THE WAY AHEAD

Fr. Gary Zender
January 5, 2017

Abstract: The purpose of this document is to impart initial guidance and intent to our consultative bodies and to all as we embark on this next phase of growth for our parish. It serves as complement to the structural reorganization outlined in the published ‘Parish Leadership’ document.
Dear Friends of St. Louise,

For over two years my sincere hope as your pastor has been to embrace the good work of the past and build for a strong future here at Saint Louise. Many of you have been active participants in this process with the survey that you completed two years ago and others with the various gatherings for parish leadership to help me understand hopes and dreams for our future. This work has been at once exhilarating and challenging. We face questions as people of faith that our parents and grandparents could never have imagined.

Pope Francis reminded us again just recently that "the world is at war [and] we don't need to be afraid to say this." It is a "war of interests" and the "domination of peoples". And this is not a view restricted to us Christians, but to all people of good will. The world is increasingly worldly. We see it in our dialogs, in our nightly news, and in our polling and statistics. Something unsettling has risen to the surface - and with it a palpable sense of disorientation and danger. Yet, for all those times when you feel unsatisfied with this world, consider that it is because you were made for another.

From early in his pontificate, Pope Francis has promoted a view of the Church as a field hospital after battle - calling on it "to heal wounds and warm the hearts of the faithful." As it has for centuries: to call your eyes to the City of God and to urge you on.

It is not in the Christian nature to be idle. The world is ever on the move. So, for us, he who does not advance, retreats. We have witnessed in our own time many parishes that have disappeared. It is simply not enough to be comfortable or to maintain, nor was that ever our calling - for God created us without us; but he did not will to save us without us. We cannot shrink from the world, but rather always strive to move our parish away from a posture of maintenance and towards one of mission. And we can only do so together - united in Christ.

We, as members of the Church, have an amazing message to bring to the world. Saint John Paul II said at the beginning of his pontificate, "Do not be afraid!" And those simple words, spoken with conviction, eventually led to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe.

With all this in mind, I offer my initial considerations and guidance here as we embark on a new chapter in the story of Saint Louise Parish under the umbrella of a new organizational structure. Please join me in prayer for our parish and for all that call her home — in service to the Kingdom of God.

Sincerely in Christ,

† Fr. Gary Zender
Pastor, St. Louise Parish
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I. OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

Solidarity of Purpose

“The meaning of the parish is precisely this: a family in which one seeks, one recognizes, one realizes one’s vocation which the Lord has given to every human being. One could say that the parish is truly a parish when it helps each and every individual to discover and realize his Christian vocation.” - Saint John Paul II

Do you want to know what the purpose of the parish is? It’s you. Truly, it was built for you - you and everyone you will come in contact with in the course of your life. To understand that is to understand the meaning of your own Christianity. It is simple as it is difficult. We have but two purposes as Christians: to be Disciples and to be Missionaries. But as it has always been, it is a journey that will take a lifetime.

Christianity is not a religion of equilibrium. It has direction and objective. As sure as we mark our lives in years, we can mark our lives by our progress against a path that is simply this:

- to find God (“seek, and you will find " - Mt 7:7);
- to be in His midst (“where two or more are gathered" - Mt 18:20);
- to know Him (“whole armor of God” - Eph 6:10); and then,
- to follow after Him - by continuing the work of Jesus in our day so that all may come to know and love Him (cf. Mt 28:19).

Everything that we do as a parish is to help you take another step forward along this journey. Progress is ignited each time we can introduce another encounter with God – ministering the call to conversion in your life (letting God work in you) to the point that, by your own witness, you begin to ignite the same effect in others (letting God work through you). Hence is our stated mission to 'Ignite Faith and Witness God’s Love'.

