

Welcome Home

Saint Mary Parish Pastoral Plan

December 2016



Over 100 Years of Spiritual Community

PASTORAL PLANNING

“Pastoral Planning will provide priests, deacons, religious, professional staff, lay leaders of the parish the opportunity to engage in ongoing systematic and comprehensive planning towards the establishment of each parish’s plan for long-term viability and pastoral vitality. The spirit that should animate all such planning is one of servant leadership. The goal of this process is to create a mechanism by which every aspect of Parish life is intentional, missionary driven, and open to periodic evaluation and improvement.” –Synod Summary 2014

A WARM & WELCOMING CATHOLIC FAMILY OF FAITH

Since 1881 our Parish has been living and celebrating the priceless gift of our Catholic faith. During our long and proud history, every generation has injected new life into our Parish Family, building on the work of those who have gone before us. Now it’s our turn!

So we have developed a Pastoral Plan, ***Welcome Home***, a plan built on a vision. The vision answers the question: what kind of Parish do we want and need to be in these early years of the 21st century, a world so different from our late 19th century roots. Recognizing the fact that so many have left the practice of our faith, the answer is obvious: we want to be a Parish that warmly welcomes and embraces those who want to follow Jesus Christ. Why? Because that’s what Jesus wants, and He couldn’t have been clearer about that when He said, “Love one another as I have loved you.”

What follows describes ***Welcome Home*** and how it was developed.

WELCOME HOME - OUR ST. MARY PASTORAL PLAN

Once again, what is our vision? How can we make our Parish a warmer and more welcoming spiritual home for our Parishioners and for those not strongly connected to our Parish life? With that question in mind, we zeroed in on various aspects of our Parish life:

LITURGY & WORSHIP

A WARMER & MORE WELCOMING WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

Strengthen Before And After Mass Greeting

We are creating a volunteer lay ministry of hospitality to greet and welcome Parishioners at all worship services. Our Clergy will also make a greater effort to welcome Parishioners before & after Mass.

Invite Parishioner Feedback On Homilies

At Mass we are nourished by the Body and Blood of our Lord, by God’s Word and by preaching, which helps us to apply the Word of God to our own lives and strengthens our relationship with the Lord. To help our Clergy in their preaching role, we invite your feedback through an anonymous survey tool that will be made available on our website. Your feedback will be shared with our Clergy.

Revitalize our Worship Ministries

Think of all the Ministers, in addition to our ordained Priests and Deacons, who support our Parish worship experiences: our Music Ministers, Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Altar Servers, Ushers/Greeters, and Altar Decorators. Deacon Jerry Lambert, our Parish Director of Liturgy & Worship, is working with all of our Liturgical Ministry Leaders to take a hard look at the ministries that support Parish worship, their needs and how they can help to make Mass a warmer and more welcoming experience for our people.

FAMILY LIFE

DEVELOPING A WARMER & MORE WELCOMING PARISH FOR OUR FAMILIES

Strengthen Our Youth Ministry

Our youth is our future, the next generation of our Parish Family of Faith. With all that the world has to offer—the lure of money, sex, and the quick fix of drugs and alcohol—we need to embrace our young Parishioners and show them that Christ is the way. He is not boring or uncool. He is the way to peace and fulfillment. As we recognize the strong role that our Saint Mary School and various catholic high schools play in the spiritual lives of our young parishioners, we hope that our Youth Ministry with its support system of faith, fellowship and fun will help to draw all our young people, regardless of school, closer to Christ and to one another. We will continue to develop new ways to pull our youth in closer. In an engaging way, we need to show them that Christ can be found among their friends, at parties, at school, on the job, in service - throughout the events and experiences of everyday life! Our aim is to grow our Life Teen (high school) and Edge (middle school) programs, by doing our best to connect them with the real needs of our younger Parishioners.

Encourage Greater Parental Involvement in Religious Education, Life Teen and Edge

Ridgefield and South Salem are towns with lots of clubs, sports and activities that engage the entire family. We want to strengthen that spirit of family involvement in our Parish by providing more opportunities and events for parents, siblings and grandparents with a particular focus on encouraging families to participate regularly in Sunday Mass. We will also organize focus groups so that Laity and Clergy can explore other ways to appeal to families and our younger members. We need your ideas and are excited to learn from you.

Reach Out to Our Young Parishioners with Special Needs

We also want to reach out more effectively to our young Parishioners with special needs, showing them how important they are to us by creating a program just for them. As of Sunday, November 13th, and every other Sunday thereafter, our young members with special needs who cannot participate in our regular Religious Education Program, are invited to a special program. At our 10:30am Sunday Mass, right before the readings begin, kids with special needs make their way to Classroom #223 on our School's main floor to celebrate Jesus in music and movement and share the Word and the Eucharist in ways that touch their hearts and minds. Interactive materials play a major role in this program, which concludes at 11:30am and gives their parents some time to worship, knowing their children are in excellent, caring hands. We invite our Peer Witnesses who are confirmed or preparing for Confirmation, to assist us with this special program.

