

Today we celebrate the First Sunday of Advent, the beginning of a New Church Year.

It is a fitting time for us to celebrate the beginning of our new parish.

Over the past three weekends we have seen the closures of our three parishes.

Blessed Sacrament Parish, St. Mary's Assumption Parish, and St. Mary, Help of Christians Parish, have ceased to exist "**on their own**".

But they continue to live on as part of a new parish, *Our Lady of the Eucharist*, whose beginning we celebrate today.

All around us we have visible signs of our "coming together."

We have sacred vessels, liturgical books, and vestments from each of our churches.

The candle stands and baptismal font are from St. Mary's Assumption.

The banners, processional cross, and paschal candle stand are from Blessed Sacrament.

The church building, and all its contents, are from St. Mary, Help of Christians.

While we were meeting with some of the Salesians of Don Bosco about the contents of Blessed Sacrament Church going to their mission in Haiti, we took them to the other two churches.

When we walked into this church building, Brother Bruno looked up at the ceiling and said, *Oh, St. Mary, Help of Christians. We Salesians were the ones who began the special devotion to Mary, Help of Christians.*

Do you believe in signs?

It certainly seems to me that **it is an affirmation of what we begin today.**

The physical items that we have brought together will help us keep the memory of all our parish families present in our hearts as we now form a new parish family.

But what is more significant is the ceremonial presentation of the Sacramental Books that will be celebrated at the beginning of our Inaugural Liturgy.

It is more significant because **the parish family is not about things, it is about people.**

At that liturgy, a representative of each parish will present the sacramental books.

Let me read for you the wording of the presentation:

Today, the people of (the name of the parish will be inserted) *entrust to us the precious Sacramental Books, which contain the names of the people who have been baptized, confirmed, received first communion, were married, and buried from* (the parish name). *The memory of these good people will live on in our new parish, and we will pray for them in all our future Masses.*

The *Parish of Our Lady of the Eucharist* is now created from the people of the three parishes, and accepts all people into its life.

The name of the new parish was chosen with the desire to maintain the roots and traditions of all three parishes as we come together.

The Eucharist is the center of our life as a Catholic Church. It has been the center of the life of our parishes.

The name "**Blessed Sacrament**" holds a special meaning for all of us as we consolidate.

Our Blessed Mother has also been a very important figure in the community life of the parishes, especially under the names "**St. Mary's Assumption**" and "**St. Mary, Help of Christians.**"

Because **the Eucharist and Our Blessed Mother** are central elements of our faith life, we requested that the newly consolidated parish be called *Our Lady of the Eucharist*.

In his encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (Church of the Eucharist), Pope John Paul II, entitles his sixth chapter, "At the School of Mary, 'Woman of the Eucharist.'"

Here are some of the words of Pope John Paul II in that chapter:

- α *Mary is a “woman of the Eucharist” in her whole life. The Church, which looks to Mary as a model, is also called to imitate her in her relationship with this most holy mystery.*
- α *In a certain sense Mary lived her Eucharistic faith even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God’s Word.*
- α *The body given up for us and made present under sacramental signs was the same body which she had conceived in her womb!*
- α *Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist. If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist.*

Our new name, *Our Lady of the Eucharist*, is in accord with the intimate connection of Our Lady and the Eucharist, as well as the intimate connection between the parishes of Blessed Sacrament, St. Mary’s Assumption, and St. Mary, Help of Christians.

Today, in place of the Creed, we will **renew our baptismal promises** and be given the opportunity to **proclaim our commitment to *Our Lady of the Eucharist Parish***.