Fundamentality

As we set out to renew our parish, we must first emphasize the fundamentals. We are re-building (in some physical cases literally) and so must first concern ourselves with the foundations upon which to build. Therefore, for every council and commission take this time now to:

- Prepare a clear charter for your purpose, organization, and essential tasks - to be approved and published for all the parish body to see
• Embrace the thoughtful study and measurement of your jurisdictions (building an expert consensus and even a library of referenceable materials from which to draw – especially for successful benchmarks that can be borrowed or imitated)

• Carefully inventory your existing assets and begin to discern any gaps relative to direction - speaking to any observable strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)

• With prudential judgement, begin to lay out an initial course of action that is conscious of enablers, considers wise consolidations or reorganizations, and best employs the compounding effects of clarity, unity of command, concentration of effort, economies of force, etc.

• **And then**, pledge your initial, modest commitments for review and approval

A briefing from each commission on the state of the above is the primary agenda item for the Leadership Meeting in March of 2017 (which is not to level an expectation that all will necessarily be fully accurate or complete by that time).

**Steady Pace**

It must be stated here and now that nothing we are aiming to achieve is driven under the duress of speed. The greatest price of failure in this initial stage of renewal may be to erode a confidence in our cause. Therefore, please endeavor with the sanction of simplicity and self-confidence at the expense of time in your planning – but execute against your commitments as though all our lives depend on it.

As confidence in this principle, imagine if any one of us were to mentor but two persons over the course of the next year into their fruition as pilgrim missionaries – enabling and causing them to join you by each mentoring two of their own in the next year, and so on. The membership of the Catholic Church would cap itself at the population of the planet (all 7.4 billion of us) in just 33 years. Imagine that.

**In Prayer**

And so let's go forward with one final, but most important, principle: In all our planning, please provide for the essential time and quiet to listen to God and to obtain an authenticity in what we do - with referenceable faithfulness to the magisterium of His Church. All we do must be done with the prayerful petition to God for His aid and that only His will be done.
II. WORSHIP COMMISSION

Among the many activities of a parish, “none is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Day.”
- Saint John Paul II

Essentials

If Saint Louise campus were to burn down today and purportedly ‘all were lost’, I can assure you that we would still gather in the burned out field next Sunday to celebrate the Mass and give thanks to God. Such is the central place of worship in our lives. It serves as the heart of our parish – pumping blood into everything else we do.

On the Forefront

Elevating the holiness within our parish community will require seizing every opportunity at every level to give an authentic teaching on prayer and a renewed, persuasive and effective catechesis i) on the importance of the Sunday and daily celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist, ii) on community and personal adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, iii) on the frequent and individual practice of the Sacrament of Penance, iv) on spiritual direction, v) on Marian devotion, vi) on the imitation of the Saints, as well as vii) on a renewed apostolic commitment to live the daily duties of the community and of individuals. In these ‘first things' we are called to be perfect (Mt 5:48); so, as we seek continuous improvement here, let no detail be too small for scrutiny.

Our short-term priorities in this area will include to:

1. Continuously improve up our Sunday Experience
2. Build up the prayer life in every parishioner
3. Reinforce the success of our Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP) program

Sunday Experience

The Mass is our first obligation to our parishioners. It is one they should expect us to uphold most seriously; and, practically speaking, well over 90% of our parishioner touch will be through these weekend religious services. They need to be as impressive and as impactful as we can make them – the pinnacle of our week and an all ‘hands on deck’ event for staff and other ministers. As part of the continuous study supporting this commission, I encourage you to visit many other worship spaces local and abroad. Assess every aspect as a potential benchmark and for its ability to spawn concepts that we may use to improve upon our own worship:

Facilities | Environment – must be assessed for both function (adequacy and comfort) as well as for beauty (to draw in our senses into a reflective state or to avoid intruding on the same).

Hospitality | Ministers – set the tone in reminding us right away that our first encounter with God at Mass is by coming in contact with one another. Our ministers, properly trained and attired, will lead that effort within our worship space. We will also continue to advance in our existing initiative to organize teams of greeters at each of the Masses. To help assure our objective that each and every person is
greeted and feels welcome, you must know that should you ever walk through our front door with any fewer than two people to bid you welcome that you are empowered to turn around and guarantee the misfortune ends with you. Ultimately, every parishioner is a deputy of the greeting ministry.

