our ongoing and new activities and programs emphasize different ways to help us all know Jesus as a friend.

Many people have indicated that they attend Mass but aren't sure why. This leads us to the second area of focus; "Loving God". The most common way to share God's love is coming together at Mass so our focus will be to increase the level of people attending, and knowing

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why they are there. This will make the time spent together worshipping God more meaningful and fruitful.

The love of God inevitably inspires us to serve others as Jesus did and to share his teachings. This leads us to the third area of focus "Serving God". To make meaningful progress in this area, it is important that we build an organization around Stewardship and service developing programs and activities that foster growth amongst our family of parishes and help our brothers and sisters share the gift of faith with others.

Our call to action varies as our roles and talents do. If you are leading or organizing activities and programs in our Family of parishes, please look for ways they can emphasize and focus on these three areas over the next three years (and thank you for all you do for us!). If you participate in activities and/or the Mass, please see if you can make progress in this direction for yourself and your family and please invite others to join you! If you would like to learn more, or participate in programs or ministries, please contact your local parish office – they will be so happy to hear from you!

Please review the Pastoral Plan in the bulletin and on the website to see the specific goals we have for Knowing, Loving and Serving God and please, please join in to achieve them!

In closing, I echo the words of St. Paul to the Philippians, "I pray always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more, to discern what is of value, for the glory and praise of God." May this Advent season be filled with hope, peace, joy and love as we anticipate and patiently await the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ, our Light.