

Vicar's
Message
for the

NEW YEAR



My Dear Friends:

Judith and Tadhg join me in expressing our thanks and appreciation for all the wonderful Christmas cards, warm wishes and gifts that we have received from you at Christmas. Christmas is a time when the need for being with family and friends is greater. We are pleased to say that you have been our family, giving us your love and support. For this we are very grateful and blessed to have all of you in our lives.

The year 2006 has been a blessed one for us as a church. We welcome new membership in the former members of St. Anne's Episcopal Church, Caseyville, IL and other new members who have joined our church, developed a building fund campaign in order to renovate our lower level and have started construction, and continued to worship, work and to minister as a faith community and family in this area. We thank God for all of his blessings towards us and I thank you for your continued

commitment, prayers, support, and stewardship to our church and to the ministry we have been entrusted by Almighty God.

We look forward to a new year with joy and excitement – the completion of our lower level with fellowship hall, kitchen, restrooms and baths, classrooms, library and youth room. This new renovated space will not only serve our needs but more particularly the needs of the community. In September 2007, we will also celebrate twenty years as a church and engaging in ministry in this area. With these two significant events in the life of St. Michael's we need to rejoice that God has been truly good to us.

God, who created us, is giving us the opportunity to experience a new year and with a new year comes renewal and recommitment. This time of the year is a period to reflect and to look forward. It's a good time to stop and think whether or not we are living wholesome lives - physically, emotional, socially and spiritually – to examine whether or not we are accomplishing or meandering. It is a good idea to set ourselves some realistic goals and try to build a better future. But we cannot seriously have wholesome, effective lives without committing ourselves to a true and meaningful relationship with God. We may want to believe that we are doing pretty well without Him, but are we really? Each new day, each new month and each new year is an opportunity for us to serve and to please God who is always there for us. But like all efficient relationships, in order for our relationship with God to be effective, it must be reciprocal as well. For too often we feel that God should participate fully in the relationship by giving us what we want but we ourselves do not keep our side in our relationship with Him.

As we have been given the opportunity to be a part of another new year, my prayer is that we will seek to improve our relationship with God and with our neighbors. Our relationships – our love for God and our love for people are extremely valuable in this life. Our Lord reminds us of this in the two Great Commandments He left with us. May we see the enormous value in relationships, not superficially but realistically, recognizing that in our church we need each other in order to build up the ministry of God in this place and community.

Judith, Tadhg and I wish you and your families and friends a Blessed, Healthy and Spirit-filled 2007.

Every Blessing!

Your Friend and Priest,

Father Anthony