

Fr. Robin Dodge's Charge to the Parish
The Church of the Holy Faith Annual Meeting
28 January 2018

This is my second Annual Meeting here at The Church of the Holy Faith, and I have to say what an honor and privilege it is to serve as your rector. I have now traversed an entire liturgical year worshipping with you in the beauty of holiness, and what glorious worship it has been! We also have had opportunities to study together and minister together as we all enter into an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ. We have socialized together, laughed together, and cried together – especially as we said farewell to some long-time servants of God at Holy Faith.

I said the priority in my first year as your rector would be getting to know each other, and I think we have done a good job of doing that. I feel like I know most of you at least by name and face, but I want to go deeper than that. I want to know your hopes and dreams and aspirations. I want to know your challenges and hurts and upsets. I believe all ministry is relational because we are created in God's image and God is relational among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We as a parish do a good job of ministering to one another, through our informal networks of friends and fellow committee members and study group colleagues, and through our organized ministries like Faith Family. We also do a good job of relating to the newcomer and welcoming them to Holy Faith. Every parish believes it is a welcoming community, but I can't tell you how many times at the door on a Sunday morning I'm told by a visitor how warm and friendly this congregation is – and that often comes from visiting priests, who are hard judges indeed!

As more and more people are attracted to Holy Faith and what we have to offer, the parish will continue to grow. With growth inevitably comes change. Change is a sign that the body is alive. Change stops only when the body is dead. Well, the Church of the Holy Faith, the Body of Christ in this place, is very much alive and change is to be expected, managed, and embraced. We are reminded that God is making all things new, and that God is continually creating and we are invited into being co-creators with God. I have unwittingly changed things this past year, simply because I am new to this body, and as other members join this body change will continue.

Holy Faith is a complex body, with more than fifty active ministries and a physical campus that is in use seven days a week. As Holy Faith continues to grow and change, coordination and communication become all the more crucial. Thanks be to God, the Holy Faith staff is more than up to the challenge. Donna Lukacs as parish secretary does a fabulous job of keeping the parish calendar and assigning rooms, while all along fielding inquiries, answering correspondence, and keeping the offices running smoothly. Mark Childers as parish administrator and director of music & liturgy does an incredible job of coordinating ministries, especially those related to our worship, so that in all our prayers and praise we glorify God. Marcos Castillo as facilities manager and Rocio Salazar as housekeeper do a tremendous job of keeping our campus in tip-top repair and operation and cleanliness and tidiness like never before. Holy Faith's staff can operate on such a high level only if we know what is going on so that we can support you in your ministries and best allocate our resources and personnel so that everything comes off in the style and manner you have come to expect from Holy Faith. The staff

serves at my pleasure, as rector, and it is more productive for them if proper guidelines are followed rather than their feeling they have 900 separate bosses.

I am joined by some of the best clergy colleagues ever. Fr. Jim Gordon is a fantastic associate rector and compassionate priest, engaging in the full range of liturgical duties of preaching and celebrating, as well as overseeing pastoral care for the parish. Fr. Richard Murphy is invaluable in assisting with the weekday masses, and we are delighted that he is able to join the Sunday rota more frequently. Deacon Pat Masterman joined Holy Faith this past year and we are thankful for her presence in her diaconal role in the liturgy of proclaiming the gospel, leading the prayers, calling us to confession, setting the altar, and dismissing the congregation, as well as providing pastoral care and interacting with outreach ministries. As many of you know, for the last year I have been trying to call a priest to fill the third clergy position on staff. I have extended three calls and, regrettably, two of the priests decided they didn't want to move to New Mexico and the third had a commitment to a congregation that the bishop insisted be honored. I continue to believe that God will send us the right priest in God's good time. Funding for the position is included in this year's budget.

Those to whom much has been given, much is expected. And so, Holy Faith plays an important role in the larger Body of Christ. Guy Gronquist serves as Diocesan Treasurer, Therese Saint-Andre serves as chair of the diocesan Investment Committee, and Janet Sanders serves on the diocesan Congregational Life and Development Committee. Mark Childers and Deacon Pat serve on the diocesan Commission on Ministry of the Baptized. Guy and Mark will also serve as lay and alternate deputy to this summer's General Convention of The Episcopal Church. I serve as diocesan

Canon for Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue. Fr. Jim serves on the Bishop Search Committee, which is charged to produce a slate of three nominees for election as the next Bishop of the Diocese of the Rio Grande. The slate is due to be announced March 19. I serve on the Bishop Transition Committee responsible for the walk-about, one of which will be held here at Holy Faith, when the candidates for bishop are introduced to and meet the members of the diocese, for the electing convention on May 5 at the cathedral in Albuquerque, and for the service of consecration of the new bishop on November 3 also at the cathedral in Albuquerque. Holy Faith's clergy, wardens, and deanery delegates will all have an opportunity to vote for the next bishop. And, of course, with a new bishop inevitably comes change.

I want to thank the Vestry who have been faithful stewards of Holy Faith this past year. While we are sad to see Sandra Brinck and Jack Lott rotate off the Vestry, we are delighted by the election of Paul D'Arcy, Guy Gronquist, and Heidi Hahn who will join continuing members Mitzi Barker, Penni Chambers, Van Horn, Lynne Rauch, Jacki Walker, Mike Ward, and myself. The Vestry has been an agent of change this year. After discussing for the past couple of years the need for a second endowment, the limited draws from which could be used for operating expenses as well as capital expenditures and mission & outreach, the Vestry to serve the long-term stability of Holy Faith pro-actively proposed the amendment to the by-laws that was considered at this meeting. Obviously, we have more work to do in this regard. But I am surprised and disappointed that, despite an adult forum where this was discussed, a presentation to the St. Francis Legacy Society, and announcements in the Sunday bulletins and weekly emails, objections to the amendment were not raised before now except for a round of

telephone calls to Vestry members last evening. Had the amendment passed, I was prepared to announce a gift from a parishioner of \$100,000 to begin funding the second endowment, because there were questions about how the second endowment would be funded, but now I will go back to the parishioner to determine if and how the gift can be used, because honoring donor intent is always paramount.

The Vestry also has been supportive of my initiative to move the baptismal font to a more prominent place in the church as you enter, which is the traditional placement for a font. By the font's placement at the entrance of the church, theologically we are reminded that it is through baptism that we enter the Body of Christ. Liturgically, we will have more space and better sight lines in which to conduct baptisms. At the same time, we plan to refinish the floors of the nave and the pews. In preparing for this work, we discovered that the support for center aisle has deteriorated and will need to be reinforced by cutting through the subfloor and shoring up the existing trusses. The aisle will be replaced with hardwood to match the existing flooring. The work will be completed during Eastertide, but it may require our worshiping in Palen Hall for up to three Sundays.

As we have now established a relationship, it is my hope and desire that we may grow together more deeply to exercise our mutual ministry. In the coming years, I plan to work with the Vestry on a strategic visioning and planning initiative to sustain and enhance the health and vitality of The Church of the Holy Faith by anticipating capital expenditures, strengthening how we support mission and outreach in our community, and improving how we communicate with one another.

I know this sounds like change. My charge, then, to you is that oft-appearing advice in Scripture: Fear not. Do not be afraid. God is doing a new thing. God is in charge, so fear not. We have Jesus Christ as the head of this Body, so do not be afraid. God is making all things new. Thanks be to God.