

## **From the Pastor's Desk**

When you read my message this week, we will have already completed the first full week of 2026; however, I do not think that we have ventured too far into the new year that the idea of resolutions is far from our mind. In light of this fact, I would like to suggest some resolves that we might put into practice in order to advance our spiritual lives this year. First, we must make a deliberate decision to have God occupy the first place in our lives. This implies a variety of things. Prayer must increase and must be deliberate. What I mean by this is that our conversations with God must be intimate – it must be a place where we bear our very souls to God, our Father – praising Him for all the good things that He has blessed us with in life and truthfully lamenting our sorrows and sharing our worries with Him. Jesus Christ must become for us a friend, not of the shallow Facebook variety, but one whom we look upon with love and one to whom we are willing to turn our lives over. We must reify in our hearts that he died and rose for our salvation, a gift that is greater than anything we could be given or accomplish ourselves in life. We must call upon the Holy Spirit to guide us and teach us to pray as we ought, for we must recognize that in our imperfection, we rely completely on God's merciful love. This newfound relationship with God must set the tone for everything else in life. Second, we must commit ourselves to becoming people of virtue. This means being just, generous, loving, merciful, kind, hospitable, prudent, courageous, chaste, patient, temperate, diligent, truthful, humble, gentle, grateful, peaceable, respectful, and sincere. As you know well, the list could go on and on; however, what matters is that virtuous people do virtuous things. That means that while moral laws are very important, what is more important is that if we practice virtue, the law of God becomes written upon our hearts. Third, and intimately related to the first two, we must become more mindful of our relationships. Relationships are the heart of moral life. We are always engaged in four relationships: with God, with neighbor, with self, and with world. We have spoken of the first and second of these thus far; however, the second and fourth are of equivalent importance. This past Thursday's first reading spoke of the importance of the relationship with neighbor when the author proclaimed: "If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother." (1 John 4:20-21) Love of neighbor is essential. This means our relatives and friends whom it is easy to love as well as (and especially) those who we find difficult to love. And it is the latter that is most difficult, but the most essential. Again, our Lord says: "For if you love those who love you, what merit is there in that? Do the tax collectors not do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same?" (Matthew 5:46-47). We must pray for those whom we find difficult to love, and we will see that our hearts will become less harsh and judgmental...with time...lots of time. And to round out our healthy connections,

we must be aware of our relationship with the world. Pope Francis raised our attention in terms of this relationship with the world in his encyclical **Laudato Si'** where he noted: the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters." (no.2). We must respect our world by recognizing our codependence with it, using its resources responsible, recycling, and other things to respect the gift we have been given by God. Finally, I believe that our commitment to God, neighbor, self and world must be reflected in our commitment to worship. From ancient times the Church has lived by the maxim, **lex orandi, lex credenda**, i.e., "the law of worship is the law of belief." In essence this implies, if our prayer, in particular here our public prayer (at Mass) is halfhearted, then everything we say we believe is halfhearted as well. Today, make the commitment to participate fully, consciously and actively in all the prayers and songs as we celebrate Eucharist.

*It is my firm belief that if we attend to these things over the course of 2026, even if we do so gradually we will become the people that God is calling us to be as we move forward in the pursuit of the fullness of God's Kingdom.*

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### **FISH FRY PLANNING MEETING**

On Tuesday, January 20, 2026, there will be a planning meeting for the upcoming Lenten Fish Fries at 6:30 PM in the school cafeteria. All those who are planning on volunteering are invited and encouraged to attend. Our parish depends upon fundraisers such as the Fish Fry and we are always in need of more volunteers. Please, prayerfully consider coming forward to assist us with this project. You will come to see that our fish fry team is committed to fellowship and community building as much as delivering a more than satisfying meal for the Fridays of Lent.

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### **Second Annual Parish Bowling Outing**

Next Sunday, January 18, 2026, at 4:00 PM, our parish will have its second annual bowling outing at 814 Bowling Alleys (the former Richard Bowling). In addition to being an afternoon of fun for the entire family, this outing gives you the opportunity to meet and to interact with other parishioners from our Church and build community. The cost is minimal (\$4.00 for shoe rental unless you own your own pair of shoes, then the cost is free since the cost of lane rental is being covered by a very generous donor). A sign-up sheet may be found in the main vestibule of the Church. Questions can be directed to Charlie Tourney at 702-499-1144.