Mapping Our Future — Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish

Environment

Diocesan Direction

- Centrally-driven leadership style
- Consolidation of diocesan services and programs
- Increased diocesan oversight of parishes
- Shortage of priests; aging priests may cause changes
- Diaconate program on hold
- Changing roles of laity and lay leaders

Parish Direction

- Growing
- Strongly lay-driven; committed
- Strong and stable leadership
- Strong school – highly integrated with parish life
- Becoming more spiritually mature
- Financially healthy; encourage tithing
- Welcome to all Catholic movements and communities

Trends (Economics, Social, Political, etc.)

- Technology: impact on society includes blessings and challenges
- Challenging state economy; more people with basic needs (spiritual and material)
- Aging population
- Growth in cultural diversity
- Fast-moving culture seems to be causing people to need more substance in religion
- Post 9/11 world: impact on attitudes and behaviors
- More single-parent families; more singles; more young marrieds without children
- People expected to handle and do more with fewer resources
- More focus on protection of children

Responsibilities

What do we do?

- Welcome, embrace and serve our brothers and sisters
- Be a spiritual catalyst to help each other develop, enrich and renew our lives
- Devote time, talent and treasure to meet the diverse needs of our parish and all God's people
- Celebrate life, faith and the sacraments
- Provide comfort, forgiveness and healing to those in need
- Form and educate in the Catholic faith
- Promote collaboration and communication with other faith communities

Critical Success Factors

Shared agenda for success

LEADERSHIP Strengthen Christian leadership by fostering active collaboration between clergy and laity that will invite participation and draw forth the unique gifts within our faith community.

LITURGY Sustain a vibrant, prayerful environment that nourishes people of all ages.

OUTREACH Inspire and increase efforts to reach out and serve the spiritual, physical and financial needs of people. Equip parish members with the necessary understanding and skills to share the good news of Christ's presence.

STEWARDSHIP Call all parishioners to a full and active sharing of their time, talent and treasure to meet the goals of our parish.

FAITH AND JUSTICE FORMATION Provide and promote opportunities for learning about the Catholic faith, awakening our moral conscience to the principles of Catholic social justice and living an active Catholic life.

PARISH ENRICHMENT Promote connection, conversation and understanding within our diverse parish community.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL APOSTOLATE Fully enable our school to deliver academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment.

Vision Metrics

What quantitative indicators tell us we are living our vision?

- Consistent, strong Mass attendance
- Healthy school enrollment
- Sound financial status
- Relevant, robust ministries
- Vibrant RCIA program
- Diversity that reflects the local demographics
- Healthy local and global outreach programs
- Active leadership and participation in worship and ministries

Mission

Why we exist

We provide a spiritual home for all God's family and nurture one another through the sacraments and the principles of Catholic faith.

Critical Realities

Affecting our work

- Parish and school are landlocked; tight on space
- Parish does not reflect diversity of the neighborhood
- Drawing young, large families
- Perceived as too conservative or too liberal
- Close proximity to and the potential for relationship with Aquinas College
- No longer have true geographical parish boundaries
- Serving a broad and diverse membership (young, old, single, married, divorced, unemployed, working, etc.)

Vision

What we constantly strive to be

A welcoming, Christ-centered parish, guided by the Holy Spirit, celebrating prayer, worship, education and the sacraments as the way of living God's Kingdom on earth.

Values

What is important to us?

- Sharing a common Catholic faith with one another
- Acts of love and compassion
- Being inclusive
- Acting for justice in the human community
- Efforts of forgiveness and reconciliation
- Honoring and protecting life at all stages
- Being morally responsible
- Embracing life-long Catholic education and formation

Competitive Landscape

- Dominican Center – for a more "liberal" experience
- St. Isidore's – for a more "conservative" experience
- Christian denominations that provide less challenging, more entertaining environments
- Other congregations that provide more social activities and affiliations
- Stronger youth programs
- A more comfortable cultural fit
- Moves to other parishes due to choosing public education

Congregational Practices

- Tithing is still a practice being learned by Catholics
- Being a sacramental church makes us stand apart from other Christian faiths
- People pick their time and place to worship to fit their preferences (lifestyles)
- Young adults tend not to "register" until establishing their families
- People leaving parishes rarely communicate that they are leaving
- People often reluctant to commit to membership in one parish community

Perceptions

How do we want to be known? By whom?

Parishioners:

- Adult: "I feel at home here and my faith is always nurtured."
- Young adult: "I like going to church at St. Thomas. I feel welcome."
- Senior citizen: "The many new young families joining the parish continually renew and inspire me."

Visitor: "I wish my church was like this."

Neighbor: "Saint Thomas makes our neighborhood a better place to live."

Diocesan official: "Saint Thomas is strong and dependable. We look to the parish as a model."

G.R. real estate agent: "Saint Thomas is the rock of this neighborhood, keeping housing values steady and the area inviting."