



TO TEACH WHO CHRIST IS

A Newsletter for the Campaign for Parishes, Catholic Education and Faith Formation September 2021

Your Support Matters

While our parishes and communities continue to navigate through these trying times, we thank you for your continuous support of our parishes and schools.

To Teach Who Christ Is continues to be in the fulfillment phase. This means today and the coming years are extremely important to our work through *To Teach Who Christ Is*, as parishes and our many other facilities receive funds from pledge payments to move forward and complete projects. When you fulfill your *To Teach Who Christ Is* pledge, you are supporting parish vitality, Catholic education, religious education innovation and academic excellence.

If you have a question about your pledge, connect with the campaign office at 312.534.8500. All support is important, and your contributions are making this the most successful capital campaign in the history of the Church.



Campaign Blesses Combined Parish with Ability to Focus on Merger and Needs During the Pandemic

Through the Archdiocese of Chicago's Renew My Church initiative, St. Joseph Parish and St. Francis Xavier Parish merged together to create Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier Parish in July 2019. Prior to joining together, both parishes were involved with the *To Teach Who Christ Is* campaign, and now, both bear the fruits of their parishioners' generosity together as a tight-knit community.



Pictured above are cars at one of the drive-in Masses during pandemic.

St. Joseph Church, established in 1845 and located at 1747 Lake Avenue in Wilmette, is the second oldest parish in the Archdiocese of Chicago. For over 170 years, the church has stood majestically at the corner of Lake Avenue and Ridge Road, proclaiming the good news of Christ confidently and completely, and building a joyful and welcoming community of faith. Founded to serve the largely German Catholic population migrating from Trier, Germany, St. Joseph Church is a historic and significant part of Wilmette and its surrounding neighborhoods.

St. Francis Xavier Church, located at 524 9th Avenue and built in 1904, finds its roots in the Irish Catholic community nestled in East Wilmette along the lakefront. The church was named in honor of St. Francis Xavier, a Jesuit missionary whose mantra was "that all may be one." In 1910, a four-room combination convent and school opened, and the community flourished. As a result, a new Gothic-style church was built, along with

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Pictured above left: Students observe construction of the parish life center. Pictured above right: Tuckpointing of St. Joseph Church.

school buildings that now stand at the corner of 9th and Linden in Wilmette. Much like St. Joseph's, St. Francis Xavier established a firm footprint in the area connecting hundreds of families for generations through a tradition of faith, service, family and community.

"When both churches were involved with the *To Teach Who Christ Is* campaign, they were independent parishes" said Joseph D'Arco, director of operations. "St. Joseph and St. Francis Xavier identified and prioritized improvements and enhancements for each church to not only meet archdiocesan goals, but also local needs."

The separate parishes brought together key members of parish councils, finance committees, school boards and parish leaders with development and communications acumen to identify areas of need, build network strategies, and collaborate in sub-committee.

After gifts were made to the archdiocese of nearly \$500,000 from St. Joseph and over \$750,000 from St. Francis Xavier, both faith communities leveraged the unique opportunity presented by the campaign to address urgent local needs. St. Joseph used additional funds to upgrade its electrical system, install new light fixtures and LED lights, paint the interior of the church and professionally clean the stain glass windows. The major capital investment at St. Joseph's was a contribution toward the tuckpointing of the school structure over a phased period of three years.

At St. Francis Xavier, the school community mobilized a sweeping, parish-wide capital campaign to build a \$9 million parish life center and school facility featuring a new gym, cafeteria, classrooms, office suite and enclosed atrium. An additional donation was secured in support of sharing parish, Immaculee Conception in Galette Chambon, Haiti.

"The addition of bright, new spaces, and the care and attention given to the refurbishment of our beloved facilities was made possible through *To Teach Who Christ Is*," said Fr. Wayne Watts, priest at Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier Parish. "During the unprecedented parish merger and a pandemic, community members were blessed with the ability to focus on ministering to the parish, school and underserved communities instead of diverting attention to pressing capital needs that had been recently addressed."

Throughout the merger and pandemic, parishioners have connected in meaningful ways to extend support and minister to each other. In addition, the parish's vibrant school creatively responded to remote learning through digital resources, and parish staff and ministries worked hard to meet needs in innovative and virtual ways. The parish hosted regular rosaries on Zoom, sent out daily parish emails, supported food pantries, developed online workshops and posted daily Mass on YouTube to keep faith in action during the pandemic.

"The birth of the combined Wilmette parish equipped the local Catholic community to weather the daunting challenges of a global pandemic with renewed vigor," said Joseph. "Father Wayne Watts stepped up to lead and serve as a single pastor overseeing two campuses, and the combined resources of parish and school leaders positioned the parish to build community when the area needed it most. Both the school and parish communities owe a debt of gratitude to the archdiocese for illuminating a path towards stewardship and unity that served as a beacon during a challenging time."

To learn more about Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier Parish, please visit ssjfx.org.

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Overall Campaign Goal: \$350,000,000

Total Raised to Date: \$409,232,659*

Percent of Goal Pledged: 117%

Pledges Paid to Date: \$274,042,071

Percent Paid to Date: 78%

*includes cash, documented pledges and bequests

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