*Music / Hymns* – music exists to promote the mass and is governed by three basic criteria: to relate to God’s word and saving action, to lift the human heart towards God, and to unite the individual with the larger community.

*Messages / Homilies* – sensation will never be enough to achieve our ultimate objective to leave Mass feeling nourished and challenged. The dominant variant in the Sunday experience will be the homily (and this is borne out often as the number one factor in people seeking a new parish). Especially in light of a parish on the move, homilies will strive to shepherd movement and connect to current events and messages within the parish.

**Spirituality**

Spirituality is distinct from religion, but it is an increasingly prevalent error in us moderns to adopt some notion of being spiritual apart from religion. Whereas religion is the duty that we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it (quantitative), spirituality is the disposition of one’s heart towards conversion and a right relationship with God (qualitative). Of course, these are hand-in-hand.

To cease to grow in our spiritual lives is to become increasingly indifferent to God (including our indebtedness to Him). As vague as the definition of spirituality can sometimes be, however, there are time-honored practices and exercises (e.g., St. Ignatius, et al) which can assuredly improve upon it. For example:

- Truly participate in the holy sacrifice of the Mass
- Sit at the feet of Christ through the scriptures
- Build up a prayer life
- Take advantage of confession
- Love our Blessed Mother
- Learn from all the holy men and women who came before us
- Improve our relationships with others

As we launch into this initial period of renewal, I want to strongly emphasize prayer - for *lex orandi, lex credendi* (“the law of praying is the law of believing”). Firstly, we must endeavor to impart its virtues and benefits (to make it a worthy pursuit in hearts and minds). Secondly, openly state a challenging but achievable goal for 20 minutes of prayer each day (the length of a single rosary). Thirdly (and here is where the real work begins), continuously instruct and motivate ourselves toward success.

There are many parallels to spiritual fitness and physical fitness. Asking someone to go from no prayer life to 20 minutes a day is not unlike asking someone to go from couch to marathon. But like training for a marathon, can we lay out programs and personal habits to crawl, walk, run our way to success over the long-term? Can some of us begin from nothing to perhaps grace before meals or to utilize some other mnemonic devices? Can we model or inspire ourselves from the lives of the saints? Let's figure it out.
Our master program in spirituality was the very first initiative in our parish renewal – the Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP) program which kicked off in 2016. Its initial results have been encouraging; and, it will remain as our capstone initiative for spirituality. We need to be sure that this program penetrates the hearts of our parish body beyond our usual early adopters and first responders. One of our primary measures of success here will be the take rate for our membership over the next three years.

**With an Eye to the Future**

Over time we would hope to build up a greater continuity and rhythm between Mass and everything else that is going on within the parish (they are, after all, wholly related). We will make ourselves conscious of a form of lesson plan from week to week so that the weekend Mass may never feel like 52 individual events - but one journey in many parts.

An increased level of spirituality should manifest a noticeable hunger – for reconciliation, but also an appetite to encounter Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in all its forms in and outside of Mass.

Sadly, it is too often that we often see only the obligation of Sunday. Yes, Christians observe Sunday as the third commandment – but, for that commandment in particular, there is more to see. If successful in our endeavors, we will have no less an obligation, but we will find a greater sense of the Sunday that is revealed in Deuteronomy (5:15) – of Sunday as a gift, a celebration of our freedom from slavery, and "a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money". Let more of us find Sunday as a day of refreshment and an opportunity to steady our feet as we head into the week ahead. As we do, more will build the healthy habit of joining us.
III. COMMUNITY LIFE COMMISSION

“The Catholic Church is like a thick steak, a glass of red wine, and a good cigar.” – G.K. Chesterton

Essentials

It is one of the great paradoxes in running a successful parish that it must feel intimate and safe in order to be large and thriving. That we have built an identity as a kind and welcoming parish with a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and interests is a commendable advantage. Yet we must never forget that “love is something more stern and splendid than mere kindness,” and consequently always feel challenged to build up the level personal and family support that we lend and receive as being a member of this parish community.

