



SAINT GREGORY^{the} GREAT

YEAR 2

Family Pathway Report

FALL 2024

Dear Parishioners of the St. Gregory the Great Family of Parishes,

We present to you our annual report. We have made great strides in our Beacons of Light process and our journey to become one canonical parish. Over the past year, the Leadership Team has been formed and our Family Pastoral Council has been meeting regularly and led four town hall meetings throughout this past year.

In July, Fr. Alex and Fr. Thomas moved on to new horizons and Fr. Aaron joined us. We went from four priests to three. We may have downsized on clergy but do not have a leadership shortage with our leadership team and pastoral council. With the clergy, we are now in one place for the entire weekend and celebrate all the Masses in that location for the most part.

We have come together as a family with Masses at the seminary, joint celebrations of holidays and many activities such as the Anointing Mass, Mental Health Wellness events and presentations. The blessing is that all our facilities are in excellent shape, and we have no debt in any of our parishes. Our schools are moving toward creating a culture of evangelization and are full to capacity. Many organizations are beginning to form on the Family level.

The Leadership Team is strong and highly competent. The Family Pastoral Council is engaged and leading, doing whatever is necessary to bring the family together. There is more of a thrust toward Family ministries. Everything revolves around our vision and goals as a family. There is a positive vibe regarding Beacons of Light. We have a joint bulletin and celebrate Mass as a family on civil holidays, Thanksgiving and once a year with a reception at the seminary. This team is leading the way, and the Leadership Team is a working group with a lot of positive energy, and can challenge each other if need be.

Thank you all for being a part of the St. Gregory the Great Family of Parishes.

Sincerely in Christ,
Fr. Steve

SECTION 2

ANNUAL PLAN REPORT SUMMARY

The past year has seen an eruption of sustained activity in unifying our Family of Parishes. Of central importance was the creation of the Leadership Team and the Pastoral Council. These two bodies are meant to ensure a smooth transition to the new parish model while remaining alive to parishioners' ideas. Already in place for more than a year, the Pastoral Council held four town hall meetings to share information and respond to parishioners' questions.

Both these groups, along with our clergy, have been encouraged by the general spirit of goodwill with which parishioners have met one another in Family community. There is so much we are learning about one another and so much more we see we can do — and even do better — together than apart. While anxieties are inevitable as we walk this new path, we are confident in our ability to overcome them.



Observations

The complexities of unifying three canonically separate parishes into a single Family are real. Different traditions, dissimilar administrative nomenclature and practices, varying tendencies of ministerial outreach, justifiably proud identities resistant to change — all these matters and more that characterize our three parishes could pose fatal obstacles to Family unity. And we have not even mentioned different techniques of financial management whose streamlining must be addressed yet in the future.

We have been fortunate, however, that a spirit of charitable teamwork has so far pervaded interactions among parish staff and, indeed, among all those who have contributed to our Family's beginning. Our pastor has set the tone. He provides intelligent guidance and proper examples of prayerful cooperation under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Challenges

One of the critical elements of unifying our Family of Parishes involves a major shift in how the parish executes its day-to-day responsibilities. Going forward we will have only three priests assigned to us. We cannot expect them to be involved in every detail of parish operations. And so appointing a qualified staff of leaders was deemed the most important step in guaranteeing the function and upward future of this Family.

Setting our leadership infrastructure in place was a challenge successfully met. Now our attention must turn to bringing our three campuses into closer administrative, ministerial, and liturgical alignment. A particular challenge is achieving sensible unity of worship while still allowing for practices unique to each parish to flourish. Such sensitivity is a watchword of both the Leadership Team and the Pastoral Council. In all events, Father Steve empowers our various Directors to assume leadership in the areas for which they are responsible.

We must also attend to declining Mass attendance. Let us think together about our Family culture. How can we make people aware again of the intimacy with Christ assured by the Catholic Mass? How can we offer the embrace of community so often refused by the alienating society in which we live? How can we enlist ever more individuals in the everyday cause of the Gospel, so that we, too, as our ancestors did, might leave a legacy of discipleship for others to follow? These are the questions in need of answers. This is the work to be accomplished.

