

# Strategic Overview

## 1. STRATEGY FOR THE LITURGY

Despite the challenges of living in a secular world such as, moral relativism, perceived mistrust of the church, and even the non-relevance of the basic message of Christianity for some people, research also shows that people will come if invited and further, that good liturgies create an opportunity for a life changing personal encounter with God.

*“In Christianity, liturgy is always in the first place communion or fellowship with Jesus Christ. Every liturgy, not just the celebration of the Eucharist, is an Easter in miniature. Jesus reveals his passage from death to life and celebrates it with us. The most important liturgy in the world was the Paschal liturgy that Jesus celebrated with his disciples in the Upper Room on the night before his death. For Jesus’ death and Resurrection is the proof that someone can die and nevertheless gain life. This is the genuine substance of every Christian liturgy.”<sup>1</sup>*

The overarching challenge is getting more people to experience liturgies because we desire to see a personal encounter with Jesus and God’s mercy, causing a conversion. In essence, this is what Jesus desired in his Great Commission: “Go forth and make disciples of all nations...” This is essentially an outreach challenge.

While those involved in liturgical ministries ‘get’ the bigger picture of the liturgy — how it is the way “par excellence” to reach the dechurched and unchurched in our broader community — doing so requires that we significantly elevate the ‘customer experience’ of all our liturgies. These are the two primary aims of our Strategy for the Liturgy – more people and a quality experience.

## STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Three Strategic Initiatives are proposed as critical for achieving our Liturgy Strategy:

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Catechism in a Year - Day 122

1. Reach out to parishioners and the wider community;
2. Elevate the Liturgical experience; and,
3. Deliver the Liturgy flawlessly.

The overall effect of these three initiatives is to leverage Annunciation's reputation as a vibrant welcoming parish. AoLP is gaining recognition as a destination parish and we wish to grow that both for the benefit of the dechurched and the unchurched<sup>2</sup> in our catchment area — leveraging AoLP's reputational strength to show case the single most visible trait of Catholicism — its Liturgy.

Using the Sunday Liturgy to showcase the merits of Catholicism is a growing trend among parishes often identified as 'best practice' examples. In the book Rebuilt, authors Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran devote an entire chapter to this cornerstone of parish renewal.

#### STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1: REACH OUT TO PARISHIONERS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The overarching goal is getting more people to experience liturgies as we desire to maximize the potential for a personal encounter with Jesus and God's mercy. Our vision is to have all people within our parish boundaries to know they are welcome to come to Mass; it's about letting people know that we want them!

The benefits that can flow from this action is a growing faith and salvation in our broader community, the ensuing enhancement for family and society overall, and increased numbers engaging and renewing AoLP.

Our Goal: To welcome and engage all parishioners personally and also the broader community more particularly. To do so we envision two action projects:

1. For Parishioners:

- a) A Comprehensive Parishioners' Register; and,**

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<sup>2</sup> The expression 'dechurched and the unchurched' refers to those who no longer go to church (the dechurched) or have never gone to church (the unchurched).

**b) New member welcome events.**

2. For the Wider Community :

**a) Bridging events;**

**b) Parish picnic — invite the wider community to family activities; and,**

**c) Flyers, Advertising/signs, ex. Knights' events.**

**Time Line: Year 1:** Project 1 integrates with the project -- Communicating the Value of the Catholic Faith -- identified in the Strategy for Christian Education.

**Project Scope:** As outlined above.

**Estimate Cost:** Cost of the proposed projects 2 to 6 would be marginal

Details for of this initiative are outlined in Strategic Initiative 1-1.

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2: IMPROVED ' LITURGICAL EXPERIENCE '**

This initiative builds on the first but purposely targets the new person at Annunciation. It is premised on the following assumptions:

- People will be connected if they know someone — make a connection;
- People seek to avoid getting to know people at mass, so they don't have to commit — or have expectations made of them (they hide, avoid);
- People hope they are doing enough spiritually and don't have to do more; and,
- Deep down most know they were created to be in relationship with God, to encounter his love and mercy, and to live in the freedom of being a beloved child of God.