Our short-term priorities in this area will include to:

1. Ensure parishioners (old and new) can easily be and feel connected
2. Clearly establish stewardship expectations and campaigns
3. Lay groundwork for more and better fellowship opportunities

On the Forefront

Community

In general, the level of commitment we seek here requires personal connection by way of access to a multitude of smaller communities that together comprise our One Body. So, in this area, I would ask that we begin to look after our range of smaller communities and events in a more comprehensive and purposeful manner (including the active marketing of such to ensure the parish is well aware of all available opportunities). There may be low hanging fruit in the form of affiliations and local happenings which reside outside of our parish alone that we are not currently exploiting. We must also remember to celebrate our wins – or otherwise update the parish on the results of an initiative or event (not only to announce their upcoming dates). Few things build team like success.

But more specifically, I would like to call a few items to the forefront in the short-term:

1. I have opened a new staff position: a Pastoral Assistant for Community Life whose role it will be to head the staff-led components of building up our community and stewardship. Among other things, this person will work at ways to strengthen our connections and to better coordinate the use of our many and varied talents.

2. I want to see the Welcoming Committee re-formed immediately. Not only do we live in an area that is high with family re-locations, but is our duty to be expertly ready to receive an inquiring guest (whether they are merely curious, or fallen away Catholics looking to come home). We need to make it especially inviting, easy, and secure for anyone new to find their way into our midst. This team will consider our ability to do that in every aspect.
3. We should begin to understand to what degree technology can serve us in this expansive undertaking. Can we find better use of Parish Data Systems and any other CRM or data management technology? Have we considered the possibility of scheduling tools for meetings/events (some of which include RSVP and payment processing)? Small group membership management and messaging? Beginning to understand, however, is different than the pursuit of – which is most certainly to be more appropriate in the longer term planning.

4. As a special subset of the above, and in joint effort with the Communications Committee, I would like us to now establish a regular, formal appraisal of our means of communication. These periodic reviews should be conducted no less than semi-annually and evaluate the awareness, ease, and ultimately the adoption against the inventory of ways in which we reach our parish membership (i.e., home mailings, electronic messaging, bulletin, website, et al.). These assessments are vital to inform decisions related to affecting improvements.

5. Consider the concept of an Events Committee. Our parish body includes persons with experience or a skill in event planning, hospitality, catering, vendor management, etc. Would our community life benefit from a standing group that could advocate the standards for exceptional meeting spaces and events? This team might provide sound guidance with regard to:

- Quality of campus or local venues (including capacity, configurations,
- Scheduling and payment processing
- Investments in A/V equipment, tables/chairs, beautification, etc.

Stewardship
Whereas the near entirety of this document is dedicated to honoring the expectations that our parishioners should have of their parish, let us also be clear on what expectations the parish has in kind on its parishioners (a fair model for which can be found in the book Divine Renovation by Fr. James Mallon). I look to the Stewardship committee to best ensure that this is well communicated – so that each member of our parish knows to:

1. Stand up and be counted by keeping registration and contact preferences up to date and to thoughtfully engage in providing feedback on our pursuits
2. Be present in Mass and in opportunities to connect and work with others
3. Invest in yourself and the entire parish through a common understanding of the following components:

- Time: a commitment to prayer and study/discipleship (including prayer intentions for the parish)
- Talent: a commitment to work in the service of others
- Treasure: a commitment to place a portion of one’s livelihood in the service of others

