SAINT COLUMBA
CATHOLIC CHURCH
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November 12, 2026

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The First Sunday of Advent is **November 29.** Father Lynch and I pray that Advent may be a grace-filled time for you and your families, and that you may experience all the blessings of Him, who is the Prince of Peace. Hopefully, you have gotten a chance to meet our new Deacon, Mark Sullivan. We work together with Deacon Tom Conlin, the parish staff and volunteers to meet the spiritual and pastoral needs of both Christ the King Mission and Saint Columba Church.

Thank you for helping us keep accurate records! Please call the parish office if we can **update your records**. Speaking of records, each year in the Advent letter, we share with you our yearly statistics. From October 1, 2025-September 30, 2026, St. Columba has 1,053 families with 2,487 individuals. These numbers reflect a slight increase from last year's statistics. Our average weekend attendance is 501 individuals (20%), the same as last year. There were 9 adults received into the Church, and 22 parishioners died. Sacraments received this year included: 26 Infant/child Baptisms; 15 First Holy Communions; 15 Confirmations; and 2 Marriages.

It has been a busy year in the parish. We have refurbished and rented the top floor of the Winona Building to the CSIU Beyond Boundaries Program that empowers at-risk youth to overcome challenges and succeed. We are considering, with the Parish Council and Financial Council, the potential of renting the school building as well, which would generate much-needed income while directly supporting our community. We have actively implemented our goals set forth in our Next Generation Parish project, specifically *to nurture a Christ-centered culture: growing our faith, strengthening our parish family, and serving the community.* This is our third year of this project, and we have two priorities.

The first Priority, led by Dr. Jim Gregory, is **"Discipleship: Becoming empowered to evangelize through education."** This past year we added 2 new Exploring Your Faith series: The **Genesis Study** and **Ignite**. Our **Infusions of Faith** monthly sessions are offered by parishioners, covering everything from St. Columba's monastery to Flannery O'Connor. **The Works of Flannery O'Connor** will be a new Exploring Your Faith series in January. Our monthly **Why are We Catholic** series is very popular; happily, it is attracting many non-Catholics to ask their questions in a comfortable, non-threatening atmosphere. **The Men's Night Out** (Steak and Beer with God) and our **Women's Night of Faith** (Wine, Women and Faith) were popular beyond our parish and diocese. The men's faith group, **TMIY** (That Man is You), has expanded to twice a week, and the women's group **SHE** has been a very successful and robust program on Thursday evenings. We have recently formed **Discipleship Quad** Groups (4 people each), answering parishioners' request for a program of faith sharing in small groups. These groups will meet for 44 weeks, and once they finish, our hope is that each member of a group will form their own group. Please let Jim Gregory know if you would like to be involved at that time. Our **Becoming Catholic (OCIA)** process has been reenvisioned, and we have welcomed 15 new people in the faith this year with 4 more coming in in December and 8 in formation. We have 127 children in CYE (K-8); our youth groups have about 20 members.

The second Priority, led by Mrs. Kim Honabach, is **"Unification: Sharing our unique gifts to build up the Kingdom of God."** A yearly **Ministry Fair** was successfully launched, a new **Welcoming Ministry** is in the works, and the **Ministry Scheduler** widely implemented. The **Warmth from the Heart** clothing giveaway to the community was again an enormous success. Our **Prayer Shawl** ministry, **Angel Tree** giveaway and **Thanksgiving Blessing Bags** are some of the many outreach projects that are currently active. The Parish Fundraising Committee, led by Dr. Bill Padner and Mr. Gary Honabach, is working on exciting and fun opportunities to help our church meet its fiscal goals. We have enjoyed the Parish Bingo, Beach House Raffle, Spaghetti Dinner, Christmas in July Tea, and will be

holding more fundraisers including another Bingo in the year to come. A major fundraiser is our **Winterfest on November 21** (9:00 am-2:00 pm), a fun and delicious way to celebrate the season! These efforts are increasingly vital for the life of the church. When attendance is low, it is challenging to meet the rising costs of utilities, salaries and insurance, while maintaining programming expenses and upkeep of all of our buildings, and we greatly appreciate your generosity. Thank you to everyone who has assisted the church through Sunday offerings as well as the Diocesan Annual Campaign which must be met yearly, if not through individual contributions, then out of our cash reserves.

Having finished the third year of the Next Generation Parish Project, we ask you to please once again complete a **follow-up survey**: the Disciple Maker Index which is online from **November 30 through January 10, 2027**. This information is on the back of the Schedule. Thank you! You will also find information there on our new Adult Education class, "The Prophets: Messengers of God's Mercy." This kicks off on November 16 --you can still sign up! (information on the back side of the schedule).

We will once again offer the special Advent Mass in candlelight called the **Rorate Mass,** with Gregorian Chant, on **December 19**, 6:45 am, which was very popular last year. This Mass begins before sunrise to remind us of a world in darkness and sin that is anticipating the coming of the "Light of the World." This year, we felt that the safety hazards and the problems caused by hot wax spills necessitated a switch to beautiful hand-held tapers for the congregation that are battery-operated. This will make the Mass just as beautiful, but easier and simpler.

We will again offer a **Midnight Mass** for Christmas this year! (with Latin chant, readings/prayers in English).

All-day Adoration is again offered during Advent on Tuesdays: Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22. Signup sheets will be in the back of the church so that amidst the fast pace of the season, we can spend some quiet time with the Blessed Sacrament in prayer. Signing up for adoration ahead of time really helps us to know where there may be gaps in the schedule. Thank you for requesting Eucharistic Adoration, and for signing up as you can.

So, here is my request: Stay active and participate in the parish events we have coming up. Check out our informative parish website (www.saintcolumbachurch.org) for updates on everything in our parish. Our Facebook Page is more active than ever; the myParish App continues to provide more content including daily devotions; we have added an Instagram Page this year also. **Please bring home a bulletin each week and read it, or find it on the website/myParish app.**

I love being your pastor, and I thank you for your Mass attendance, volunteerism, and enthusiastic participation in the many opportunities for spiritual growth, togetherness, and spiritual outreach this year. Let's keep this momentum going. God is moving, and He is calling us all forward in faith. On behalf of the pastoral and administrative staff of Saint Columba Church, I wish you a Blessed Christmas season and a joy-filled New Year.

Enclosed is a Christmas Season Schedule. Information on our Advent class and the Disciple Maker Survey is on the back of the schedule. We have trimmed our mailing costs by **placing Advent Reflection books in the church** for anyone who enjoys this resource. Please contact us if you are unable to pick one up and we will gladly mail it to you. We hope that you find these materials useful as we move together towards Christmas and 2027!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Richard J. Mowery
Enclosures