

Dear Parishioners of NW8 Family of Parishes,

We are about to celebrate the pinnacle of our faith in these coming days of Holy Week and Easter. We are also moving forward with our NW8 family of parishes working towards one unified family that also respects the gifts and blessings of each parish.

Palm Sunday, April ½, marks the beginning of Holy Week, the most sacred time of our liturgical year. It is a time that calls us to immerse ourselves ever more deeply in the life, death and resurrection of Christ and to experience again the life-saving power of Christ that brings Easter joy! The services of holy Week are unparalleled in the Church year, rich in symbols, ritual and drama. We pray that all of you will take the opportunity to experience the richness of this time that leads to shouts of Easter joy!

The Chrism Mass, April 4th, on Tuesday of Holy Week, the priests of the Archdiocese gather together with Archbishop Schnurr for the Chrism Mass. Here the sacred Chrism Oil, the Oil of the Sick and the Oil of the Catechumens are blessed. It is also a time for priests to recommit themselves as servants of the Church.

The Easter Triduum begins with ***Holy Thursday, April 6th***. Here we celebrate the gift of the Eucharist and our call to service and ministry in the Church. The washing of feet is a reminder of our call to service. The Holy Oils blessed at the Chrism Mass are presented to the parish. On ***Good Friday, April 7th***, we celebrate the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. A barren church with a wooden cross becomes our focus. The path to Easter joy must go through Good Friday. The ***Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday, April 8th*** begins in darkness. The old lights have been put out and a new fire has been ignited. The Easter candles from each NW8 parish, symbols of Christ, are blessed in water that will be used to baptize the newest members of our family of parishes. Sojourners in the rite of Christian Initiation, will join us through the waters of Baptism and as fully initiated members in our Catholic faith. Truly the joy of Easter will resound as Alleluias ring out. On ***Easter Sunday, April 9th***, we continue to celebrate that Christ the Lord has risen and that one day we shall join in the glory and majesty of His Resurrection. May the richness of Holy Week and the joy of Easter fill our hearts and draw us ever more deeply into an amazing relationship with Jesus, our Lord and savior.

The NW8 naming committee has been formed with a representative from each NW8 parish. We are grateful to Renee Bertke St. John, Kathy Buening St. Rose, Trina Griesdorn Nativity, Heath Hegemann St. Augustine, Bart Homan Precious Blood, Kelly Mueller St. Joseph, Kelly Schmitmeyer St. Sebastian, Angie Topp Holy Redeemer and Nick Wilker who will be facilitating the committee's process. 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

NW8 Bulletin Letter April 1-2, 2023

Community and yet kept their individual parish name. The naming committee will narrow the list of suggested names to 5 – 7 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.

We have assembled a NW8 Vision Team to lead and facilitate the creation of a vision that expresses what our new family aspires to be in the next 5-10 years. It will provide direction and discernment resources to allow aligned decisions on where to focus resources and efforts to enable the family to achieve the vision together. We are grateful to Pam Fleck and Nick Thobe from the Marion Cluster, Steve Gruber and Leslie Tyler from the Minster Cluster and Gwen Staton and Nick Wilker from New Bremen. I, Fr. Ken Schnipke, am also serving on the NW8 Vision Team. The vision team attended an Archdiocesan visioning session in Dayton early March and are meeting locally with an Archdiocesan liaison to establish the visioning process and outcomes that will be most beneficial and inclusive for our family. When assembling the team, we were looking for faith filled team members with a good understanding of their own parish/cluster, but also broad enough to see beyond and seek the common good of all. We were looking for recently retired folks with skills in visioning, organization, public speaking, etc. who would have the time and flexibility to receive training, design and facilitate a visioning process 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.

Paul Gagel recently announced his retirement as Business Manager for St. John's and the Marion Catholic Community after 50 years of services. That is a milestone in any field and we are grateful for all the gifts, time and talent he has shared over those many years. We are reviewing the St. John Business Manager position in light of the NW8 Family of Parishes and the staffing that will best help us serve the needs of St. John's and our NW8 family of parishes.

Each of these endeavors are in the initial stages and will take some time to develop before their efforts become more visible in our family. I have every confidence that they will bear good fruit for the glory of God and our NW8 family of parishes.

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. Staff and liturgical ministers are preparing for shared Holy Week services and the Easter vigils. We are also looking toward the next NW8 Anointing of the Sick Mass, Friday, April 21st at 10:30 AM at Holy Redeemer Church, New Bremen. This Mass is for parishioners in the NW8 Family of parishes who are elderly and weakened by age, affected by a serious illness, or preparing for a serious procedure or surgery. There will be a lunch following the Mass in the Holy Redeemer Parish Hall. If you would like to attend the lunch, please RSVP to the office by April 15th by emailing holyredeemer@nktelco.net or calling 419-629-2543. I am truly grateful for all the ways our staff and parishioners are supporting and stepping forward in our efforts to be a beacon of light for all in NW8 and beyond.

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