

State of the Parish 2019  
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Corpus Christi Catholic Church

I've been calling this Sunday homily the **"The State of the Parish."** It's an occasion to look at the life of our parish together, to give thanks for God's blessings to us, to read the signs of the times in our community, and to then listen to the voice of the Lord. Lord, where are you leading us? Lord, what is your will for us? We just heard the story of the wedding feast at Cana. Mary tells the servants, "Do whatever [Jesus] tells you." And she says the same to us: "Do whatever Jesus tells you!" and if we do that, we will not lack for any good thing.

Today I'm going to mention some important trends and facts about the parish, but this is really just a run-up to next week's All Parish Meeting. I'm really excited about this event. Here's what will happen: After the 10:30 AM Mass next week, we'll have some sandwiches for lunch, and then come back into the church at noon. Then there will be some brief presentations from parish leaders, and then time for discussion and questions. Child care is going to be provided in the gathering space.

In the week between now and then, think about what you heard, look over the bulletin insert which gives a snapshot of Corpus Christi over the past few years, talk to one another about how you sense God speaking to us and leading us, and write down your questions or ideas. There will be three ways to submit questions and ideas in advance of the meeting next Sunday: First, you'll notice paper and pens in your pews. You can write something down right now and drop it in the collection basket. There is also a table in the gathering space with a submission box. Finally, anytime this week you can go to our website and submit comments. I encourage all of you to come next Sunday.

Okay, so what is the State of the Parish? I want to open with our mission statement:  
**"The Church of Corpus Christi, a welcoming community, makes Christ present through sharing**

**his message, celebrating the liturgy and challenging members to practice justice, peace, and charity.”** Our mission is all about Jesus Christ. It is really his mission that we partake of. That’s why it’s so beautiful that we are named Corpus Christi – “the Body of Christ” – because Christ is our head and we are his members.

Let’s start by talking about **Worship**. The most important way Christ is present to us is when we gather for the Eucharist. Each Sunday we gather to celebrate the liturgy. It’s a testimony to your faith, that people are always remarking to me how they love coming here to worship: they say how warm and welcome they feel when walking through our doors, that people know each other and they love to linger after Mass, that people enter into worship with participation, with joy, with song – especially because of our strong tradition of sacred music. And that’s something that has struck me ever since I came in July. You are a community who *gives* yourselves to God in worship. It’s beautiful and I am grateful for it.

Every weekend we see about 440 people come to our parish. It’s interesting to note that of our registered members, 43% live outside of Roseville’s zip code. That means that many people who come to Corpus Christi are driving past several other closer Catholic churches in order to be here. This past year 34 new people became parishioners.

I know that last summer the loss of the 5 PM Vigil Mass was a difficult blow to many. A parish really is a community of communities, and even though Corpus Christi lives on, that change felt like a death to many of our members. Where did those parishioners who were “5 o’clock people” go? We know that some have become part of the 10:30 or 6:00 PM liturgies, with many still serving in liturgical ministries there. Some have chosen the Saint Rose 4:30 PM Mass as their weekend worship, and I often see them together before or after Mass.

In 2018, we had 5 baptisms and 5 weddings at Corpus Christi. We also had 18 funerals last year. That may seem like a lot, but we often celebrate funerals for relatives who were not

parishioners, and so last year the number of parishioners who were buried from our parish was actually 13.

Next, let's talk about **Pastoral Care**. Pastoral care has to do with helping people spiritually and materially through challenging life transitions – especially with aging. 1 in 5 parishioners at Corpus Christi is over 70 years old, and our parish has many senior residences in our boundaries. I want to commend Toni Leach and all our ministers to the homebound for the compassionate care they give to so many from our community who can physically no longer attend Mass. Because of my ministerial workload, I needed to reduce the number of senior residence Masses offered when I arrived. That means that there is even more need for volunteers to visit the elderly and homebound and bring them Holy Communion. So, if you are thinking about serving Christ in 2019, one of the easiest and best ways is to visit our aging seniors. Think about it, and call the parish office!

Next, let's talk about **Faith Formation**. One of the things I love most about our parish is that we don't just see our young people as "the future of the Church" but we acknowledge and celebrate them as simply "the Church" – "the Church... right now." It's great to see our kids and teens taking initiative, serving, contributing, teaching each other. I'm very grateful also for our Wednesday night faith formation program, which kicks off with praise and worship, lively teachings, and witnesses – all done by our teens. You should really come to one of these energizing nights to be part of it, even as an adult. And, in February, there will be even more reason to come, since each Wednesday of the month will be "Welcome Home Wednesday," where a free meal will be offered at 5:30 PM, prior to faith formation's kickoff.

