

'I have a Dream'

A Statement from Reverend Father Robert T. Cooper

January 8, 2012

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus who comes to give us hope!

As we begin a New Year, I am filled with gratitude for the support and care that you have shown to me during the more than two years that I have been blessed to serve *St. Peter Parish*. Throughout this time, your deep faith and generous spirits have given me a great deal of hope. I know that we will continue to accomplish great things together as we open our lives to the power and presence of God in our midst.

The end of one year and the beginning of another is usually a time to look back to what has been and to look forward to what can be. To look back or not to look back – that is the question! If we avoid looking back, we can be accused of failing to learn from the past – and that includes both the positive as well as the negative things. I am not going to attempt such an exercise right now; but I do believe it is something that we should try to do even briefly – looking at the wider world, our own country, our own families, our parish family, and our own personal lives. They are all interconnected.

To look forward to what can be or should be possible is also an important exercise. That I presume is one of the reasons for giving a *New Year Message*. And it should include more than anything else – a message of hope. The prophet Joel, inspired by God, spoke as follows: "I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind. Your old people shall dream dreams and your young people shall see visions." It is important to dream, to try to imagine how, for example, we can help in making *St. Peter Parish* a more vibrant family of faith. "I have a dream." These words have been immortalized by Dr. Martin Luther King. The dream was a clear vision of where he wanted to take his people; calling them from bondage to freedom. In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul writes about the mystery hidden for all ages in God and which now has been made known to us in Christ. It is the dream or vision of God's plan for the world and the mission of the Church in that plan: to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.

And so, my Brothers and Sisters, 'I have a dream' for *St. Peter Parish* as we enter the Year of our Lord Two Thousand Twelve.



- ‘I have a dream’ that our hearts will grow ever closer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; that we will spend more time in personal and communal prayer – growing in holiness and striving to be saints!
- ‘I have a dream’ that in this Festival *Year of the Mass* our love for the Eucharist will blossom, that more individuals will be committed to regular times for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and that our liturgies and divine worship will be pleasing to the Lord. We will celebrate the Eucharist and the other Sacraments with joy in our hearts, faithful to our Catholic tradition and adjusting to the changes in the new edition of the Roman Missal.
- ‘I have a dream’ that we will truly live out our call to Christian stewardship, that we will use our time, talent, and treasure to support the mission of the Church and the noble work of our parish so that the Good News of the Gospel may be proclaimed to people of all ages. We must take more seriously than ever our co-responsibility for the mission of the Church, including being faithful stewards of God’s gifts of human, financial and temporal resources; we must acknowledge our material limitations while encouraging one another to use well and wisely the gifts that all have been given for the building up of the Church and the advancement of its mission.
- ‘I have a dream’ that we will work tirelessly to care for the needy within our parish community and provide the necessary resources to help alleviate the sufferings of so many individuals.
- ‘I have a dream’ that we will take concrete steps to strengthen the family as the domestic Church, provide ample family and adult faith formation and discern the appropriate catechetical resources and tools to help our children grow in holiness and knowledge of the faith.
- ‘I have a dream’ that the mission, vision, values set forth for our parish school in the last twelve months will continue to unfold so that we may be truly, faithfully, authentically, and unapologetically Catholic – that may we strive for excellence in our spiritual, academic, human, and apostolic formation.
- ‘I have a dream’ that we will make profound progress in researching, constructing, and implementing a *Parish Pastoral Plan* to provide us with the vision and framework we need as we move into the future. A common theme has emerged in the past several months: the need for a vision of who we are as God’s people here at *St. Peter Parish* and who we wish to become. Common concerns have been raised and common hopes have also been shared. As we are reminded in the Book of Proverbs, “without a vision the people will perish” (29:18).

These dreams may sound lofty, but I have learned over the years that the vision and dreams of a parish family need to be “big” – for if you envision small you remain small! Our dreams need to be bold and courageous while simultaneously maintaining a balance between reality and hope.

This great season of expectation and hope reminds us of who we are and all that we are called to be. It reminds us of our calling to create an environment in which all life

is cherished and treasured – including your life and mine – because all life is created in the image and likeness of God and thus has value, dignity and purpose. It reminds us of our calling to teach the Good News of Jesus Christ and to encourage and support all people, especially our youth, as they seek to embrace and live the Truth. And it reminds us of our calling to build a family of faith in and through which the Lord is present. I am humbled and excited to make this journey with you.

May our dreams help us to see more clearly our own journey in the year 2012 as a journey of hope. I thank you for everything that you do for me and for our parish family. Thank you for making great sacrifices along the way. Your efforts do not go unnoticed.