

OUR LADY OF THE VISITATION PARISH

Three-Year Plan

2003 - 2006

Our Lady of the Visitation Parish
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Pentecost Sunday
8 June 2003

Dear Parishioner,

I am proud to publish the parish plan for Our Lady of the Visitation Parish for 2003-2006. The three-year plan developed by parishioners is a wonderful witness to the power of prayer and to the presence of the Holy Spirit. The plan is also the result of proper stewardship of time, talent and treasure.

Parishioners made time for each other. One Sunday in mid-October, six hundred people took time after the homily to fill out a parish questionnaire. Throughout one week in mid-December and during another week in early January, sixty parishioners spent an hour and a half together in focus groups. They openly and frankly discussed the strengths and the problems of our parish. One hundred people spent an entire Saturday in January called Listening Day. Parishioners and I carefully listened to each other share our future hopes and dreams for our parish. On a Saturday in February, ninety parishioners gathered for Discernment Day. On that day we collectively discerned the priority areas and types of programs we wish for Visitation Parish. Finally, in a day-long retreat in March, fourteen parishioners developed a Vision Statement for our three-year plan.

Parishioners used their talent for the good of our faith community. Two parishioners and I made up the Executive Leadership Team; we received ongoing training how to energize the planning process. Twelve parishioners formed our Planning Team; they oversaw and facilitated the CARA Questionnaire, Focus Groups, Listening Day, Discernment Day and Visioning Day. Five parishioners formed the Editing Committee; they distilled all the information received from parishioners and wrote the final three-year plan.

Parishioners shared their treasure. Through their regular giving, all parishioners helped with the cost of the ENVISION Program. To help offset the cost to the parish, some parishioners made special, generous contributions. Others donated money to cover the cost of food, materials and mailings. And one parish family kindly printed this booklet for us at no cost.

I believe this planning process has been genuinely collaborative, inclusive and positive. It has been a time of renewal and reconciliation. The Spirit of Light has truly been present in our efforts. Our Lady of the Visitation Parish is growing in grace, in love and in fellowship. Praise God!

Raymond L. Fecteau, Pastor
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Our Lady of the Visitation Parish
Vision Statement

“Guided by the Light of Christ, we are building a vibrant, welcoming community of *fellowship, grace, love* of God and one another.”

Acknowledgment

The Planning Team gratefully acknowledges our Parish Pastoral Council, Stewardship Council and staff for their assistance, prayers and support in our ENVISION process.

Planning Team

Dennis Stiles, Chair	Martin Kelly
Gerry Foley, Co-Chair	Elizabeth Krisko
Lynn Aminzadeh	Mathias Neumann
Bill Connors	Andrea O'Brien
Deacon Paul DiDuca	Bill Rogers
Father Raymond Fecteau	Mary Ellen Rose-Blewett
Larry Harris	Donna Zezzo

Editing Committee

Lynn Aminzadeh, Chair	Bill Rogers
Larry Harris	Mary Ellen Rose-Blewett
Andrea O'Brien	

Vision Statement Team

Bill Connors	Elizabeth Krisko
Michael Flaherty	Michelle Martin
Gerry Foley	Chris McGee
Kim Foster	Mary Kate McNamara
Larry Harris	Bill Rogers
Marti Haub	Paul Stack
Martin Kelly	Dennis Stiles

SUNDAY LITURGY

Focus

To gather together as a faith community to contemplate and joyfully celebrate the Word of God and the Eucharist.

Commentary

Parishioners of Our Lady of the Visitation have expressed an overwhelming desire that our Sunday Liturgy be celebrated with joy, inspiration, warmth and welcome. Sunday Liturgy is the foundation of our faith and parish community and the link between all other parish activities. It is frequently the first contact new members or visitors have with our community and it may be the only interaction some members have with Visitation Parish. The parish community's consensus vision for our Sunday Liturgy is that it inspires the spirit, mind and body.

By 2006, we will:

- Enhance the celebration and solemnity of the Sunday Liturgy working within the guidelines set forth in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM).
- Reinforce our commitment and priority to involving youth in every aspect of parish life. This can include, but is not limited to, implementing a variety of weekend Liturgies (dependent on available resources), scheduled at different times, with one Liturgy targeted to youth and children; involving youth in all aspects of the Liturgy; and the addition of vested altar servers.
- Enhance the sacred music played and sung during the Sunday Liturgy by offering a comprehensive music program under the direction of a dedicated music Director/Coordinator.
- Enhance the sacred art and environment of the church building itself. This can include, but is not limited to, increasing the use of color throughout the church in flowers and banners, and the visible placement of symbols and statues to commemorate Jesus and Mary in their essential role in our faith.
- Offer a nursery at some or all of the weekend Liturgies to assist those with young children.

Priority Area Leader:

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SENSE OF PARISH COMMUNITY

Focus

To strengthen our bonds of fellowship and our love of one another so that we may better live the Gospel and serve the Lord.

