

## **Our Parish Vision**

In this second communication installment, we will look at our parish vision statement. In the first communication we introduced the vision developed by the Pastoral Planning Committee. The vision was defined as a statement of where we want our parishes to be.

Before undertaking any trip, we first decide on our destination. Once set, we can decide how to get there. Should we drive or fly? Do we need to stay overnight or travel in one day? What do we need to pack for the trip? What preparations do we need to make before we leave? Should we hold the mail? Do we need to board our pets or take them with us?

All of these questions can only be answered once we decide where we are trying to go, so having a clear definition of our desired end state was a critical first step to determining the Pastoral Plan. Here again is the vision we have for our two parishes.

**With love and joy,  
We strive to be vibrant Catholic parishes  
Serving our Church and larger communities  
So that we may live in God's image.**

“With love and joy” describes the environment we want to live in. We have love for Jesus, love for our families, love for our fellow parishioners, love for our communities, and love for the world at large. St. Paul tells us that when all else fails, only faith, love, and hope will prevail; but the greatest of these is love. We want our parishes to do all things with love.

However, love must come joyfully. We often confuse happiness with joy. Happiness is a feeling of contentment or satisfaction present in the moment. It is fleeting because it is based on external factors and reflects things happening to you. Happiness may come from doing purposeful work or activities you enjoy.

Joy is a deeper emotion because it comes from within. It may be a sense of purpose and meaning, even finding joy in suffering. Joy is internal and connected to living a more authentic life. To have joy, you must do inner work identifying your values and strengths, then aligning your life with them. So in our vision state, we joyfully live our faith with love for all things, having aligned our internal values and strengths with God's love.

In the second line we find two key words in our vision. Let's look at them in the reverse order they appear. In our vision, we see our parishes being VIBRANT. Vibrant is defined as full of energy and enthusiasm. It is easy to imagine this in our Sunday mass with an enthusiastic and energetic congregation fully engaged in the mass, singing joyfully and being motivated by powerful homilies that have meaning to our week's upcoming challenges. For this to occur, our parishioners will look for opportunities to serve in the sacred ministries as lectors, eucharistic ministers, altar servers, ushers, greeters, or cantors. Even if you aren't involved in a liturgical ministry, you can contribute to the vibrancy of our parish through your words and actions.

In addition, we recognize our responsibilities outside the Sunday mass in support of our parish. Our energy and enthusiasm extends to youth programs, community service, Bible studies, and even parish committees. Anyone looking at our parishes see them as a “happening” place where they see Jesus in our daily lives.

The second word to focus on is STRIVE. We recognize we will never totally achieve the vibrancy we desire but as a parish we will continue to work toward that goal. Our vision is a parish that constantly tries to get better.

In the third line we see our motivation to exist as a parish. We exist to serve. Jesus made that very clear when at the Last Supper he washed his disciples' feet to demonstrate how we must live our lives. But who do we serve? Clearly we have a responsibility to our parish and the Diocese but we also must look to the needs of the Church at large and those in our communities who do not embrace the Catholic faith. This is a daunting task but it is the scope we must embrace if we are to truly serve God.

In the last line we recognize all this is to work towards God's expectation of us. He showed us His image of how we should behave when he sent his Son. Jesus is the perfect role model and He gave us all the tools we need to work toward God's image of us. One of the most powerful tools he gave us was the Church. Working alone it would be near impossible to achieve God's image of us. But working together, through our parishes, we can support each other with love and enthusiasm. This is why achieving this vision is so critical for us individually as well as the total parish.

The Pastoral Plan Committee, studied the Disciple Maker Index survey results and derived from that baseline three priorities we should focus on to move us toward our vision. In subsequent communications, we will look at each priority, some strategies identified for each and goals we believe can be achieved with your support. I would again ask that if any of this work excites you, please reach out to Father Dave and we can discuss how your enthusiasm might best support this work.