



## FROM THE DESK OF FR. MIKE

### *Merry Christmas!!!*

The joy, the gift, the hope, the truth of the Child of God, born in time, as Savior of the world speaks heart felt truths for all ages. Whatever year we were born on this earth, may the promise of the Child of God, born in time over two thousand years ago, bring hope and promise to us this Christmas day. The trees are up, the Christ child is in the manger, and we continue to pray our way through the joys of Christmas through the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which is celebrated on Monday, January 8, 2023. *Merry Christmas!!!*

In the coming months, I will be convening a handful of parishioners to engage in conversation and dialogue with representatives of Holy Cross in Deerfield convened by Fr. Rich Lo Bianco and St. Patrick's Church in Lake Forest convened by Msgr. Robert Dempsey. The conversation and dialogue will be part of our three parishes direct involvement in the Archdiocese of Chicago *Renew My Church* process, that every parish has participated in since the process started in 2015. The meetings and conversation will be facilitated and led by representatives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Over the past six years the members of the Parish Councils of these three parishes have met for conversation and friendship. And over the past six years members of the Parish Staffs of these three parishes have met for conversation and friendship. Each of these three parishes have their own unique history that has developed since the parishes were founded years ago.

Holy Cross Parish was founded almost 100 years ago, first calling parishioners together for worship in 1929. Our parish was founded in 1875, breaking off from St. Patrick's to serve the residents in east Lake Forest. St. Mary's will be celebrating our 150th anniversary in 2025, which will be here before we know it. We will give thanks for the graces God has and continues to provide for parishioners of our parish, coming together to worship and serve God as followers of Emmanuel, God is with us as. St. Patrick's was founded back in 1849, being the oldest of the three parishes in our *Renew My Church* grouping.

Over the past seven years you may have heard of parishes closing, merging, being "renamed" for the new parish that was being founded from what had been several parishes. **As we, Holy Cross, St. Patrick's, and St. Mary's, engage in *Renew My Church*, there will be no closures, no renaming, no merging of our three parishes.** The Parish Councils and Parish Staffs and parishioners will continue to look for ways to support the ministry in our respective parishes in our area of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

As we pray into the Lenten season which begins on February 22, the parishes are planning on offering Lenten Reconciliation services to offer parishioners the opportunity to come together and celebrate the healing sacrament of reconciliation in Lent. We will be looking at other ways that parishioners of these three parishes can come together to share faith and support as Catholics. Your ongoing prayers and future opportunities for involvement in coming together with parishioners of Holy Cross and St. Patrick's will be announced and shared in the coming months.

The *Renew My Church Prayer* has been encouraged to be prayed individually and communally. I list it here in my article today for your prayer.

Lord Jesus, you speak to us today,  
as you spoke to holy men and women  
who have gone before us.  
In every age and in our own time,  
you call to us and say: *Renew My Church*.  
Pour out the gift of your Holy Spirit upon us,  
and so enable us  
to hear you clearly  
to listen to each other attentively  
to imagine our future boldly  
to discern your direction wisely  
to persevere in your holy will courageously  
to stay together in charity  
to surrender our own plans readily  
to embrace the greater good  
to hand on your gifts to future generations.  
May we remain in the holy company of  
the Blessed Virgin Mary, the apostles and all the saints.  
May their example and presence  
inspire us with patient confidence  
in the work of your grace.  
We ask this of you who live and reign  
with the Father  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God,  
forever and ever. Amen.

May God bless us with hearts filled with the presence of Jesus this Christmas season,