

Saint Mark Catholic Church

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October 13, 2016

Transmitted by Email to Debbie Charles

The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano,
Bishop of Bridgeport
The Catholic Center
238 Jewett Ave.
Bridgeport, CT 06606

Dear Bishop Frank:

As instructed by Patrick Turner, I am forwarding to you a copy of the two year Parish Pastoral Plan for St. Mark Parish in Stratford. Our plan is the result of a comprehensive survey completed by our parishioners, a series of "town hall" meetings during which the content of the plan was discussed, and a final review by the leaders of the various organizations within our parish.

The plan contains several priorities and initiatives that support our mission, which involves an increase in spiritual growth and the development of a more vibrant and welcoming environment for all ages within the parish.

Please let me know if you require any further information. We look forward to hearing from you and receiving your final approval.

Your brother in Christ,

Reverend Birendra Soreng

Reverend Birendra Soreng,
Pastor

Parish: St. Mark, Stratford, Connecticut
Pastor: Reverend Birendra Soreng
Task Force: Joe Donia, Deanne Donia, Jared Forcier, Steven Kim, Michael Mollica, Patricia Nettleton, Theresa Sciallo, Jennifer Tayman, Gary Tennyson

PART I: OVERVIEW

Introduction: The task force developed a parish survey and subsequent town hall meetings to identify the most significant challenges to be addressed. In addition, we met with the Parish leadership to understand their perspective and solicit feedback during the development of the parish plan. Based on the information obtained, we developed a list of overarching priorities and initiatives that would help the task force address multiple challenges at once. Organization, formation of committees and communication were three such priorities that will enable the parish to address these challenges.

The first step to organization was to identify relevant committees and associated interim leaders of those committees to oversee the various aspects of this plan. Prospective permanent committee leaders will be approached immediately after acceptance of the plan by the Bishop.

Task Force Mission Statement: To develop an organizational plan that increases the broader involvement in parish activities, enriches spirituality and charitable service, and promotes a more welcoming environment for our St. Mark Parish Community.

Parish Mission Statement: Our mission as the St Mark Catholic Community is to inspire spiritual growth through the Holy Eucharist and Catholic teaching, and to encourage works of charity, sharing our talents and gifts, thus resulting in a more vibrant and sustainable community, which creates a welcoming environment for all ages.

PART II: STATEMENT OF GOALS AND ACTION STEPS

Pastoral Challenge #1: Evangelization

Rationale for choosing this priority area: Evangelization and its sub elements were mentioned several times in our recent parish survey. The parish is experiencing an aging demographic and a lack of participation as well as a declining number of families. This priority area is at the core of Catholicism.

Statement of the first goal to be achieved: The overall goal is to increase the number of active families within the Parish by (a) increasing participation of existing parishioners and (b) increasing the number of families within the parish by 50 families by December 2018.

Action Step #1: Utilize the communication committee to reach current and prospective parishioners. Better organize our methods of communication including print and web based. Facilitate various events or other sponsorship opportunities to broaden our reach into the community and bring prospective parishioners into the St. Mark community.

Timeline for Completion: Currently in process, to be finalized by March 31, 2017

Responsible Person: Communication Committee Director (tbd)

Action step #2: Establish a Welcoming Committee within the parish that will focus on how our parish interacts with both new and existing parishioners. Initial steps will include:

- Contact those parishioners identified, both adults and young teens; Schedule preliminary meetings to introduce the “Welcoming” concept and to solicit their comments and suggestions to enhance the concept.
- Finalize a strategic two year plan for the committee, including: (1) Select a committee of men, women, and young adults to greet parishioners as they enter for all Masses on Saturday and Sunday. (2) Assign greeters for each door, for all Masses, Assign young teens as greeters, identify gift bearers for each Mass.

Timeline for Completion: Establish the Welcoming Committee and develop a working plan for the committee two months after acceptance of the plan by the Bishop.

Responsible Person: Welcoming Committee Director (tbd)

Action Step #3: Schedule periodic missions (1 or 2 per year) with specific topics and speakers. Schedule specific social events for the parish (also 1 or 2 per year).

