

*Dear Parishioners of St. Gerald*

The pandemic has had a great impact on our lives and our parishes. As churches reopen, parishioners are understandably concerned about returning to worship due to social distance recommendations and their own health. Yet, throughout this crisis, renewal remains of utmost importance in our parishes and in our hearts. We know as an Archdiocese that the way to spiritual renewal is through a focused effort on missionary discipleship, igniting the fire of Jesus in our own hearts and sharing that with others through hospitality, community outreach and ministry.

The Renew My Church movement begins with a "Discernment and Decisions phase" in each grouping. This process focuses on structural renewal and the best physical configuration within a grouping, for example the best use of resources to support strong parish staffs and have buildings, parking lots, etc. that support ministry. Once this has been determined, teams begin to focus on spiritual renewal and the vitality and vibrancy of parish life. Based on the current climate, we need to move to the spiritual renewal phase as efficiently as possible.

For that reason, the Archdiocese has moved up the start date for our grouping's discernment and decisions phase. We were originally scheduled for 2021-22. We will now start the process this fall, likely mid-October, and possibly using virtual meetings.

This basically means a small group of parishioners from St. Gerald will meet with other parishes in our grouping to evaluate the needs of our local areas and scenarios for structural changes that best suit our communities. The results of this process vary – from significant consolidations in areas with large financial and vitality challenges to changing Mass schedules or more opportunities to coordinate ministry with a neighboring parish in areas with stronger organizational and structural foundations.

Other than the timing, this process will remain largely the same as it would have been otherwise. There will be ample time given for prayerfully considering various scenarios and sharing ideas with the grouping team. Our focus throughout the entire process will be on renewal by making disciples, building community, and inspiring witness, with the first Discernment & Decisions phase focused on the organizational and physical structures needed to support those imperatives in our times. More details will be shared in the coming weeks.

As always feel free to call us at 708-224-0234

Yours in Christ

Fr. Robert