With regard to financial giving, the annual calendar should be well coordinated and properly promoted. Each family should be asked to prayerfully consider how best to approach the four major areas dependent on their sponsorship each year:
1. **Operational Funding** – to support the day-to-day ministries of the parish
2. **Capital Funding** (aka the 'Building Fund') – to invest in our parish campus
3. **Annual Catholic Appeal** – to support the greater Church in Western Washington
4. **Annual School Giving Campaign and/or School Auction** – the major source of donations in support of our largest parish ministry

**Pastoral Care**
The proper pastoral care of our families being essential, I would ask that we do a thorough appraisal of ourselves here which includes whatever points of parishioner feedback can be correctly ascertained. Does the menu of services available satisfy parish needs? Are services easy to access and execute? Where can a renewed staff / lay leadership partnership improve upon our existing work?

**With an Eye to the Future**
In many ways, it is difficult to be prescriptive for anything in the long-term here because Community Life is always a reflection of our parish body. The key to this ministry is to be in tune with parishioners and seek out opportunities.

We must, however, always keep an eye for any technologies which may lessen the overhead burden of such a managerial driven task. Upon real success in rebuilding the Welcoming Committee, I would think to consider other ways to leverage this important asset beyond new parishioners (e.g., capital campaigning, reaching out to alienated Catholics, etc.).

Regardless of whether or not we pursue the concept of an Events Committee, I believe there may be a place for an annual capstone event (similar in magnitude to the annual school auction) where we could celebrate our good works, showcase new plans, and perhaps include a keynote speaker.
IV. EVANGELIZATION COMMISSION

"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance, the only thing it cannot be is moderately important." – C.S. Lewis

Essentials

"Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15) has been the motto for Christian apologetics for nearly 2,000 years. Yet, in the few decades since the Second Vatican Council it feels much more like salt in a wound – a painful reminder of all we have failed to do in modern times. It feels as though the world has gotten away from us. So bad are some of the statistics for the Catholic Church in America that one is hard pressed to even say we are giving a good fight against the torrent of ignorance, error, and deceit that is so pervasive in this 'Information Age'.

A personal threshold which began to waiver enough in the 1960s so as to incite a steady reduction in the number of people willing to commit an entire life in the service of God is now so low that we are increasingly unwilling to devote even an hour a week. Is it any wonder that the fastest growing religious sect in America today is the 'nones'? For every one person coming into the Church, nearly six are falling away.

Now most of us already have a sense of this - even if unable to put a fine point to it. According to our latest survey, Saint Louise parishioners rate the parish low in feeling called to discipleship and themselves even lower in being disciples. And when asked to identify the top 3 priorities for the future, evangelization-related programs dominated (which is cause for hope):

- High quality sacramental preparation and religious education (54%)
- Opportunities for adult faith formation (43%)
- Programs for teens (40%)
- Reaching out to alienated Catholics (36%)

As for most American parishes, here stands one of our greatest opportunities. The call for a 'New Evangelization' within the Church is as old as Saint John Paul II - and it is high time was sounded here.

Our short-term priorities in this area will include to:

1. Reinforce success in our youth programs
2. Inventory and assemble all existing and possible evangelical assets
3. Streamline and add transparency to our Outreach activities

On the Forefront

Discipleship

We must do more to raise the call to discipleship throughout the parish. Owing to current position, we must take even more time to carefully assess and plan here than in some other areas. Where we can leverage existing and/or outside assets, we should do so foremost. Certainly a mix of more active and passive means seems appropriate –
allowing us to concentrate our efforts. I propose the following to help lead the discussion:

**Youth Programs (Active)** – With our firm commitment to the family, our highly regarded parish school, and the good work continued by Annarose and team with our long-standing parish youth programs, Youth Discipleship is a natural point to make a counter-attack. Correspondingly, I have opened a new staff position: a Pastoral Assistant for Youth Ministry reporting to Annarose and whose role it will be to assist in the added effectiveness of our youth programs. Collaboration between school and youth programs is expected in studying and solving for a lasting faith in our young people. So too is the expectation that we can do better to provide support to despairing parents of fallen-away children (e.g., helpthemreturn.com). The apologetic lessons and best practices developed here can easily lend themselves to the benefit of RCIA, adult formation, and other catechetical efforts to come.

