

Fr. Robin Dodge's Charge to the Parish
The Church of the Holy Faith Annual Meeting
26 January 2025

I have often felt that the Rector's Annual Meeting Address seems a lot like the Presidential State of the Union Address – a sort of a state of the parish address. Well, I can tell you that the state of the parish is good but, with your help and God's help, it can be even better!

For the theme of this address, I would like to reflect on a portion of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, which is appointed as today's Epistle (1 Corinthians 12: 27, 14, 20-21): "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it...the body does not consist of one member but of many...there are many members yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the foot, 'I have no need of you.'" The bottom line to this theme is that all of you are needed and valued at Holy Faith, and needed and valued in various ways.

As we have heard in the financial discussions, you are needed and valued in sustaining the mission and ministry of Holy Faith. We have heard that around half of the households on the parish mailing list do not make a pledge of financial support of the parish's mission and ministry. I especially want to thank our Stewardship Co-Chairs, Patty and Jim Vaughan, for driving this point home. When there is a disconnect between those who look to Holy Faith as their spiritual home in Santa Fe and giving for what you receive, there is something wrong. It shouldn't be seen as transactional – a pay as you go scheme – because stewardship is not a financial issue; it's a spiritual issue. Your financial support doesn't mean just that Holy Faith can exist as an

institution; it goes beyond that. Week by week we hear that Holy Faith invites all persons into an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ. Holy Faith exists to glorify and worship God and provide opportunities for all people to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I often hear the question, “How do I become a member of the church? What do I have to do to become a member of Holy Faith?” My answer is usually “show up and participate.” But I think we’re asking the wrong question. The question shouldn’t be about membership, but rather “How can I become a disciple of Jesus Christ?” or “How can I go deeper as a disciple of Jesus Christ?” Holy Faith doesn’t exist to make members. Holy Faith exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ. The worship, the Christian formation offerings, all the ministries are designed to help you deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, all of your voices are needed and valued at Holy Faith. We may not all agree on everything, but we all can agree on our need for our Savior Jesus Christ. This past year we tackled some hard issues that had the potential to divide us as a parish – same-gender marriage and the expansion of Rite II to the Sunday morning liturgies. Through a series of Sunday forums, feedback opportunities, and listening sessions, the Vestry took the pulse of all the parish on these issues. While the resulting decisions may not have been in accord with your viewpoint, I can assure you that your voices were heard and valued. The resulting decisions – to bless same-gender marriages and to use Rite II at the 8:30 Sunday service during the seasons of Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter – formed a sort of *Via Media*, or middle way, that has been a touchstone of Anglicanism dating back to the Elizabethan Settlement of the 16th

Century. With the Via Media, no one gets everything they want. The decisions were designed to keep as many people worshipping together at Holy Faith as possible. I am saddened to report, though, that about a half-dozen parishioners on different sides the issues felt the need to separate themselves from the parish.

I want to thank the Vestry for the prayerfulness, seriousness, and care with which they handled these issues and all their responsibilities this past year. Would all those Vestry members who served this past year, please stand up so you can be recognized and thanked? I thank Mike Morrissey for his wise counsel and leadership as Senior Warden, Junior Warden Preston Stone for his tireless efforts overseeing projects around the property during the past year, Treasurer Charles Rountree for tracking the parish's finances and providing greater transparency to our financial reporting, Secretary Pam Jones who miraculously captures the minutes of the Vestry meetings, Investment Chair Peter Lockyer for keeping careful eye on the parish's endowment funds, and our other faithful Vestry members: Mark Everett, Kaki Grubbs, Ruth Rael, and Steven Shore. Now, would those outgoing Vestry members remain standing, so once again we can thank you for your service? I am confident that the incoming Vestry members – Rebecca Tobey, Jim Vandernaald, and Jacki Walker – will continue and enhance the Vestry's culture of prayerfulness, seriousness, and care by which it approaches its responsibilities, recognizing that they have large shoes to fill.