Insights

One of the most interesting insights to come forward so far in this process of unification has been the potential of becoming a "go-to" Family. Priests make choices about their preferred assignments, as do staff about their employment and families about their parish loyalties. Wouldn't it be grand if St. Gregory the Great was a place that priests, staff, and families longed to join? Despite all the upheavals and awkward rearrangements, this goal is within our grasp. We are financially sound. Our facilities are in good shape. We have active and committed leadership. Our schools are bursting with enrollments. Eucharistic piety and evangelization through service to others rightly figure at the center of our intentions. Come, then! Let us move forward with confidence and with all the strength that God can give us!

Our Family Purpose and Vision

Our Purpose: To be a Eucharist-centered Roman Catholic community dedicated to fostering discipleship by following Jesus through prayer, teaching, sacraments, and service.

Our Vision: To be life-long disciples responding to the mission that we are called for more.

PASTORAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Progress and Plans

Eucharist

Much has been done in the past year to ensure that the Mass is the source and summit of the whole Christian life. We hired a Director of Worship. A Family Worship Council is being assembled. Guardian Angels has an Associate Director of Worship; we are in the process of filling the same position at St. John Fisher. While numbers are ticking up, we want our churches filled. Have you invited a friend to encounter Christ with you at Mass?

Church

While we are keen to ensure that each campus retains its special traditions, the St. Gregory the Great Family is coming together. Our annual reception at Mount St. Mary's Seminary is a big hit. Our combined Masses, such as the Thanksgiving Day and Holy Thursday Masses, have been wonders of liturgical art. Some councils, including social action and health ministry, are already meeting jointly.

Leadership

We are blessed with step-forward, can-do leaders. We established a Leadership Team comprised of the business managers from each campus along with four St. Gregory the Great employees (Directors of Worship, Evangelization, Health, and Communication). We also have a unified Pastoral Council, which includes an equal number of members from each church, achieving a balanced representation throughout the Family. Both the Leadership Team and the Pastoral Council meet regularly to address issues related to Family unification. Both are pledged to parishioner accountability. We are also blessed to have 11 active and devoted deacons who are working with our priests, leadership team and the Pastoral Council to provide support, prayer, inspiration and service for all the workings of our Family, in particular in our various liturgical celebrations.

PASTORAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Progress and Plans (continued)

Stewardship

We define stewardship in terms of time, talent, and treasure. The Leadership Team assigned "time" and "talent" to our Associate Director for Adult Evangelization, who is already assembling a stewardship task force. "Treasure" will be the responsibility of our three campus business managers and their staff associates. Speaking of treasure, we have seen ups and downs. While money rolled in to support the stunningly beautiful renovations at Guardian Angels, across the Family, giving could be stronger.

Evangelization

We formed a six-person evangelization team to address three key stages of life: youth, young families with children, and adults. We are aligning all our ministries to the mission of discipleship formation. By naming evangelists as Associate Directors in both of our Family of Parish schools, we are intentionally trying to integrate the schools into the parish and its mission. Finally, the evangelization team is developing a comprehensive Family discipleship plan.

Love in Action

All three of our churches have strong traditions of providing resources to people, organizations, and communities outside our geographic boundaries. For generations of time, supporting people in need through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy has been a hallmark of the parishes in our Family. These efforts will continue with greater scope under energetic leadership. We appointed a Love in Action coordinator, who has formed a Love in Action team. The activities they superintend range from bereavement support to meal deliveries to our new Mental Wellness Ministry and more. Plans are in place to introduce unified health and social action councils next year while allowing unique ministries at each church to flourish.

Summary

There has been wonderful movement down the pathway toward unity. As we close out the second year of Beacons of Light, we ask you to prayerfully consider how you are called for more, as individuals, families and members of the St. Gregory the Great Family of Parishes. We will continue to build St. Gregory the Great through the foundational values of faith, family, generosity and joy and ask Christ to guide us every step of the way.



St. Gregory the Great Prayer

St. Gregory the Great, patron saint of teachers,
present our prayer of gratitude to our Heavenly Father.
Share our prayer of wisdom and guidance
as we continue on the path to unify our family of parishes.
Just as you led the faithful knowing
"the proof of love is in the works",
open our hearts to be dedicated disciples of Jesus
through prayer, teaching, sacraments and service.
May our works, inspired by Jesus,
guide us to unity within our family
and love within our community.
Teach us humility and compassion,
the cornerstones of generosity,
and the unwavering faith you demonstrated
through times of change,
so that we come together in unity,
rooted in Christ's love.
Amen