



Pastor's Pen

January 6, 2019

- Fr. Tom Wilson, Pastor

JESUS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Yesterday's daily reflection from Dynamic Catholic reminded us that God brings stability to a culture that is always changing. The world we live in always changes, sometimes for the better and sometimes not. It is hard to argue that the world we live in is changing at rates exponentially higher than in the past. The challenges of that change are real and present great opportunities but are scary at the same time. The same is true in our life as a Church and parish community.

On Epiphany, we are reminded of the universal nature of God's presence in the world, and His desire to be known by all nations. The three kings represent the world outside of God's original revelation to the Jewish people seeking, acknowledging, and desiring the presence of the living God in the person of Jesus Christ. He is God and Savior of everyone, whether consciously acknowledged or not. Communicating that divine truth in the context of a fallen world has been the mission of the Church since Day One. As I have said over and over, the many things we do as a community risks distorting our most fundamental call to make disciples of all nations.

To live that call at All Saints we have adopted a mission statement of "Leading People to Christ through Liturgy, Learning, Sacraments, and Service." It crystalizes the universal mission of the Church in the fundamentals of who we are as the Body of Christ. It is branded in a way that has nothing to do with technology, social trends, or any of the other things we equate with the changing world. The world may be changing, but the need for Jesus remains the same.

As we face a world appearing increasingly dark, less focused on God, and rising in the numbers of people who don't believe or don't take seriously the necessity of being part of the divine entity created by God in the Body of Christ, we are confronted with intellectual and spiritual challenges we have never seen.

We have two fundamental choices in confronting the challenges. The first is to do all we can to reclaim what once was and do our best to replicate the past in the present that we believe fulfills our mission. The second is to be open to the possibility that God is calling us to something different in the way we execute our mission. The first option appears easier as it takes on a "back to basics" approach needed from time to time in different areas of our lives. The second is scarier, because it requires a greater sense of trust in God, a willingness to listen to God and each other, and take risks that we often do not associate with the practice of faith.

In an increasingly chaotic world, Jesus, through His people in His Church offers the stability that cannot be found anywhere else. It is a human need that too many people fail to recognize until they end up fragmented, frazzled, and frequently desperate. To meet that need, as disciples we need to meet people, invite them, and honor them as people. The encounter with Christ begins with human interaction for almost everyone. That is precisely why we have gone out of our way to address basic human kindness in our community, whether it is a simple greeting on the way to Mass or doing our best to provide child care, so parents can participate more easily in parish activities.

It is a high priority for us to equip people with the tools to more effectively engage the human and spiritual needs of people who may be outside of the Church. We had over 80 people participate in the *Return* program to help them be witnesses to loved ones who may have left the Church or the Faith. We have an active small group program that has 37 groups, ranging from five to ten people in each participating so they can grow in their faith and be better prepared to share it with others.

In the fall we hosted the *Return* program for the first time which helped people who struggle with loved ones who have left Christ and His Church. It was a time of growth and insight for participants that prepared them to take risks for the good of their loved ones.

On January 26 we will host the *Called and Gifted* program to discover or rediscover charisms that God has given us to enhance His kingdom. On February 12, we will host Jon and Kalley Yanta who will begin our *Relent* program to help us more fully enter Lenten renewal in a one-night family-friendly event that will help use the season more completely.

All of these are new to us as we look to the future of bringing the stability and joy of Christ into the hearts of people.