**Worship Support (Active)** – Given the strategic imperative in worship, evangelization has the opportunity to assist in increasing our consciousness and appreciation for same. Consider this: if surveys are to be believed, upwards of 50% of American Catholics declare themselves unaware of Church teaching on the Real Presence! We cannot learn a thing in second grade and never talk about again. Can we find ways to reacquaint those in need with what they are truly encountering while at Mass (e.g., Four Encounters by Tom Curran)?

**The Case for a Creator (Active)** – At Easter service last year I left you all with one of life’s great questions: Why do you believe? Let us not be so naïve to think that the veracity of our answers does not play a role in the poor trends for faithfulness that we are currently observing. All of us are Christians for a reason; and, we need to buttress our reasoning as antidote to a culture that is increasingly militant against us.

That effort should begin at the source - with helping to build a confidence in your case for a Creator. And from that firm resolve will quickly flow the rich, central teachings supporting the sanctity of life (its natural rights and obligations) and the dignity of the human person (which informs all the balance of Catholic Social Teaching). It should never be enough for us to simply teach a thing without also imparting the confidence hard-earned through two millennia of defense.

**Personal Discovery (Passive)** – For all the rest, we may have to resolve to more indirect methods for the time being. In time, we should be able to assemble resources that can assist individual discovery and study, including:

- Online and offline resources which we can recommend or promote
- Evaluating outside programs that can be adopted and/or personalized for the benefit of our parish (e.g., Lighthouse Catholic Media, Formed.com, et al.)

**Building a Cadre** – Being successful in as little as what has been set forth above may require us to slowly assemble a cadre of “engaged, articulate and well-formed Catholic laity endowed with a strong critical sense vis-à-vis the dominant culture” who are willing to work at a vocation in intellectual charity. We will make progress in this area in any event, but what can be done by when is almost solely dependent on who is ready, willing, and able to pick up this new work – which is very much to be determined.
Outreach
With all Outreach activities coming under a new, single Outreach Committee, it is my hope to achieve a renewed level of concerted effort in this area. This area should work to publish a recurring update for the parish body (no less than semi-annually). This is not only to increase the level of transparency in terms of sources and uses of our gifts, but to highlight the returns achieved through those investments wherever possible so that parishioners can share in the effect of their charity in the world.

Along similar lines, our mix of causes should emphasize those for which we are willing to tackle on all three fronts of time, talent, and treasure – as well as those which make themselves most visible to the parish body (e.g., the giving tree). This will always make the total good greater than the sum of the parts. Least desirable (even if sometimes necessary) is for us to merely transfer pools of wealth as would a NGO. At the heart of Christian charity is human connection.

We must also redouble our commitment to the New Bethlehem project – not only as a worthy, local cause but to demonstrate what a worthy partner is to be had in Saint Louise Parish (with deference to Holy Family of Kirkland and Catholic Charities who are leading that effort).

With an Eye to the Future
There is so much that can be done in this area that really the sky is the limit. We must challenge ourselves to be better ambassadors of Truth in the world (beginning with our own parish community). We must work with an expectation that all we do is firmly supported via reference to Holy Scripture, The Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (the former being a couple of the greatest books seldom read).

Based on our progress in this area and financial means, I will look to open a new position for a Director of Evangelization whose role it will be to take us to the next level. Until that point, we must focus on putting the building blocks in place and creating an atmosphere that opens up greater dialogue on evangelization related topics.