Connect with Our Parish Millennials

We need to create a warmer and more welcoming atmosphere for our Millennial Generation if we want to keep our congregation robust and growing as we move forward. We will do this by making more efforts to better understand their interests and needs and by offering programs specifically designed for them. We will provide young millennial parents with enhanced take-home materials at the 10:30am Mass to help their children better understand our Catholic faith. We'll also try to offer better and much needed support to single parents faced with the challenge of raising their children on their own.

LEADERSHIP

**BUILDING A
BRIDGE TO THE
FUTURE**

*Our Pastoral Planning
Priorities:*

Liturgy & Worship

Family Life

Leadership

Finances

Building & Facilities

“So many of our parishes are doing great work in ministry, and this planning process gives them the opportunity to build on the good work that is already ongoing, and look at areas of pastoral life that can be strengthened.”

-- Patrick Turner, director of the Office of Strategic and Pastoral Planning



HELPING CREATE A WARMER & MORE WELCOMING PARISH

Reprioritizing My Time

To better connect with our Parishioners, I am re-prioritizing how I spend my time, with particular focus on my weekend worship schedule. I will do my best to celebrate more Sunday Masses, preach more frequently and, as you may have already noticed, make pre-Mass announcements. Meeting and getting to know you better gives you the opportunity to meet and get to know me better, and I will try my best to do all that I can to increase my interaction and visibility in our Parish Life. On the lighter side, I have joined Facebook and enjoy friend requests from Parishioners! Please connect with me.

Collaborative Leadership & Participation Between Clergy & Laity

We will continue to implement our Parish “Leadership in Collaboration” Model, helping to strengthen our Parish and all of its Ministries through better communication and collaboration between myself, our dedicated Parish Staff and Ministry Leaders, who make possible and support all that we do.

BUILDINGS & FACILITIES

ENHANCING OUR WARM & WELCOMING SPIRITUAL HOME

Buildings and Facilities have become Parish priorities because our current facilities no longer meet our needs. Consequently, we are developing a Revised Master Plan based on Parishioner survey feedback. The Plan addresses the need for increased seating in an expanded church, the need for gathering space to strengthen our sense of community, and the need for additional meeting space to support our increasing number of ministries. Over the next three months, we will share with Parishioners renderings of our Revised Master Plan along with cost estimates for the various options. By the end of March, we will share decisions we expect to make relative to those options.

FINANCES

SUPPORTING OUR WARM & WELCOMING PARISH

Offertory Plan to Support Ongoing Day-To-Day Operations

Going forward we need to develop a plan to balance revenue and operating expenses. This will require offertory growth at least at the rate of annual inflation, supported by periodic fundraising events and continuing efforts to improve the overall efficiency of Parish operations.

“[Pastoral Planning] has already produced good fruit in our community; there is a very positive sense about the future here because we are working together collaboratively—the clergy and lay leadership—now that we have a pastoral plan in place.” -- Father Samuel Scott, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Danbury

GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND INTERCESSION OF OUR BLESSED MOTHER



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As we work to implement our Pastoral Plan, we recognize that it is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that it will bear good fruit.

Bishop Caggiano commended the work of the Synod to the intercession of Mary, Mother of God. Let us also look to Our Lady, Patroness of our Parish, for her spiritual support and guidance. She has always served as an anchor for the Church during challenging times, and she continues to do so today.



HOW WE DEVELOPED WELCOME HOME

Bishop Caggiano asked all parishes of our Diocese of Bridgeport to submit a Pastoral Plan by September 30th and he approved our Plan in his November 8th letter to me:

“I want to acknowledge the receipt of the recently submitted parish pastoral plan, “Building a Bridge to the Future,” and thank you for identifying Liturgy and Worship, Family Life, Leadership, Finances and Buildings and Facilities as priorities on which the parish will work in the coming two years. I am pleased to approve the plan for Saint Mary Parish and look forward to hearing its progress at the end of the current pastoral year.”

Our Planning Task Force deserves our sincere thanks for many hours of hard work developing **Welcome Home**, using three main sources of input. The first was the material produced by our Diocesan Synod 2014 with its five global challenges: Liturgy and Worship, Family Life, Evangelization, Leadership, and Catechesis and Education. The second was our Parish Self-Assessment, which enabled us to evaluate our greatest strengths and challenges, signs of growth and vibrancy, the condition of our buildings and grounds, potential use for land and buildings, our Parish financial health, possible collaboration with other parishes, and hopes for the future of our faith community. The third and final source of input was the Disciple Maker Index (DMI). Our Parish was one of 29 parishes that participated in the Disciple Maker Index (DMI) survey created by the Catholic Leadership Institute in Philadelphia. This past winter, our Parishioners had the opportunity through the DMI Survey to reflect on their own spiritual growth and provide feedback on how and to what extent our Parish supports that growth.

Msgr. Larry Bronkiewicz, Pastor

“The Synod has not been a discussion about what we believe, but about how we are going to live our discipleship as the world around us changes and becomes more privatized and more indifferent; as religion becomes more suspect while spirituality is still alive, and as people search for God but are ambivalent about whether or not they need [the Church] in the process. We are back to missionary times, and we have to ask, ‘what would we do different than what we are doing in our parishes today.’ That’s part of the discernment we need to make through the Synod journey.” –Bishop Caggiano



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the Synod 2014 visit www.synod2014.org



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