



The Word from Fr. Arek...
Renew My Church – Part 1 of 4

We are already participating in the Renew My Church initiative. In the next few bulletins, inspired by my Staff and the Team members (introduced below), I am going to re-print articles that I wrote and published throughout the summer months, so that you are more familiar with the process. I would like all parishioners to know where Incarnation Parish is at this time in terms of the imperatives and benchmarks set by the Archdiocese of Chicago and how we are already well advanced into things that our diocese is asking parishes to accomplish.

At the end of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, when Jesus tells His followers to, “Go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” He shares that mission with the whole Catholic Church, in every generation. Throughout human history, we continue to be called to be His Words, His Message, His Evangelizers in our world.

Even just fifty or sixty years ago, the world seemed to be a more overtly Christian place – so striving to fulfill Christ’s mission requires new efforts, new vitality, and new energy in our parishes today! In this reality, Cardinal Cupich and the Archdiocese of Chicago began its Renew My Church (RMC) initiative. Many parishes were in need of the renew process. Many parishes have gone through this process of evaluation and adaptation to the changing times. Incarnation Parish is now beginning our own journey in the RMC process, so I want to share some information with you and keep you apprised of what is happening.

Be assured that we have an amazing Team of priests, staff, and parishioners who will be leading our parish through the process. As your pastor, I have already been attending over 25 hours of meetings, (and this is just the beginning) both in person and virtual, and I am also guiding the entire Team.

Fr. Pawel is also with me, and I rely on and appreciate his wisdom. Fr. Mass, as Pastor Emeritus, brings years of experience and insights into the wonderful giftedness of our parish. Our staff representative, Kathy McNicholas, has been an integral part of our parish community for over seventeen years and brings her knowledge and experience. And parishioners Patrick Bryant, Carla Ford, and Jason Walker round out our Incarnation Team. Patrick and Carla are members of the Parish Pastoral Council (serving as an advisory board of consults to the Pastor). In addition, Jason has been successfully leading our Athletic Program. We are meeting already – and I am truly and deeply inspired by the spirit and dedication of the entire group that speaks with a strong unified voice representing the Parish.

The goals or imperatives for parishes in the RMC process are threefold:

1. Make Disciples
2. Build Communities
3. Inspire Witness

Over the next three weeks, I will once more delve more deeply into each imperative and explain the importance of these goals for the mission of the Church. I want to reassure you from the start that Incarnation Parish is strong and well-placed to continue fulfilling these mission imperatives for the future. We meet and exceed every benchmark that the Archdiocese has set – and because of the faithfulness, generosity, and commitment of our parishioners, we are a vital and growing community.

I ask that you pray for our entire Team as we journey together. Pray that the Holy Spirit continues to guide us, as we have been blessed by God’s Divine Providence in the past. Feel free to reach out to Team members with questions or comments you might have – and we will continue to communicate with you on the process.



The Word from Fr. Arek...
Renew My Church – Part 2 of 4

As I explained in last week's article, the process of Renew My Church puts forth three main goals, imperatives, on which parishes should focus their energy. The first of these three imperatives is: MAKING DISCIPLES.

Who are the disciples of Jesus today? What qualities do they share? And how do we, at Incarnation Parish, already provide opportunities for people to become active Catholic disciples? How might we do more in the future?

There are a number of ways to understand the word "Catholic" and what it means to be Catholic. Some people would say that a Catholic is a person who has completed their sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation). And this is true – but this is only one piece of the spiritual path, the "**ecclesial journey**" towards discipleship.

Being Catholic also involves a "**personal journey**," an encounter with Jesus Christ that leads to an awakening and a desire for connection with Our Lord. A soul who meets Jesus longs to deepen this relationship through prayer and ongoing formation.

The third aspect of being a disciple is called the "**missional journey**." This means that a person commits to conversion, opens to changing their life, to taking up their cross, to living in service of others, and to working to grow in holiness and compassion.

Here at Incarnation, we offer many ways for people to become disciples of Jesus. We have adult formation (RCIA, Adult Confirmation), children's Religious Education Program, and Baptismal Preparation Program to help prepare individuals to receive God's grace through the Sacraments.

In addition to daily and weekend Holy Mass, we have many opportunities for personal and communal prayer and reflection - particularly our 24-hour Adoration Chapel. We pray the Holy Rosary together; we pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet every day, and prayer to St. Michael the Archangel after all Masses. We are resuming adult education series in September in order to provide an experience to aid a deeper understanding of our faith. We offer Bible studies, based on the Mass readings, for both men and for women, and Liturgy of the Word for children on Sundays. Every year parishioners generously participate in our Lenten Missions, Corpus Christi Processions, and variety of liturgical celebrations throughout the entire year. Our grounds, especially our Marian Garden and Memorial Garden, also provide numerous quiet places for meditation and private prayer encounters.

And we offer many ministries that reach out to others in need, inviting parishioners to live out their call to mission by being Christ's heart, hands, and feet in the world. From Ministers of Care to the St. Vincent DePaul Society to TRAIN youth group to Knights of Columbus, taking that first step towards finding your purpose in Christ is as easy as checking out our parish website: www.incparish.com.



The Word from Fr. Arek...
Renew My Church – Part 3 of 4

The process of Renew My Church (RMC) puts forth three main goals, imperatives, on which parishes should focus their energy. As we begin RMC here at Incarnation, we are exploring these mission goals. Last week, I wrote about the first of these three imperatives, that is “Making Disciples.” In today’s article, we’ll talk about the second imperative: “BUILDING COMMUNITY.”

