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MEMBERS OF NORTHWEST MILWAUKEE CATHOLIC PARISHES

NWMCP Strategic Planning Update June 2023 Update

There once was a man who planted a garden. He bought fertilizer and gardening tools and followed all the instructions in his gardening books. Over time his plants grew some, but not nearly as well as the man had envisioned. He became discouraged as his garden struggled to thrive.

One day, as the man stood woefully contemplating his work, a neighbor walked by and commented on the wide variety of flowers and herbs he had planted. On an impulse, the man cut a bouquet of flowers and a handful of herbs and gave them to his neighbor. To his surprise, a few days later the man noticed new growth on the plants he had trimmed. He began to trim more plants to share them with all of his neighbors. The man realized that it was through sharing that his garden reached its full potential.

As we think about this story in relationship to our parishes' collaborative strategic planning, we should also consider it as part of our turn to participate in the *Love One Another* campaign. The *Love One Another* campaign is an opportunity for all of us to share our resources at this vital time, not only for our parishes, but for the Catholic Church throughout our archdiocese and beyond. Each parish has been clear that they would like to be here in the future. Each of our churches in our collaboration face capital improvement expenses. Our collaboration also needs to look ahead, building resources for the fruitful future of our "garden" – a Catholic presence in Northwest Milwaukee. Through the *Love One Another* campaign, we have the support of professional consultants to lead us in this effort at no cost to our parishes.

The campaign also provides a powerful reminder that as disciples of Christ we are called to serve our brothers and sisters beyond our parish boundaries. Forty percent of funds raised will be received by the Love One Another Trust to fund a variety of needs, including healthcare for our senior priests, renovations to our seminary (built in 1845), education and formation for our children and youth throughout the archdiocese, programs and services from Catholic Charities, and strengthening college campus ministries.

Sometimes we ask ourselves, "Why should I give?" Here is something to ponder as we consider that question. Sometimes in our relationship with God, we are like children at Halloween. We, like children, eagerly come to God's doorstep when we want something – praying for help for ourselves or someone else, for strength in times of trouble, for guidance when we don't know where to turn.

Are we to be merely like children who continually ask for more, losing site of the gifts He has already given us? God is always at the door waiting for us to knock. He continues to bless each of us. God's gifts, however, come with a purpose and a responsibility. God does not give us His gifts just to keep to ourselves but rather to be shared, and shared abundantly, with others. **With love and generosity, the gifts are given, so with love and generosity they are to be shared.**

You will be hearing more details about the *Love One Another* campaign in the coming weeks. This is going to be an enormous test for each community of faith – to rise up in this moment to support each parish's current needs and a vision for vibrant ministry in the future. Please prayerfully consider how you will participate in the campaign to support our parishes and the broader Church.

As always, thank you for your prayers.