

At the 39th Academy Awards hosted by Bob Hope, *A Man for All Seasons* won the Oscar for Best Picture. I believe this would be an appropriate title for Fr. John Hennessey's priestly ministry as he celebrates his 50th Anniversary of Ordination, 1967-2017.



Fr. John Hennessey's ordination came just a few years after the writing of one of the most important Vatican II documents, the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, known by its Latin title *Lumen Gentium*. In defining the church as the People of God, the writing provided a new direction for the church, shifting the focus from seeing the church as the domain of the hierarchy and clergy to greater emphasis on community and a recognition that all people are blessed with charisms that are a gift of the Holy Spirit and available to all the faithful "of every rank".

This new vision had to be initiated and sustained and our own Fr. John Hennessey played a crucial leadership role in the Archdiocese of Chicago during this important period. After his first appointment to St. Bernadette's in Evergreen Park, Fr. John began a stage in his life in which he was involved in the formation of those who would be part of promoting this new vision throughout the Archdiocese. His appointment to a teaching position at Quigley South, a preparatory high school for those interested in the priesthood, and to Niles College of Loyola University, the college seminary of the Archdiocese of Chicago, gave him a great opportunity to do so. After completing these assignments, he was appointed as Vocations Director for the Archdiocese. This was a very important and influential appointment because the people he recruited would eventually determine the future direction of the church.

In 1986, Fr. Hennessey was appointed pastor to St. Isaac Jogues and subsequently to St. Joseph's Libertyville in 1997 where he served as our beloved pastor until his retirement in 2012. In both these appointments he sustained the new direction of the church as a community of faithful disciples, called the People of God. However as a true man for all seasons, his ministry and his sage influence persists.

Four years prior to his retirement, Fr. John had the courage to initiate the "Joe Study", a major evaluation of St. Joseph's to discern the best path forward for the parish and to grow engagement, which eventually led to the formation of the Parish Pastoral Plan. This process was inclusive and comprehensive and eventually led to a new vision and mission for the parish which called for a restructuring or evolution of every aspect of parish life.

I find it quite interesting that this is something that the Archdiocese of Chicago is about to undertake in all of its parishes and institutions. For some, it is going to be a challenging process and will involve significant change, something that is never easy. However, one of the many great gifts that Fr. John has given this parish is that we are ahead of the curve when it comes to this program entitled Renew My Church.

Finally, I would like to celebrate one of Fr. John's many qualities that I seek to emulate in my own ministry. It is his capacity to relate to people with kindness and compassion in a way that sincerely communicates that every person is valued and appreciated. This is reflected in his amazing ability to remember names. Someone put it beautifully and succinctly when they said, "Fr. John is part of our family and we feel part of his."

Please join me in congratulating Fr. John on 50 years of priestly ministry. We treasure his many contributions to St. Joseph's over the years. Thank you, Fr. John.

*Fr. John Trout*