From the Pastor



October 25, 2026

Dearest Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Our Fall Ministry Conference was an absolute joy and very informative. The most important thing I took away from it was the briefing on the renewal of Catholic Charities, which is the charitable arm of the Diocese of La Crosse. What I saw and heard gives me great confidence that the issues which have affected the work of Catholic Charities in Eau Claire, especially with regards to the issues affecting the operation of Sojourner House are addressed.

The work of Catholic Charities is a critical part of our witness to the Gospel – that is, *the good news that saves*. The Gospel is not just about the truths of the faith, the Truth of God's saving initiative in the incarnation of his only begotten Son, and his passion, death, and resurrection. No. The Gospel is spread in a particularly effective way through the active expressions of God's love in acts of charity carried out by those who claim the name "Christian".

We also heard about the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the Diocese of La Crosse. The work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society is complementary to the efforts of Catholic Charities. It isn't an either – or of one charitable organization versus another; it is a both – and of two organizations which, when working together, even more effectively give witness to the Gospel through the work of charity.

Both of our parishes, Newman and Sacred Heart – St. Patrick's, have a rightly proud tradition of efforts in the area of social concerns. I pray that these efforts will become even more effective and focused through our support of both Catholic Charities and the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the Chippewa Valley.

Next week I'll talk about another area of Church life we were briefed on: our support of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony – building and supporting strong marriages and following family life. Until then…

Pray Well!

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NEWMAN

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On Living the Vocation to the Holiness

Over the past few weeks, I have been discussing issues of liturgical practice in this column. Liturgical practice is a critical area of our living the vocation to holiness as it deals with the first thing asked of us in justice which is the right worship of almighty God. Some might question the characterization of worship as an act of "justice", and yet, it is certainly that even as we recognize the first and foremost it is an act of love for God Who has first loved us.

One of the ways we express love and worship is through song. Indeed, the "Song of Songs" found in the Old Testament is entirely a song of love for the "lover" by the "beloved". We are used, in our American context, to "breaking into song" when moved by love. Indeed, our most American of art genres, the American musical, is pretty much noted for it's protagonists breaking into song at moments of discovery and connection between lover and beloved.

Pope Leo gave an entire Wednesday catechesis to chapter six of the Vatican II document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* – the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy – which is the chapter of that document dedicated to music in the liturgy. It is most notable that this chapter teaches us that music is not merely something that is nice, something added to the liturgy in order to elevate it. Rather, music is identified as integral to the act of worship.

This single chapter in this constitution is the summation of the papal legislation preceding it as well as the fount from which all subsequent papal legislation concerning music and the liturgy flows: from *Tra le solicitudine to Musicam Sacram* to the 2003 chirograph of Pope St. John Paul II.There is much to be learned in these treasures of Church teaching, things, indeed, which may surprise many.

Over the years, there will be many opportunities to dig into these gifts of the Church. The important thing for us to hold onto today is this: music is integral to the liturgy. That being said and held as true, it is important, then, for us to engage ever more fully in those parts of the Mass that are sung, as well as the songs that are sung at Mass – there's a difference, and that difference will be explored next week. Yes, music is so important that we can't cover it in only one column.

Diocesan Annual Appeal

This week we kick-off the *Diocesan Annual Appeal*. This is an important part of our support of the diocesan structure that supports us. The DAA was conceived as a way for the people of the diocese to be more engaged in those important activities which make us the Church of Jesus Christ on mission for the salvation of the world.

I know that there is always something in the DAA that this person or that doesn't care for, or even disagrees with. I would point out that, as a very large family, that is and will always be the case. The important thing is that we recognize the things we embrace are not always going to be that which another embraces, but between us, everything that is in the appeal is there for a very important reason.

Another thing we need to recognize is that the DAA is not a choice wherein we express our like or dislike of the direction of the diocese - it is a bill. Whatever we don't raise in individual gifts the parish will be billed for next July 1. What's more, the parish will be paying with money that has already been taxed at a rate of 5.5%. That's the negative.

The positive is that all money raised over and above our diocesan goal comes back to us unencumbered, that is, tax-free. With that in mind, my parishes have always gone well over the goal, generally with a particular project benefitting the parish in mind. One year it was a new well; another year it was sidewalks in front of the church, another year it was a budget fix.

The DAA is a necessary focus for every parishioner. We really do need each of our 218 registered families (as of 10/22/2026) to participate. For some it will be $5, for others it will be something much larger. The point is, it takes the participation of every parishioner.

So, please be on the look-out for your pledge packet coming in the mail this week. Keep a careful eye out as the packet has often been mistaken for "junk mail". Read it over carefully and bring it to prayer, and then give as you are able. I really dislike talking about money, so, please, let's take care of this quickly. And, thank you for your prayerful consideration.