



SAINT STEPHEN PROTOMARTYR CATHOLIC CHURCH

May the risen Lord be with you,

May 8th, 2022

Easter is a liturgical season that invites us to lift our minds and hearts in gratitude for the gift of faith we all received through our baptism. By the same faith, we are called not only to nourish it personally but, more importantly, to continue the work of building the Church that Christ has given us. Pope Francis invites our local parishes to be a beacon where the gifts of the Holy Spirit unfold in each one of us so we can continue the mission of Jesus in the here and now of our reality. As your new pastor, I want to rely on your help so that together we can paddle toward the same horizon of making disciples, building our community, and inspiring witness to others.

As I mentioned to you, parishioners of St. Mary and Stephen have begun working together in the Unification Committee on the following tasks. First, to manage the process of considering a name for the new parish. You can go to the websites of each parish, www.ststephendp.org, and www.st-mary-catholic-church.org, and click the **Renew My Church** link, where you will find the Naming of a new parish form as well as the names of the parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago, so your suggestion should not be one of any of the existing parishes. The deadline is May 31. You can also email your suggestion to newparishstmaryststephen@gmail.com

The second task of the Unification Committee was to revise the final proposal of the Religious Education programs in English and Spanish. Thus, as I promised in my previous letter, we open registrations beginning May 14 to all seven-year-old and older children who need religious education and want to prepare for First Communion and Confirmation. Please call the parish office at 847-824 2026 to register them. A general view of the religious education programs is on the current web pages under the **Renew My Church** link, including the schedule of Sunday and weekday Masses that I proposed to the Unification Committee to revise as a third task and the responses and assessments that they responded to a set of initial questions to address the new parish's different aspects, such as communications, worship, parish life, facilities assessments, and its vision.

The global coronavirus pandemic has profoundly impacted our communities, families, and lives. While the pandemic has been a time of acute loss, pain, and suffering for many, as people of faith, we are attentive to how this crisis has taught us important spiritual lessons about renewal. At the same time, this call to renewal is an abiding part of our lives as Christians. The challenges of our present-day highlight the critical need for this spiritual growth. Our model of parish life was built for a different time. We must prayerfully and carefully evaluate the needs of our Catholic presence in the area of our new parish in Des Plaines and reimagine how we can serve better guided by the Holy Spirit as Jesus commanded us to do. We must ask how spiritual renewal will allow us to be a church that welcomes newcomers from both near and far.

Finally, the Unification Committee is working on a thanksgiving Mass on June 26 at Noon to acknowledge the forty-five years of priesthood that Fr. Lawrence Collins has served the church in the Archdiocese of Chicago, twelve of them at St. Mary's parish. On that day, too, Fr. Roy Belocura will celebrate his last Sunday Mass at St. Mary at 10 am. In gratitude for their service, we plan to have a gathering at St. Stephen Protomartyr's gym at 2 pm and also thank Ms. Amelia Marquez and Mr. Jerry Priore's dedication as staff members of St. Mary who planned their retirement.

As you can see, there is a lot of work ahead of us, but I am confident that by relying on Jesus, our Good Shepherd, we will cast our vision to be anew in service of renewing his Church.

Keeping you in my prayers, sincerely in Christ,

Rev. David Arcila, Pastor

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