I also just want to highlight a new ministry that started up last fall: Roseville Area Young Adults. We have teamed up with Saint Rose, Maternity of Mary, and St. John's in Little Canada. I've been to several of the events and they have been awesome. If you call yourself a young adult, you should really check out the events for 2019.

Next up: **Social Justice and Outreach**. When people ask what Corpus Christi is about, this always comes up. It's part of our DNA. There are so many diverse and varied things happening here, it's hard to even begin to list them: our Giving Garden, the new solar array, forums on homelessness, Interfaith Action of St. Paul, Holy Hammers Habitat for Humanity, Give and Grin, Loaves and Fishes, and on and on. The bottom line is that we are letting the Holy Spirit turn our faith into action, to make a difference in the world and to be servants of Christ.

A brief word on **Finances**. Since there will be a finance council presentation next week, I am only going to say a few things today. First of all, I'm happy to report that we have no debt. Secondly, I'm encouraged that our anticipated revenue is up, and our expenses are down. In fact, over the last three years our annual contributions have risen by 8%. We have begun the process for setting next year's budget, which begins July 1, 2019.

Next, let's talk about **Facilities**. A lot is happening in this area. Hand in Hand Montessori School will be moving to their new location by the end of August. Once they have departed, we plan to renovate the school wing and transfer our parish offices to be adjacent to the church. This means that we have a decision to make regarding what to do with the current office building that will eventually become vacant. More on that next week. Also, you have read in the bulletin that there are several major capital projects we need to move on. These include: totally overhauling the flat roof that surrounds the pyramid, resurfacing the parking lot, and adding a new sign on the corner of Fairview and County Road B. One other important item is our air conditioning. Currently, our air conditioning will *not* be functioning next summer, so our staff has already begun the process of finding a contractor to replace our system as soon as possible. These combined expenses mean that we will be soon launching a capital campaign. This capital campaign will ensure that our facilities are up to date and can serve our needs for a long time to come.

People always ask me about **Saint Rose of Lima**, so I'll mention a word about them. Saint Rose, who we are clustered with, is also planning a capital campaign this spring. I plan to launch both parish campaigns at the same time, even though they will be separate. Each weekend about 800 people come to the parish for Mass. A lot of great things are happening in the school at Saint Rose. Right now, we are working hard to increase enrollment, which has been decreasing slowly over many years. I am committed to our Catholic school and I'm looking forward to growing it in many areas both this year and next year! If you want to hear more about Saint Rose, the parish is having their "State of the Parish" homily on February 2 and 3.

Finally, I should say a word about the **pastor**. One of the biggest changes at Corpus Christi was when I came in July to serve as shepherd, as a pastor for the first time, and of not one but two parishes! I'm often asked, "Wow, Father, two parishes... how do you do it?" Well, only by the grace of God! And I mean that, God gives grace from high when he gives someone a mission. That, and I've also gotten pretty good at the daily shuffle crossing Snelling Avenue many times. In fact, I have memorized where all the pot holes are on County Rd B and I know how to avoid them without slamming into the car next to me. But in all seriousness, I am really glad to be at Corpus Christi. It's such a gift to serve as your priest, and, as Archbishop Hebda mentioned during his visit, to be shaped by you as a pastor and shepherd. Most weeks are exhausting, and my number one personal concern is avoiding burn out, but overall I am doing well and feel very fulfilled in the ministry I do and in the person God is making me. I ask you to please keep me in your prayers and to call me on to deeper holiness.

So: that's the State of the Parish. But the state of our parish is not a state of rest: it's a state of movement: a people moving with the Holy Spirit. We have been moving since the first Mass was celebrated 80 years ago, January 29, 1939, on the corner of Como and Carter, beneath what is now Nico's Taco and Tequila Bar! Next week, come to the All Parish Meeting with your questions, comments, and ideas. Until then I ask you to reflect on how who we are as

a parish, on how we are called to make disciples of Christ, on what it means to be a priestly, prophetic, and royal people – yearning for the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ is the Lord and he has so many good things prepared for us. The headwaiter at Cana was amazed that the quality of the wine had increased, not decreased. And that is how Christ blesses us: never with less, always with more, if only we would “do whatever he tells” us, and believe him in faith.