

Last week I wrote about our parish vision, prepared by parish leaders to provide a sense of direction for our parish. A vision statement gives our parish as a whole a common direction, to know where we're headed. Having a vision helps to guide our decision-making – to choose what we'll do and not do, because we can't do everything. Having a parish vision helps us to focus our priorities so we can use our resources well.

Our vision has one key word, and four bullet points. The first bullet point is **Love God**. When Jesus was asked, "What is the most important commandment?" this was his answer: Love God! God has loved us first; then God created us and gave us all the rest of the universe as a gift; then God extended himself again when we got lost and forgot who we were and chose sin instead. After all that, God asks one thing in return: Love me back!

If we are created in the image and likeness of God, then the best way to know ourselves is to love the One in whose image we're made. We get to know God well by remembering what God has done, listening to what God teaches, and acting like God acts.

Our primary action for loving God is to pray together, which is why we have the Eucharist. Remembering that God is a Trinity, its own community of loving one another, we come together in the image of that Trinity to be united with one another in love. So the first bullet point of our parish is this: we Love God.

We do that first of all in our Sunday worship as a community. We strive to do that also as best as we can – heartfelt praise, proclaiming the Scriptures well, singing out our hearts led by good music, in a beautiful space, with good preaching, and ministering to one another in various roles of readers, singers and musicians, ministers of Holy Communion, altar servers, sacristans, priests and deacons.

There are more who make us welcome and cared for when we come -- ushers and greeters, wedding assistants, people who welcome newcomers to the parish, those who make donuts and coffee, and those who clean up after we leave. There are those who keep praying for the needs of our parish and our world – at daily mass, the Rosary group, the prayer groups, and the Prayer Line.

It also includes all those who take care of our church and grounds – those who decorate the church, and those who care for the plants, the candles, the liturgical linens and vestments, the gardens and lawns and parking lots, and the maintenance and janitorial staff.

And above all that, it's all of us who make provision for the parish by contributing to its upkeep and paying down the mortgage; and those who count the money and handle the finances. All of this is part of our parish **Loving God**, and making the space to do it together as a community in the image of God – as members of the Body of Christ.

Jesus said: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with your all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, with all your mind" (Luke 10:27)