

# ***St. Joseph Parish***

*& St. Vincent de Paul Mission*

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Dear Parishioners,

After two years of being here with you in this wonderful and active parish — the family of St. Joseph in Elk Grove and our Mission Church of St. Vincent de Paul, I have learned a lot in working with all of you and in working with the Liturgy, Pastoral and Finance Councils. With the help of God, I would like to share with you the perspective towards the future — joining our reality with the reality of the Diocese of Sacramento and the Catholic Church worldwide. Now that we are about to begin the celebration of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of St. Joseph Parish, I want to follow the example of St. Paul “...straining forward to what lies ahead” as disciples of Jesus. (Philippians 3:13)

**Liturgy:** According to the plans of our Holy Father, we have to be more united with all the Church in our liturgical celebrations and to recover the sacred value of our lives. That is the focus of the changes that we will experience in our liturgical celebrations for the new liturgical year, starting with Advent. We are exploring different ideas to adapt our church and its surroundings to be more appropriate for liturgy and prayer; and planning preparation sessions with the community to receive the liturgical changes.

**Pastoral:** God continues to give to us abundantly his “Bread from Heaven” in his Word and in the Eucharist. Our strength as a community of faith and as families is in knowing how to feed from the “Bread from Heaven,” how to prepare for it, and how to feed others, which is heart to heart, as Jesus did and as he has taught us, his disciples. Our project is to create and implement plans for spiritual instruction and formation at all levels, especially for the Sacrament of Marriage. We need to know how to take advantage of the rich value of belonging to the Catholic Church and how to protect ourselves from the destructive forces of secular society. Without the strength of this food from heaven, our children and young ones are in danger of being manipulated in their hearts and creating in them very wrong ideas and feelings. This past year was dedicated to the youth. This year, I want to dedicate it to Social Justice and in consequence to two groups of our parish excellent in that work: St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Knights of Columbus; it is important that our community discovers who they are and our community increases in practicing social justice through these precious instruments we have in our parish, the manifestation of our generosity, which brings abundant blessings to this community and to our Land... “God bless America”!!!

**Finances:** We all know how finances are in the world and in our own town. However, when we consider seriously, we realize finances do not measure the fruits of the Catholic community but our faithful unity to God; for this reason, I don't want to think in terms of "crisis" but of "transition." We need to adapt to future changes because they are out of our control. On one side, St. Joseph Parish is not as it was in the past; it is not the only Catholic Church in the Elk Grove community. We share the city with two sister parishes and other close parish neighbors and we share our St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School with Good Shepherd Parish. On another side, our city of Elk Grove is growing at a fast pace. What we can control is the manner in which we face these changes. I came to this parish when financial turbulences were happening at all levels, just as the boat where Jesus was with his disciples was shaken by the violence of the wind and the waves... I wouldn't like the reprimand of Jesus because we have a lack of faith. I have been asked to make drastic changes that might jeopardize the pastoral care of the community. I did not want to panic and make radical changes just yet, but would rather wait through this year and make a plea to all of you to put our trust in God and have a very PRACTICAL FAITH: Please plan very well, in prayer, your weekly offering. We are going to implement EOP (Electronic Offering Program) that is already in place at our St. Vincent de Paul Mission Parish, with good results. I want to observe the average income of the parish this year, and according to the results, we will proceed to make some adaptations in our office staff and pastoral care. We have a very competent direction in our CFF for children and youth, we enjoy a variety of priests celebrating our Masses, we have the invaluable help of a consecrated woman, who brings us God's maternal blessing: our Sister Nancy. But, we must know that in the history of the Church, the work of VOLUNTEERS is vital for the ministries and we need and will continue to need as much help from you, as possible.

Finally, I would like you to remember that the more ACTIVE is our PARTICIPATION and our INVOLVEMENT in the parish community, the stronger will be our faith and our inspiration for our decisions at home and in the middle of our daily occupations. Remember that our offering of thanksgiving to God is through the three "T"s: Talent, Time, and Treasure. This is what makes us the Church Christ instituted.

May our good God give you inspiration so, united in Him, we can face the future and proclaim in communion with our Mother Mary, St. Joseph, St. Vincent de Paul, and all the saints, the wonders of our God.

Always yours in Jesus' Name,

Fr. Rodolfo D. Llamas, Pastor