

# Next Generation Parish

Dear Parishioners,

It is with great hope and optimism that I share with you the news that our parish has recently begun an exciting new journey of becoming a **Next Generation Parish**. In partnership with the Diocese and the Catholic Leadership Institute, our parish will be piloting a nationwide effort to create communities of disciples, leaders, and missionaries that will sustain the Catholic Church into the future.

## Why the Next Generation Parish?

We can no longer take for granted some of the basic assumptions on which much of parish life today is built. The current model of parish life has worked well for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but today's rapidly changing world demands something new from each of us. As Pope Francis has said, the parish must be willing to adapt and change through the creative and missionary zeal of the pastor and the community.

- 1. Society has changed.** People are more mobile, religiosity is not assumed, and society is much more secular.
- 2. Sacramental participation is rapidly declining.**
- 3. We are moving into a massive generational shift.**
  - 80-90% of volunteering and giving is coming from only **7% of US Catholics**
  - The majority of these Catholics are a part of the **Baby Boomer Generation**, 60% of whom currently practice their faith
  - As this population ages, it will be replaced by numerically smaller **Generation X**, 30% of whom currently practice
  - Generational change over 10-20 years will represent an **estimated loss of 8.3M people & \$5 billion** in giving

## SACRAMENTAL PARTICIPATION IS RAPIDLY DECLINING



Weekly Mass attendance is below 30% nationwide.

Catholic Marriages have declined 55% in the last 25 years.

1 in 5 children baptized do not receive 1st Communion

2 in 5 children baptized are not confirmed

85% of children confirmed stop practicing by age 21.

To sustain a legacy for future generations, we must act boldly.

## What is the Next Generation Parish?

The Next Generation Parish is not just "one more program," it is a comprehensive effort to ensure a *sustainable future full of hope*. This will be an opportunity for our community to assess our opportunities and strengths, develop a plan to move into the future, and most importantly, cultivate a deeper missionary spirit throughout our parish. Together we will empower each other to bring the message and love of Jesus beyond our parish walls.

Based on their more than 25 years of experience working with Church leaders, our partner, Catholic Leadership Institute, has identified four elements that define a Next Generation Parish. Our hope is to transform our community into one that does the following:

- **Fosters Spiritual Maturity** and a plan for discipleship of its members
- **Shares Leadership** by maintaining a commitment to a healthy organization
- **Offers a Vibrant Sunday Experience** with excellent hymns, homilies, and hospitality
- **Embraces a Missionary Impulse** to go out and bring others to Jesus

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The benefits for our parish community during this four year pilot will be numerous, and include:

- A **comprehensive analysis** of parish resources
- Guided support on **improving communication** in the parish
- A **Strategic Plan** for the parish with focused priorities and goals
- Parish Leaders who are equipped to **provide training and discipleship** to other parishioners
- **Professional Development** for those in parish leadership
- Collaboration and modeling of **best practices** that other parishes in the diocese can use as an example and resource

## The Disciple Maker Index

Over the next four years we will be actively pursuing new ways of operating and assessing our health as a parish. One of the first steps is our parish's involvement in the **Disciple Maker Index Survey**. **Our parish took that survey a few years ago and the results have:**

- Provided robust data that measured our **parishioners' individual spiritual growth**, as well as the overall effectiveness of the **support our parish provides** in that growth.
- Equipped our parish leadership to make **informed decisions** that will increase parish engagement based on data, rather than intuition.
- **Measured growth**. The survey will be taken again at the conclusion to measure the impact of our efforts.

## Planning for the Future

Catholic Leadership Institute will provide us the tools and guidance to create a Strategic Plan with specific, focused goals and priorities that address the individual needs of our parish. These plans will be based, in large part, on what we hear from you in the Disciple Maker Index. CLI will continue to accompany us throughout the process and provide leadership skills to parish staff and key lay leaders.

## A Future Full of Hope

We are excited by the opportunities that stand before us and we will continue to keep you informed as we move forward together toward the next generation, with Christ always at the center of our mission. We ask that you hold this community in prayer over the next four years, as we will do for you.

Like the generations before us that built the parishes we now call home, we are called to build. This is our moment to create and envision the Next Generation Parish experience that will provide a lasting foundation for the future.

God bless,

Fr. Joe