What is Christian community? Why does it matter that we live in community together? Why did Jesus Himself call us to “be one”? How is community essential to our spiritual growth? How do we, as Incarnation Parish, invite and welcome others to our community, our Parish Family?

God’s plan for salvation of the world takes shape in the Christian community. Here, those who live a life in communion with Christ come together for prayer and worship, seeking friendships, finding shelter from the storms of life, and sharing in the fellowship that only God can give. We are committed to life together as the People of God. We encourage each other in faith – and we challenge each other to grow spiritually. Jesus is made known to us in our relationships, when “two or three are gathered together in my name, ... there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

With Christ as our Head, the Church is a living Sacrament, making the presence of God visible to others. Strong parishes also make Christ real to all of society, providing outreach, prayers, and a caring presence in a confusing and often unkind world. It is essential for Christ’s Mission that we have parishes that are vital, financially sound, guided by faithful and competent leadership, and continually looking to evangelizing for the future.

Here at Incarnation, we have been blessed with generous donors - and our Parish has been stewarded well by fiscally responsible pastors. Our buildings and grounds are in excellent condition; with the benefit of our parish Walsh Fund, capital improvements are made without the need for additional fundraising. Our recent projects, to name just a few, include repairing the parking lot, replacing the leaking skylight, installing energy efficient lighting, giving the Church a fresh coat of paint, and updating our landscaping. The wonder of God’s creation is reflected well in our beautiful Parish spaces.

God’s presence is also made known through our wonderful and welcoming priests, staff, and parishioners. The pandemic revealed just how important this welcoming spirit is to our Parish – as we continued to add a steady stream of new parishioners (recently, over 120 new families joined our Parish!) and learned each other’s names through the ministry of our Greeting Team! Our Religious Education Program welcomes new children at any time of the year – no one is turned away from learning about Jesus. The prayerful presence of the Albertine Sisters brings spiritual benefit to our Parish. Our Human Concerns Commission provides outreach to people beyond our parish boundaries. And our St. Vincent DePaul Society responds to those in the larger community who need assistance. Even our electronic sign on 127th Street invites others to join us! Led by the power of the Holy Spirit, in these and many other ways, we continue to grow and strengthen as a Parish family rooted in our Lord Christ Jesus. Jesus, we Trust in You!

*Father in heaven,
all creation rightly gives you praise,
for all life and all holiness come from You.
In the plan of your wisdom
the Blessed Virgin Mary bore the Christ in Her womb,
and was raised body and soul in glory to be with Him in heaven.
May our Mother Mary intercede for us,
and may we follow Her example in reflecting your holiness
and join in Her hymn of endless love and praise.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*



The Word from Fr. Arek...
Renew My Church – Part 4 of 4

The process of Renew My Church (RMC) puts forth three main goals, imperatives, on which parishes should focus their energy. As we begin RMC here at Incarnation, we are exploring these mission goals. I first wrote in my previous bulletins, about two imperatives: (1) “Making Disciples” and (2) “Building Community.” In today’s article, we’ll talk about the third and final imperative: **“INSPIRING WITNESS.”**

What did Jesus reveal about God’s great love and mercy for all people? How are we called to be Christ’s saving compassion in the world? How are we called to be Christ’s saving compassion in our families? How do we at Incarnation Parish put our faith into action by helping those in need and building solidarity and peace among all?

The call to compassion is the hallmark of every Christian disciple – and compassion begins with an awareness of the cries and suffering of our fellow human beings who journey with us in this world. Once we become aware, we need to adapt an attitude of forgiveness, caring, and accompaniment just as Jesus taught so clearly in the Gospel. The biblical Parable of the Good Samaritan is only one of many stories Jesus told to illustrate God’s boundless mercy. God’s mercy then compels us to action. We yearn for a more just society, where all of God’s children live in peace and harmony.

The earliest Christian communities, filled with the Holy Spirit, bore remarkable witness to this kind of love – and so they worked to fulfill Jesus’ command to be salt and light to the world. We, too, are called to inspire others by witnessing to Our Lord’s compassion.

Here at Incarnation, many of our efforts are focused on outreach; in fact, one whole branch of our ministries is called Human Concerns. This includes our many donation drives (e.g., Coat Drive, Sponsor a Family, Giving Tree), our Pro-Life Committee, and our Peace & Justice Group. Our Albertine Sisters who found their home here at Incarnation, serve thousands of poor people each year, and so does our own St. Vincent de Paul Society on a local/parish level and beyond. Our TRAIN Youth Ministry goes on an annual Mission Trip to help building houses for those in need of a roof above their heads and serves our elderly and homebound parishioners with leaf-raking and snow-shoveling. Our Religious Education program has service projects at all grade levels, trips to Feed My Starving Children, and sponsors an annual “Family Mercy Project” sending aid locally, nationally, and even internationally. And our special second collections, Catholic Appeal, and Missionary Sunday donations help the efforts of the broader Church. During the Pandemic, we introduced individual parish phone calls, to share prayers and support with our parishioners, many of whom were left isolated, and we also introduced regular ‘robocalls’ to stay in touch and pray with all in our Parish Family and beyond.

We continue to listen for the voices of the most vulnerable in our society: the lonely, the youth, the sick, the elderly, the broken. As we move forward in our new reality, we pray to be ever more sensitive to the stirrings of the Holy Spirit to be living witnesses to Christ’s compassion.