

The Cathedral Star

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Where is the Lord calling us to go?

Cathedral of the Assumption
Parish Discernment Process
Final Report

I. Introduction

On December 27, 2016, the Feast of the Holy Family, Archbishop Joseph Kurtz promulgated a pastoral letter, *Your Parish: The Body of Christ Alive in Our Midst*. In this letter, the Archbishop spoke of the importance of vibrant parish life. He also invited every parish in the Archdiocese of Louisville to discern their future through a process that involved movements enabling parish communities to pray, listen, decide and develop together a future vision for their parish in three priority areas: Family Life, Education and Formation, and Outreach.

The objectives of the Parish Discernment Process were threefold:

- ***Where are we?*** Reflect upon the abundant ways God has blessed our parish and thereby create a renewed sense of excitement.
- ***Where is the Lord calling us to go?*** Reflect on what the parish is already doing and what more it might do to grow

and increase its vitality as the Body of Christ.

- ***How will we get there together?***

Discern through prayer, small group discussions and listening sessions, specific goals the parish will pursue in response to the Pastoral Letter, and determine the resources needed to accomplish the goals.

Now that our parish has prayed, listened to the Word of God and to one another, and discerned where we believe the Lord is calling us to go, it is time to develop a statement of priorities for future growth in the three areas: Family Life, Education and Formation, and Outreach.

II. Family Life

Where are we?

The living memory of the Cathedral parish bears witness repeatedly to a family dynamic. Countless visitors attest readily to the beauty of the Cathedral after visiting for the first time, and many note as a quick secondary observation that the people were very gracious and welcoming. Many commentators voice

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that a priority for the parish going forward is the continuing manifestation of this welcoming charism. The hope is contained therein that this charism might even be deepened in our own day.

This welcoming identity is the hallmark of family life in the parish and creates a dynamic in which from varied family units a universal Catholic family emerges at the Cathedral that is, at its best, a family of families.

Where is the Lord calling us to go?

At present, the Cathedral parish community faces strong opportunities for growth. Stability amongst parish leadership and staff in conjunction with a dedicated cast of volunteers, coupled with a truly inspiring worship space creates a promising dynamic. There is also a sense in which the Cathedral faces the necessity of growth. The past decade has witnessed a modestly shrinking parish population as well as a reduction in staff and resources. These factors supply a real and tangible need for the parish base to grow. Simply put, there is a need for more families at the Cathedral to revitalize its family life. A number of commentators point to a particular need to be receptive to young adults and young families.

Certain secondary considerations likewise emerge regarding physical accommodations for families at the Cathedral. Among the possible areas for improvement that have been voiced in this category are: chairs and kneelers, nursery, sound system, the Archdiocesan History Center, as well as technology and online presence.

How do we get there together?

Action Step I

The Stewardship Committee will be tasked with the mission of using the 2017-2018 parish Stewardship Drive as a resource for specifically encouraging parish growth as well as to invite the parish at large to join in efforts to invite others to attend the Cathedral.

Action Step II

The Finance Council will discuss and arrive at consensus regarding the prioritization and estimated cost of various capital needs surfacing from the discernment process that face the parish in the next five years and relate their findings to the Parish Council. In turn, the Parish Council will chart a course of action during the upcoming fiscal year that begins to address the proposed areas of need.

III. Education and Formation

Where are we?

The Cathedral parish is blessed with committed staff and volunteers who work selflessly and effectively in the areas of education and formation. A variety of groups are already invested in ongoing intergenerational opportunities for the parish at large. For the most part these groups are specialized by audience (i.e. youth, seniors, RCIA, social concerns). A number of commentators look to earlier formation offerings at the Cathedral as possible templates for future growth. The ongoing success of the School of Spiritual Growth galvanized a large bloc of the parish base through weekly catechetical offerings. In more recent history the Why Catholic? program was uniquely successful in capturing the dynamic of the small Christian community during its four-year cycle.

Where is the Lord calling us to go?

Many Catholics articulate the need to know their faith more deeply. Most have experienced irregular and insufficient catechesis from their own upbringing and education. Oftentimes there are considerable gaps between what people believe the Church teaches and what the Church actually teaches. One of the virtues of an offering like the School of Spiritual Growth was its ability to transmit a relevant message to a considerable group of people on a recurring basis. One of the virtues of an offering like Why Catholic? was

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its ability through many small Christian communities to allow for the depth of interpersonal relationship necessary for understanding and growth in faith.

A third model for catechesis is courtesy of the ever-improving electronic media programming that is increasingly available. Word on Fire and the Augustine Institute both produce excellent educational components on-line for all age groups. Such offerings grant increasing latitude for involving youth and young adults in the life of the parish.

How do we get there together?

Action Step I

The Cathedral will commence a monthly faith formation offering between the 9:30 and 12:00 Sunday Masses in January of 2018. The program will offer a variety of topics to suit areas of interest with mind for a well-balanced presentation of the Catholic faith and the need for ongoing evangelization.

Action Step II

The Cathedral will begin a year-long parish membership with the Formed online media platform offered by the Augustine Institute. This will grant access to their many catechetical resources for the parish at large as well as the many groups already convening as part of the parish on a regular basis including sacramental preparation.

IV. Outreach

Where are we?

The Cathedral's history of civic awareness and charitable service is exemplary. In addition to the monumental daily work of the Feed My Neighbor meal program, the Cathedral community has also been instrumental historically in Central Louisville Community Ministries, Nativity Academy, St. John Center, House of Ruth and the Cathedral Sister parish in Jérémie, Haiti. In recent years the financial burden of committed sponsorship to all of these endeavors has been severely tried. External

support for the Cathedral lunch program through the Let's Dance Louisville fundraiser has been a remarkable success and is truly necessary for the ongoing life of the charitable initiative.

Where is the Lord calling us to go?

Ongoing support of the many charitable works affiliated with the Cathedral will require renewed commitment from the parish and a willingness to raise awareness regarding these honorable projects amongst parishioners, and in some cases, the city of Louisville and the Archdiocese of Louisville as well. The Cathedral Lunch Program merits special consideration because of the scope of its mission and its need for significant financial support. To the extent that many parishes and schools within the Archdiocese and organizations within the city of Louisville represent potential supporters through volunteer efforts and financial aid, the work of inviting others into its mission can be of great service locally.

An additional consideration surfaced by a number of commentators includes the Christian witness of reaching out to those who have left the parish in recent years as well as those seeking a stable parish community. Many pillars of the parish community today readily reference an invitation from a friend or family member as decisive in their ultimate decision to join the parish years ago. Formally inviting the parish community at large into this effort is an essential aspect of evangelization.

How do we get there together?

Action Step I

The Social Concerns Committee will seek opportunities to educate the parish community and raise general awareness of the scope and nature of those charitable organizations with which the parish is associated.

Action Step II

The Flaget Society will begin to incorporate a Major Gift component to its ongoing mission in addition to its promotion of Planned Giving.

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Action Step III

The Steering Committee for Let's Dance Louisville will begin strategic planning for promoting the fundraiser as well as Cathedral Lunch Program at local parishes and schools in conjunction with leadership for the meal program.

V. Conclusion

This Parish Discernment Process has provided our parish with opportunities to gather as a parish family and through prayer, reflection, dialogue and discernment has invited us to discover God's will for our parish community. We believe that the priority goals that have resulted from this process represent our best efforts to discern God's will and respond in the most appropriate and effective ways possible. All members of our parish are invited to participate actively in building the future of our parish community that is full of faith, hope and love. Thanks be to God!

Fr. Michael Wimsatt, Pastor