

Dear Parishioners of NW8 Family of Parishes,

Recently, one of our NW8 parishioners introduced themselves to me at a HS basketball game and which parish they belong. I'm always grateful for the extra help with names as there are a lot of folks to remember. They also wanted express thanks for all the efforts bringing our NW8 family of parishes together. From their perspective, there is good cooperation and support among many, folks feel welcomed and at home in their own parish and attending Mass in other NW8 parishes, and they are excited about the opportunities that are before us. I was grateful for their affirming words and wanted to share them with you as we are all in this together.

Archbishop Schnurr also shares his appreciation in his recent Beacons of Light letter. We are just over 6 months into this new configuration of parishes, and while there are some anxieties and concerns, there is also great hope and promise for the future. Our primary calling as a family of parishes is to share the Good News of Jesus in word and deed.

We are moving forward in our NW8 family of parishes. Late January our NW8 staff gathered for lunch, team building and visioning. A smaller visioning team is being assembled and will be attending a "Visio Day" in Dayton. The goal is to help the visioning team assess where we are at in all aspects of parish life and to receive training for facilitating visioning sessions with NW8 staff, parish councils and groups, and parishioners at large. Visioning is a work in progress that will become more clear over time and with the cooperation and collaboration of many.

We are also assembling a naming committee with a representative from each NW8 parish. The committee will be soliciting suggestions from all parishioners along with an explanation why the name may be appropriate for NW8. Here are a few of the criteria. The name cannot be the same as an existing parish in NW8 nor used by another family in the Archdiocese. The name must be a saint, a mystery of the Lord, or a title of the Blessed Virgin Mary. While we are creating a new name for our NW8 family of parishes, the title of each existing church will not change. This is similar to the naming process in the past where parishes were part of the Minster Cluster or Marion Catholic Community and yet kept their individual parish name. The naming committee will narrow the list of suggested names to 5 – 8 possible names, provide background information on each suggested name and create a process throughout NW8 for discerning/deciding our new name. Watch the bulletin for further details about the naming process.

In the midst of visioning and naming, our parish staff and volunteers continue serving each of our parishes and looking for ways to work and minister together. Recently several parishes came together for a First Communion retreat, one unified Christmas letter was sent to all and the NW8 staff enjoyed a Christmas lunch together. Parishioners are also finding opportunities in their own parish and others in NW8, making new friends and renewing old relationships. These are all part of the Holy Spirit bringing us together.

Blessings and prayers, Fr. Ken Schnipke, C.P.P.S., Pastor