

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You may have seen our Parish Mission Statement at some point. It is based on Jesus' Mission for the Church:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20, emphasis added)

Jesus said that the Church's mission is to go into the world and spread the Good News (literally the "Gospel"). Working with the pastoral staff and the Parish Pastoral Council, we have formulated a Mission Statement for St. Patrick Parish that flows from the Church's Mission Statement given by Jesus.

We are a community of Catholic Christians who desire to grow closer to the living God. It is seen in the way we...

- **build Christ-like relationships with others (Go),**
- **help people to fall in love with God (Make),**
- **fall deeper in love with God by entering the life of the church through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist (Baptize),**
- **serve and witness inspired by the Holy Spirit (Teach).**

We do this because we are children of God who long for all to share in eternal life.

(The short version is **GO, MAKE, BAPTIZE, TEACH**.) In baptism, God made us His sons and daughters, heirs to the Kingdom of God. Note the vocabulary in the Mission Statement is that of relationship. We are not simply servants of God who obey the Master, we are sons and daughters and "**desire to grow closer to the living God.**"

God, however, has not called us to be passive in our faith, but to go out actively to others. No one gets to heaven alone – we go as *Church*, the Body of Christ. God wants us to share the Good News of His love with each person that we meet. God wants us to fall in love with Him, but also to help others to fall in love with Him. By our Baptism, we not only are children of God, but we are sent out to the world so that each person may come to know the living God, fall in love with Him, and so become heirs to His Kingdom.

The purpose of each parish, according to Pope St. John Paul II, is to become a *school of holiness and a school of prayer* (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte* 30-34). St. Patrick Parish, therefore, must be a place where people grow in their primary vocation of holiness through a growing intimacy with God (prayer). Over my six plus years here in the parish, I have tried to make this a priority – helping people to grow in holiness and prayer. This work, however, is not simply done by the clergy, or even the pastoral staff of the parish. No, it is meant to be done by each baptized Catholic! As we rollout the Mission Statement, I will talk more about how we do this on a practical level.

For now, let's look more at the Mission Statement. We desire to grow closer to the living God, so we **GO** out to the world, building relationships. As the saying from *Cursillo* goes, "Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ." It's only in genuine friendships that we can be a bridge of trust for them to come to know Jesus' presence in the Church. We **MAKE DISCIPLES** – helping people know Christ and fall in love with Him. As the Baltimore Catechism says, the meaning of life (why did God make me?) is to know, love and serve God in this life so we can be happy with Him forever in the next.

The third part of the Mission Statement is **BAPTIZE**. Baptism is a symbol of the whole sacramental life. Remember that the Sacraments are gifts from God to help us to grow in relationship with Him. Baptism is the gift of becoming God's daughter or son. Confirmation gives us the gifts needed to live out our call as missionary disciples of Christ. The Eucharist (the source and summit, the center of Christian life) is the very presence of Jesus, our God. In it, He feeds us with His very self, He gives us strength, He unites us to His Heart, He makes us one with Him. While people can go into the woods and encounter God, the Eucharist is the presence of God *par excellence*. It's like the difference between texting someone and being face to face with him. We come to Mass, and draw others to the intimacy of the Mass so that we can be face to Face with God.

Finally, we **TEACH**. We teach, of course, with our words – sharing how God has moved in our lives – but also by example of our service and love.

Why do we **GO, MAKE, BAPTIZE, TEACH**? Because we are God's, and we want everyone to be His forever!

As we rollout the Mission Statement, I hope it inspires you to look at your life, your commitment to God, and to step out in faith to share the Good News of what God has done in your life and in the world.