Timeline for Completion: By March 2017 we will identify 2 topics/speakers/events to occur within the next 12-18 months. As these 2 events occur, evaluate effectiveness and schedule 2-3 more events (either recurring or new based on reception of 2 original events) to occur 19-36 months after plan acceptance.

Pastoral Challenge #2: Family & Community Life

There is a need to develop an overall plan to address and improve the activities of the St. Mark community.

Rationale for choosing this priority area: There are several areas that need to be investigated to improve community life within the parish. Additionally, the objective is to encourage involvement from a broader age group of young families and teens.

Statement of first goal to be achieved: Increase the organization and structure of parish leadership to facilitate better communication among existing and perspective parishioners. Develop a preliminary organizational structure, describing functional areas to be addressed,

including their scope and objectives. The Initial objective would be to establish a Welcoming Committee. Second, effort will be made to improve the communication within the parish.

Action step #1 to achieve the goal: Identify the preliminary functional organizations and identify a Director for each area: Welcoming, Communications, Religious Education, Adult Education, Youth Activities, Liturgy and Worship.

Each functional Director will determine who will serve on his/her committee. Members identified are to be contacted for agreement to participate. Then, introduce the purpose of each committee and request comments and suggestions from the committee members. Specifically, the goals are:

- Identify the Director for each area identified above within 2 months after plan acceptance
- Directors to identify committee members within 2 months of being appointed

Timeline for completion: As noted above, committees to be formed within four months of acceptance of the plan by the Bishop.

Responsible Person(s): The Director of each functional committee.

Action step #2 to achieve the goal: Each committee will develop an annual plan with specific goals for the committee. Goals are to be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-driven.

Timeline for Completion: Committee goals to be submitted within six months of acceptance of the plan by the Bishop.

Responsible Person: Directors of each Committee (TBD)

Action step #3 to achieve the goal: Better coordination (communication) of parish and school/religious education activities to increase participation in both. The goal is to convert 5 school/religious education families into active Parish families per year.

Timeline for completion: Ongoing throughout the school year

Responsible Person: Directors of the welcoming, communications and social events committees

Pastoral Challenge #3: Liturgy and Worship

Rationale for choosing this priority area: Based on the responses received from our recent Parish Survey, many parishioners are interested in improving this area of Liturgy and Worship, to further engage our parishioners, and to broaden the scope to indicate more emphasis in the Liturgy for young families and our teen population.

Statement of first goal to be achieved: Increase engagement at Mass by focusing on the needs of existing and potential parishioners. Through these efforts, the goal is to increase attendance at mass by 50 people per week within two years of implementation of this plan.

Action step #1 to achieve the goal: Liturgy and Worship Committee to identify and address various aspects of Worship that could facilitate greater participation. These ideas include:

- Arrange for separate Masses during the month for the Teens and other youth groups, with their own liturgy and selections of “their” music.
- Try to get all parishioners involved during Mass through simple tasks like bringing up the Gifts.
- Identify new ways to encourage greater participation in the children’s Mass
- Revitalize music program
- Organization of the Mass, including altar decoration at Holidays, floral choices, more engaging atmosphere
- Blessing of the animals and similar activities

Timeline for completion: 12 months

Responsible Person(s): Liturgy and Worship Committee Leader(s) (TBD)

Action step #2 to achieve the goal: As noted in Challenge #1, we will establish a welcoming committee to focus on the interaction of new and existing parishioners.

Timeline for completion: See Challenge #1

Responsible person(s): See Challenge #1

Action Step #3 to achieve the goal: Increase the focus and visibility of our various ministries to drive greater participation to the parish. This will include a “ministry weekend” to showcase the existing ministries to our parish as well as other activities. In addition, the Ministry Committee will assist the Pastor with oversight of the formation of new ministries as well as the organization/activities of existing ministries.

Timeline for Completion: Establish a Ministries Committee and develop a plan within three months of acceptance of this plan. Ministry Weekend to happen immediately.

Responsible Person: Director of Ministries (TBD)