

“Stand up and go; your faith has saved you.”

My Dear and Precious Friends,

Each year the Archdiocese of Chicago presents its “Christifideles Awards” to lay leaders at parishes across the archdiocese who have demonstrated by participation in the life of their parish the personal and ministerial renewal called for by Pope Saint John Paul II in his Papal Exhortation “Christifideles Laici”, which calls the laity to the vocation of responsibility for the life of the church springing from the gift and mission of their baptism. The entire text of this beautiful exhortation is available on the Vatican’s web site, www.vatican.va. The website is a wonderful resource as it contains all of the writings and homilies of all of our popes. “Christifideles Laici” is not a quick read, but it is indeed a beautiful and inspiring document which calls all of us to the kind of loving and dedicated service that we will most certainly need as we journey together as a family of faith into the new reality that God has prepared for us.



I received an email reminding me that our nomination for the award recipient for our parish was due. I didn’t think anything of it since I am no longer the pastor, and so the decision was not mine to make. But then I received a follow up email from our Vicariate Parish Life Coordinator asking for nominations from the parishes going through Renew My Church from the pastors of the legacy parishes which existed prior to the unification process. And so I had one last duty as pastor of Saint Anne. I needed to nominate one of our parishioners for the Christifideles Award, a nomination which would then be approved by our Vicar, Bishop Perry. While I was taken by surprise, it was actually one of the easiest decisions that I ever had to make. As I wrote in my recommendation:

Whenever Jim meets and greets you, the first thing he says is, “Do you need anything?”, “Can I help you?” “Can I get you anything?” He is an incredibly generous man, a man who is always ready to help in any way that he can. He regularly attends parish meetings, even if he is not on the particular committee that is meeting. He serves as a lector, as a server, as a eucharistic minister, as an usher, and sings with our parish choir. Everyone knows that they can always depend on Jim to help whenever and however he is needed. Jim is a tremendous example of the spirit of “Christifideles Laici.”

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Jim Cameron as he received his award from Cardinal Cupich at Holy Name Cathedral on Sunday, October 2nd. He is pictured here with the fourth pastor of Saint Anne, Bishop Kevin Birmingham. I have been blessed to know Bishop Birmingham since his senior year at Quigley Preparatory Seminary South where I had just been assigned as a member of the faculty. Many years later, when the time came for me to leave my pastorate at Saint Turibius after 12 1/2 years, it was Bishop Birmingham who helped me make my transition into Saint Anne. He had made an incredibly selfless decision to move on from Saint Anne so that he could be of service to a parish that needed his facility with Spanish and his loving and generous spirit of priestly service even more. Cardinal Cupich then called him to serve as his secretary, a very demanding job which he, as always, fulfilled with tremendous zeal and loving devotion. Over my years as a priest, I have had the honor of knowing many wonderful bishops, starting with my dear friend + Joseph Cardinal Bernardin and our dear Vicar Joseph Perry. But I have never been so happy to see a brother priest ascend to the episcopacy as I have for our dear and precious Bishop Kevin Birmingham. Jesus tells the Samaritan who returned to give him thanks and praise after he had been healed, “Stand up and go; your faith has saved you.” And so he says the same thing to each of us as we continue on our Renew My Church journey. Inspired by the loving service of our own Jim Cameron and our Bishop Kevin Birmingham, may we, saved by the power of our faith, stand up and go to proclaim the Good News!

In Awe and Wonder of the Power of God’s Love and His Divine Mercy,
your friend and brother always,

Father Ralph

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