



January 2013

My dear friends,

This past year we celebrated the opening of the Second Vatican Council. For those of you who attended our Fall Lecture Series, you know it was an opportunity to learn more about that great event, which was, without doubt, the most significant in nearly 500 years of Church history.

And now, in celebration of the Council's anniversary, we have moved into another significant and special year: a Year of Faith proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI, who is hopeful that the Church will grow in a deeper awareness of its call to preach and live the Gospel during the coming months.

### ***Our Faith Life in Community***

As we enter fully into this Year of Faith, I want to share with you a few thoughts about the faith life of our parish. More than anything, I am encouraged by it and even excited about it. In many ways we are a strong and very alive parish. Just witness our beautiful, prayerful liturgies week after week; our extensive outreach to the poor and needy along with our many efforts to advocate for justice; our strong faith formation programs for children and adults, including the RCIA; and the efforts so many of you make to create a warm, welcoming, hospitable environment here at St. Matthew's. All of these are evidence of a vibrant faith life.

But may I be very honest with you for a moment? If there is one aspect of our life here at St. Matthew's that gives me real concern, it is this: the shrinking number of people who attend Mass each weekend. No, I don't take attendance every week, but I can easily see that the Cathedral is not as full at certain Masses. The one big exception is the 1:00 p.m. Spanish Mass, which is growing. Frankly, it is a concern to me that our weekend attendance is slightly down but our parish registrations are steadily increasing.

### ***The Sunday Eucharist, Source of Life for One and All***

There are, I am sure, many possible reasons for this downturn. Some of you have work schedules that make it difficult or even impossible for you to be here regularly, much as you would like to. My concern is with those for whom Sunday Mass was once a priority but no longer is. Yes, some have simply stopped attending Mass.

Reasons given for missing Mass can vary, from the difficulties involved in balancing life's many competing demands, to the distance involved in traveling to the Cathedral, or to some form of disillusionment with the parish or with the institutional Church. But I would argue that depriving oneself of the Eucharist—and of the life of the community—is not a good way to register dismay or discontent. In the end, that decision will eat away at the fabric of faith because without the Sunday Eucharist, we die.

As individuals, we lose so much when we miss even one opportunity for Holy Communion, including the remission of any venial sins and the bestowing of graces that make us more pleasing to God and strengthen us against temptations. And Mass is the best preparation for receiving the Eucharist.

Missing Sunday Eucharist has consequences for our parish family as well—it is difficult to build a strong community when people drift in and out all through the year. The Church's liturgical year is not just a collection of dates on a calendar; it is a very intentional, communal pilgrimage through time that brings us into the closest possible contact with Jesus Christ. The year unfolds from Advent to Christmas to Lent and Easter to Pentecost, to the "growing season" of Ordinary Time. We remember and celebrate what it means that Jesus took on our own flesh and blood, lived his life among us, and laid down that life so that we might

have life. Each year, through Sunday and feast day liturgies, we relive that life. In the Eucharist, Jesus' life becomes more and more our life and helps us to make sense of the parts of the our lives that otherwise wouldn't make sense.

***“Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD.” (Deut. 8:3)***

To miss Mass is to miss out not only on the irreplaceable benefits of the Eucharist, but also on the proclamation of the Word of God. The Sunday Scriptures also nourish us, and together with the homilies are meant to inform our faith, to deepen our understanding, and to challenge us to go out and live our faith. Whenever we miss Sunday Mass, we miss out on all this. And as a result, not only do we suffer but so does the community, which is weakened considerably by our absence. As you know very well, this Catholic faith of ours is not a solitary walk with God but a journey we make in community. God's grace flows to us not only through the sacraments but in and through the community.

***My Hopes for You in this Year of Faith***

As I mentioned earlier, we are now beginning a Year of Faith that will stretch all the way to Advent of 2013. That gives us a wonderful opportunity to reassess where our priorities lie with regard to the practice of our faith. And I believe we all can benefit from this reassessment.

Now, I think you know me well enough to know that the last thing I want is to be a complainer. What I **do** want is to be your pastor! My preferred way to pastor is to lead the flock by walking ahead, but I would be failing in my calling if I did not regularly turn around to see who's there and who's not! Many are there, of course, very many, and I feel blessed that we can be together on this journey.

To those who have become discouraged or grown lax, I take this moment simply to encourage and challenge you. St. Matthew's Cathedral is a wonderful community of faith, but it is stronger and more vital when you are present and participating. When you worship here week after week, our prayer together is so much more powerful, and so is the outreach that we are able to offer to the poor, the homeless, and the needy, the sick, the immigrant, the refugee. Both these things—the communal prayer and the loving outreach—are what Jesus calls us to do, and they are the lifeblood of our wonderful parish.

In this Year of Faith, I challenge you to make participation in the Sunday Mass a part of your life and the life of your family, not just when convenient, but every Sunday, week in and week out. I also want to acknowledge that this challenge is a two-way street. And so, on behalf of the wonderful pastoral team that ministers here along with me, I assure you that we can commit ourselves to working with you and for you, to make St. Matthew's

- a place where everyone feels the welcome of Christ;
- a place where your needs are responded to promptly and courteously;
- a place where we can meet Christ in prayerful liturgies celebrated with beauty and reverence;
- a place where the Gospel of Christ is compellingly preached, day in and day out, from the pulpit and in all our parish programs;
- a place where you and our children are given opportunities to deepen your knowledge of the faith through challenging faith formation programs, celebrations and events;
- a place where everyone has an opportunity to put their time and their gifts at the service of the Church and of the poor.

Together, we can make this Year of Faith a time when our community comes together as never before to witness to Christ in a world desperately in need of his saving love.

Will you join me on this journey? And will you consider inviting a family member or friend to come along?

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. Msgr. W. Ronald Jameson, V.F.  
Rector



***Do you feel a little rusty on some of the essentials of Catholicism?***

***Do you want to do something to mark the Church's Year of Faith but are not sure what?***

**MAKE A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR FAITH!**

Join us for ***Living Catholic*** beginning in January.

St. Matthew's will offer this Archdiocesan-wide program, involving short periods of study, prayer, and conversation about the fundamentals of our Catholic faith. ***This program is an ideal faith formation activity for people with more internet connectivity than time.***

We will kick off with an opening event Saturday, *January 12* from 10 to 11:45am in the North Conference Room; participants then will do four weeks of quick online sessions at their own convenience. We will have optional discussions one day per week, and we will conclude the program Saturday, *February 9* from 10 to 11:45am in the North Conference Room. The cost to participate is \$5 (payable at the opening event).

**Fill in the holes of what you have forgotten since Sunday School, get to know some of your fellow parishioners better, find out what the Church considers to be the most fundamental elements of our faith, and develop the confidence to talk about your faith with others.**

There is no need to pre-register right now. Registration will take place at the opening event Saturday, *January 12*.

Questions? Contact Heather Kinney at [hkinney@stmatthewscathedral.org](mailto:hkinney@stmatthewscathedral.org).