If even a small cadre were to come to fruition within the parish, we might be able to utilize their individual subject matter expertise to present topics in a wide variety of venues to improve upon our existing catechesis. We might even be in a position at some point to consider adopting an evangelical program such as ‘Alpha’.
V. SCHOOL COMMISSION

“Catholic education aims not only to communicate facts but also to transmit a coherent, comprehensive vision of life, in the conviction that the truths contained in that vision liberate students in the most profound meaning of human freedom.” – Saint John Paul II

Essentials

Saint Louise School is by far the largest ministry within Saint Louise Parish – and rightly so. The primary purpose of our school is to assist families in the formation of their children as faith-filled people while providing a quality education. In doing this, we celebrate the whole child (recognizing that each person has a unique role in building the Kingdom of God) and strive to form a community in which the presence of God is deeply experienced and modeled by Jesus. In many ways our school represents our commitment to the Christian family and is one of our very best investments in the future of the Catholic faith in America.

On the Forefront

Education

Our school has done commendably well in establishing itself as a center for academic excellence. In no way must that be diminished. We have to ensure, however, that its value is widely understood and manifest in our enrollments. But the future will need young adults strong in character as well as smarts.

The greatest challenge to Catholic education in the United States today is to restore to that culture the conviction that human beings can grasp the truth of things, and in grasping that truth can know their duties to God, to themselves and their neighbors. So, I will mention again here the challenge I outlined in Evangelization: losing a conviction in truth to the dominant culture. For all concerned here, in youth ministry, and elsewhere, I expect concerted study and collaborative action with regard to this matter.

Community

Whatever our solutions for our youth may be, we know that merely transmitting knowledge about the faith, though essential, is not sufficient. If students are to gain a genuine experience of the Church, the example of teachers, parents, and others responsible for their formation is crucial: the witness of adults in the school community is a vital part of the school's identity.

Given its unique focus on the business of education, it is sometimes supposed to think of the school as set aside from the Church. This is a grave misrepresentation. The parish school and families are an integral part (if not centerpiece) to our parish community - not a stand-alone business that has setup shop on the north end of campus. All must find and know a stewardship for school and church ministries alike for the parish to truly thrive.

With an Eye to the Future

I view our school as one of the great opportunities to leverage our past success for the future. For much of what we can become, I hope to see our staff, teachers, students, and parents here leading the way from the firm ground they have already secured for us.
VI. PASTORAL COUNCIL

“The national anthem of Hell is 'I did it my way.'” - Peter Kreeft

Essentials

It is indispensable as a large parish to have an entity committed to the command and control of our wide-ranging strategic initiatives. With its oversight of the parish commissions, the Pastoral Council is the chief means by which the parish further develops and lives out its mission as one cohesive body. It plays a central role in promoting communication and understanding among the parish organizations and will control the tone and tempo of our ambitions.

First Steps

This ‘new’ Pastoral Council must quickly establish the mechanisms by which the commissions will be held accountable (starting with all that is contained herein in accordance with our Parish Leadership constructs).

Project Portfolio Management

We should work towards a published status for our key efforts that can be easily distributed and updated. A good portion of the monthly meetings for the council will be committed to adding/dropping initiatives for tracking as well as updating current initiatives. Some simple but key elements to this summary might include:

- The owner and date project was initiated
- Its current stage of development (e.g., Concept, Design, Stage, Launch, Terminate)
- Its current delivery status relative to expectations (e.g., green, yellow, red)

The council must also agree on what standards govern that which is key from that which is ordinary - as well as what gates are required for a commission to advance an initiative from stage to stage (e.g., artifacts and/or approvals).

Communication

Communication between commissions will be concurrently improved with commission officers (i.e., decision-makers) as council members. Nonetheless, opportunities to improve collaboration will be emphasized and enforced, in part, through the CDI (Consult-Decide-Inform) model of communication. The council will also be instrumental in determining how to keep the wider parish appraised and best solicited for its participation.

Ideally, Pastoral Council meetings will become a model for holding effective and efficient meetings. Given the potential scope of topics, in most cases no one subject can overly dominate. Further details and deliberations will often be assigned for follow-up by the subject matter experts within the commissions or elsewhere. Those in attendance should leave these monthly meetings with a good sense of how the parish is performing and where their specific activities fit within the bigger picture.