And my thanks especially go to my wonderful colleagues, Holy Faith's dedicated staff that kept the parish humming this past year. We, as the staff, support the many worship liturgies, Christian formation opportunities, and parish ministries so that you can be disciples of Jesus Christ, so that you can deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Mother Lynn shares with me in the areas of pastoral care, celebrating and preaching, and the Sunday forums, and is one of the best assistants with whom I have had the privilege to work. She also serves as liaison to Faith Family, the Mission & Outreach Committee, and Family & Children's Ministries. Mother Madelynn guides the Women's Spirituality group and assists at Sunday and weekday services. Mark Childers is our hard-working organist and choirmaster, director of music and liturgy, and parish administrator who keeps all our worship services flowing smoothly and beautifully, and who supports so many parishioners in their own ministry. Parish Secretary Donna Lukacs keeps us all on task and has the answer to almost any question at her fingertips or knows where to find it! Sarah Stone, coordinator of Family & Children's Ministries, shepherds the growth in this ministry, which we have seen by the number of children at the 8:30 and 11:00 services and today's first Youth Sunday. And we give thanks to Marcos Castillo and Rocio Salazar for maintaining and cleaning our beautiful facilities!

I want to mention some exciting initiatives that will be getting underway very soon. Because I was approached by the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, our tenants on the second floor of Conkey House, for their need of more office space, I was led by the Spirit to think outside the box about our space allocation. Consequently, we're making available to the Desert Chorale, at a very reasonable rent, the Family & Children's Ministries room at the end of the second floor hallway, adjacent to the Desert Chorale's existing offices. That particular room never lived into the vision for Family & Children's Ministries, in part because it was so far from all the action. But Family & Children's Ministries are burgeoning, so we need a dedicated space for it. Holy Faith in an earlier time also had a thriving youth ministry, so much so there is a room with a curtain divider

on the second floor of Conkey House labelled “Jr. & Sr. Youth.” For many years, because of the absence of youth at Holy Faith, the combined space has been used as one long conference room. We once again are separating that space into two, using the curtain divider, with half the space continuing as a conference room, albeit with better sight lines and greater acoustics. The other half will be dedicated for Family & Children’s Ministries and will be used for Children’s Chapel if necessary, a new meeting of youth between the 8:30 and 11:00 Sunday services (except on the first Sunday of the month when families are encouraged to join the extended parish Coffee Hour), and Youth Group as they meet on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at 12:30.

I also am happy to report that the Vestry has agreed to be the Charter Organization for Scouting Troop 57 and Cub Scout Pack 57. Beginning next month, the Scouts will be using many of the spaces in this building and Conkey House for their weekly meeting on Monday evenings. There will be great synergy in this relationship as the Scouts are exposed to the mission and ministry of Holy Faith and parishioners can benefit from the values of Scouting.

This increased emphasis on youth comes from having a critical mass of those who want to be involved, and provides all of us an opportunity to go deeper as disciples of Jesus Christ. We are the inheritors of a faith that has been handed down for generations from Jesus Christ and the apostles to us today. Our responsibility as disciples of Christ, is to hand on the faith once given to the next generation. They are not the Church of the future, they are the Church of today as we encourage all persons into an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ.

Remember the words of St. Paul: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it...the body does not consist of one member but of many...there are many members yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the foot, ‘I have no need of you.’” In other words, all of you are needed and valued at Holy Faith.

So my charge to the parish is this, with apologies to St. Paul for substituting “disciples” for “members,” as disciples of Jesus Christ and parishioners of Holy Faith, we commit to:

I. Going more deeply in our relationship with Jesus Christ, by partaking of an additional weekly liturgy, Christian formation opportunity, or ministry, using the Annual Report as our guide to discover the fullness of offerings that Holy Faith provides;

II. Inviting another parishioner to join us in going more deeply in relationship with Jesus Christ; and

III. Inviting a friend outside the parish to become a disciple of Jesus Christ with us.

As I live into my ninth year here at Holy Faith, I continue to feel blessed to serve as your pastor, priest, and Rector. Thank you very much and may God bless you all!