Commentary

A primary goal among parishioners is to greatly enhance the sense of community within our parish. Expressed at every step of the Envision process was the conviction that the success of our parish will be based on our ability to strengthen our sense of community. This will be accomplished by providing a variety of fellowship, social and service opportunities for all parishioners.

While many opportunities currently exist, another key finding and often mentioned issue was the need for increased communications. Therefore, effectively and enthusiastically communicating our experiences, opportunities and information about all aspects of parish life and our faith is recognized as a critical element in enhancing our sense of community.

Our sense of community and welcoming will be extended not only to every individual who walks through our doors, but will include outreach beyond our doors and our faith.

By 2006, we will:

- Implement a variety of programs to address parishioner interests, which can include, but are not limited to our senior groups, CYO teams, separated/divorced Catholic groups, and topical speakers.
- Expand our process for welcoming new parishioners.
- Implement several creative and vibrant communication methods on parish activities and announcements, including an interactive web site. Other possibilities can include, but are not limited to, regularly published letters from the pastor, topic-oriented newsletters, and frequently updated bulletin boards.
- Communicate urgent needs (such as parishioners in need, bereavement support) to fellow parishioners.
- Maximize the use of our facility as a resource for social activities and group meetings, and as a gathering space.
- Increase appropriate parishioner communication in conjunction with the Sunday Liturgy.

Priority Area Leader:

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Focus

To provide a solid foundation in the teachings of the Catholic Church and to cultivate the growth and development of our personal and parish community's relationship with God through spiritual formation programs.

Commentary

As with other aspects of Our Lady of the Visitation Parish life, there is recognition and appreciation for the existing religious education and spiritual formation programs. There is also the desire to expand and enhance opportunities for deepening our personal understanding of the Catholic faith, its traditions, teachings, and Scripture. This fuller and deeper personal understanding is to be reinforced and complemented by opportunities for fellowship in Catholic lay organizations that can be established within the parish.

By 2006, we will:

- Implement adult continuing education and spiritual formation opportunities, including formal programs, speakers and informal gatherings.
- Develop exciting, interesting and fun program activities and curriculum for youth religious education.

- Establish and support parish groups and opportunities for spiritual growth, which can include but are not limited to, Marian Devotion, Eucharistic Adoration, Sodality, Holy Name Society and Knights of Columbus.
- Implement and support numerous faith sharing opportunities, tailored to the needs of different groups. Possibilities include prayer groups, retreats, Scripture study and witnessing by parishioners at Sunday Liturgy.

Priority Area Leader:

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SOCIAL JUSTICE

Focus

To share our gifts of time, talent and treasure in order to live the Gospel and serve the Lord within our parish and the greater community.

Commentary

Our Lady of the Visitation Parish is blessed with a multitude of talented and interested parishioners who are committed to supporting and advancing the teachings of Catholic faith through active engagement in social justice initiatives. The consensus vision of the parish is that social justice undertakings should focus on the development of parish stewardship programs that provide significant community outreach in meeting the basic needs for food, clothing and shelter in our greater community and that focus on environmental issues.

By 2006, we will:

- Implement and support a variety of social justice programs addressing the basic human needs for food, clothing and shelter, which provide opportunities for “face-to-face” interaction by all age groups. Such programs can include, but are not limited to, a job support program, pro-life group, child-welfare advocacy group, Habitat for Humanity, Rebuilding Together (Christmas in April), and prison ministry.
- Implement and support a Stewardship of Creation program that focuses on environmental issues. Such a program can include, but is not limited to, initiatives designed to increase youth awareness and involvement in specific environmental service projects, the “adoption of” Seneca Road, and the assumption of a leadership role to establish diocesan-wide “Stewardship of Creation” programs as done in many other dioceses nationwide.
- Implement and support social justice programs that partner with other faith communities.

Priority Area Leader:

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YOUTH MINISTRY

Focus

To provide our youth with positive faith-filled experiences, spiritual formation and fellowship.

Commentary

There is widespread agreement among members of the parish that a vibrant and diverse youth ministry program will provide a necessary support structure for youth and a solid foundation for the future of the Church.

From the various ENVISION discussions and research, the adults and youth who participate in the existing youth ministry program finds the experience to be rewarding. To ensure greater participation and support for our youth ministry efforts, we need to effectively communicate the success of these programs and opportunities.

Mention was also made of the desire to increase the role of our youth in all aspects of parish life. So, youth and adult leaders should constantly explore opportunities to accomplish that goal. Youth involvement in all that we do is our goal.

By 2006, we will:

- Develop a vibrant youth program, under the direction of a dedicated Director/Coordinator of Youth Ministry, that stresses the importance of social and spiritual development and generates enthusiasm for participation.
- Implement and support regularly scheduled events for youth (such as mentoring, gathering after Sunday Liturgy, community service projects, dances and social events).
- Ensure compliance with our Archdiocesan Child Protection Program for all parish youth programs.
- Dedicate physical space and financial support for youth social and spiritual programs.
- Encourage eligible youth to run for parish council.

Priority Area Leader:

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