Given this backdrop, it is critical that people who come to mass feel that they are welcomed, belong, and they have a spiritual encounter with Jesus. That, they feel supported by the community and touched by God. This is only possible by great liturgies with the “new” person in mind. The question we asked ourselves was, How can we help them enter in to the celebration? The benefits that can flow from this Strategic Initiative is a growing faith and salvation in our members and the broader community through:

- A more meaningful experience that breaks down peoples' natural hesitation to come to mass;
- Opening the door to spirituality growth for the newcomer;
- Understanding that the church exists to reach the dechurched and unchurched also opens opportunities for spiritual growth for members of liturgical ministries;
- Enhanced liturgical experiences fosters engagement in other ministries; and,
- Parish community life and worship becoming a source of unity, an opportunity to give glory to God, and for God to actually and truly touch people's lives.

Those involved in liturgical ministries understand its importance to reach the dechurched and unchurched in our broader community. Doing so requires that we significantly elevate the 'experience of all our liturgies. We propose to do so through three action projects:

**1. Hold a Retreat - for those involved in liturgical ministries - Time Line: 6 months to 1 year**

The Retreat would aim to inspire a vision for the potential of liturgies to be a personal encounter with God. The retreat itself would be modelled along the lines of Cursillo weekend. Because of the scope and broad applicability of a retreat for ministries, the project is described in greater detail in the 4th Strategy for Strengthening all Ministries.

**2. Improve Liturgy 'Customer Experience' - Time Line: 1 to 2 years**

Note: This project requires a needs analysis along the lines described in Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoron's book *Rebuilt*<sup>3</sup> to plan the way forward.

**3. Improve physical Environment Time Line: 1 to 3 years**

A number of building improvements were proposed by the group and range from improved art, religious artifacts, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> see Rebuilt, Michael White and Tom Corcoron

If done successfully, we anticipate changes such as — more children at mass, more people coming earlier to get a seat, more smiles, more singing, more verbal responses, increased offerings, attendance and in member volunteers.

Details for of this initiative are outlined in Strategic Initiative 1-2.

### STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3: ORGANIZATION AND DELIVERY

This initiative builds on the first two and aims to empower the AoLP volunteer base to meet the challenges outlined above.

Our goal is for people who come to mass to feel welcomed, that they belong, and that they have a spiritual encounter with Jesus. That, they feel supported by the community and touched by God.

This is only possible by great liturgies with the “new” person in mind. A question we asked was “How can we help them enter into the celebration?”

In order to enhance the customer experience both for current parishioners and our broader community we need to be able to deliver outstanding liturgies! Doing so requires a major engagement and empowerment of our people involved in various ministries; to that end, we propose three enabling projects:

#### **1. Volunteer ‘Job’ postings**

Volunteer roles need require clear expectations, guidelines, and time commitments, to ensure people know what they getting into. It is only that they can truly assess what the commitment would mean for them. This should be a totally transparent process.

#### **2. Succession planning in all ministries**

Standard operation procedure manuals for training of volunteers and pass-off are required so that policies are clear and a seamless process is assured. A framework is necessary to identify people who have rotated in and have led or co-led the ministry.

#### **3. Full Time Coordinator of Volunteers & Ministries**

A paid coordinator of volunteers and ministries and giving parishioners advice on how they would could be suited to particular ministries.

**Time Line: Year 1:** This urgent initiative needs to be activated in the first 6 months. More specific details are outlined in the Discipleship Formation Program outlined in the 4th Strategy:

Strengthening of All Ministries

**Project Scope:** Needs seamless integration with other Ministry plans including participation in the Annual Ministry Planning Workshop.

**Estimate Cost:** Identified in the Strategy for Strengthening All Ministries

Details for of this initiative are outlined in Strategic Initiative 1-3.