

St. Mary Parish, Mokena, Illinois

Pastoral Perspectives

Pastor's Parish Vision for 2014

Parish Pastoral Vision for June 2014

Published in the Parish Bulletin on January 4, 2004

In his books on Principle-Centered Leadership and the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, author Steven Covey urges us to "begin with the end in mind." Thus, in the course of our Parish Council's visioning process which has now begun in earnest, I think that it is helpful for me to share some of my own personal vision for our St. Mary Parish community at this time.

I hope that these remarks will not only let people know more fully just where I am coming from, but also inspire them to work together with me to forge a common vision for at least the next ten years. In the spirit of New Year's Resolutions, here are my Pastoral resolutions for our parish community as part of a ten-year strategic plan for the future of our parish community. — Fr. James Dvorscak, Pastor

Vision: When I am transferred from St. Mary Parish after my two six-year terms of Pastor are completed, this is what I envision as the legacy that I will be leaving behind me as Pastor. This is something that I cannot accomplish alone, but only with the grace of God and the consensus of the parish community as a whole.

Liturgy: People respond and sing in such a way as to raise the rafters. Even after the seating is expanded in the church to the east, our Masses are still crowded because of all the people who flock to us because of all our inspiring liturgies, both in our expanded church building and in our overflow crowds that come to worship in our parish center building each weekend.

Spirituality: Not just on Sundays, but throughout the week, St. Mary's is the place for locally and nationally-known centrist Catholic speakers to draw significant crowds of people from the greater Mokena metropolitan area for quality forums on spiritual growth and development on a wide variety of religious topics relevant to living out our Catholic Faith in everyday life.

St. Mary School: More important than having two full classrooms for each grade level, and even more important than being heralded for our excellence in education and high test scores, St. Mary School's most important claim to fame is having the highest percentage in our diocese of Catholic School families who regularly attend Mass together on Sundays.

Religious Education: With over 2,000 children in our elementary-level Religious Education Programs, and over 500 teens participating in our Youth Ministry programs, we turn on youth to Jesus Christ and his Catholic Church. Everywhere you look on Sundays, there are youth of all ages at all Masses, participating fully in all our liturgies and in all parish activities.

Christian Service: Volunteer development is bursting at the seams with opportunities galore. Our parish is known as a clearing-house for volunteer placement in parish and community organizations. If we can't directly help, our full-time service staff knows who can, and makes the necessary connections right away for people to readily find the help that they truly need.

Community Building: Parish organizations are thriving, providing abundant inclusive opportunities for men, women, children, teens, young adults, families, singles, middle-agers, and seniors to pray together, learn together, recreate together, and serve together.

Administration: After following through on Bishop Fitzgerald's parish center project, I successfully complete my own two building renovation projects: 1) the renovation of the old elementary wing of the school, with the transformation of the old gymnasium / former church into the Koop Library as a computer, media, and resource center for the whole parish community; and 2) the expansion of the current seating area of our church with an eastern extension of the Nave that connects out to the second floor of our school building – leaving our 1987 church building structure and design architecturally intact.

Finances: St. Mary Parish is on firm financial ground. Not only is there no parish debt – we have money in the bank to spare. But most importantly, our parish financial commitments include the funding of several charitable endeavors in the greater Mokena area in such a way that we are well-known and respected as a parish for our philanthropic and charitable endeavors.

Summary: Many years from now when I am in heaven, I hope to be remembered in St. Mary Parish history just simply as “the priest who came back to the parish to bring us the cross and the bells.” Thank you for considering my Pastoral vision which will prepare our parish community for our parish's 150th anniversary in 2014.

Afterword: This Pastoral vision statement was shared with the parish staff at a regular staff meeting, with the parish council at a council meeting, and with the parish Commissions at parish leadership meetings. It will be interesting to save and then read this Pastoral vision statement in 2014 to see what actually happened in our parish.

Even if everything in this vision does not become a reality, the setting of goals helps inspire us to produce more than we would have achieved randomly. Make a plan and work that plan, and then evaluate and adjust the plan accordingly — these are true words of wisdom. But most importantly, be careful about what you pray for because it might really come to pass, or even be exceeded with the help of God.

May the Lord's will be done, and then some! — Fr. James Dvorscak, Pastor — 2004