



The Basilica of the Immaculate Conception Pastoral Plan 2021-2024

“Communion gives rise to mission, and mission is accomplished in communion”

(Christifidelis Laici, 32)



Dear Parishioners,

A brief overview...

As you know, I became the pastor in July 2017. In the two years prior to my assignment as Pastor of the Basilica Parish Community, Fr. Ed, staff and parish leaders had engaged the parishioners with a survey and had also engaged 3 companies to present plans for the renovation / restoration of the Church. During my first year, it was decided that there were several things that needed to be done before embarking on a major capital campaign and that since an analysis of the first survey and subsequent parish plan had not yet been accomplished, another survey would be of benefit. It was clear from those discussions that in order to sustain vitality and to grow, our parish needed a plan to set a direction for current and future leadership. At my request, the Parish Council committed to the creation and implementation of a three-year Parish Plan to be shared with the parish during the 2019-2020 liturgical year. Unfortunately, the pandemic greatly interfered with the process and delayed our work.

*Thankfully, through the hard work and perseverance of the members of the council, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and use of best practices for success, they have been able to complete their work and bring forward to the parish community, the fruit of their labor and prayers. The goal of this plan is to focus our parish's efforts to excel in important areas so that we can more fully live out our mission of bringing the good news of Jesus to the world in ways old and new, aided by an ever deeper understanding of what it means to live 'communion and mission'; to Know, Love and Serve God. Therefore, our parish plan will focus on the areas of **WORSHIP, CATECHESIS AND COMMUNITY**, and through the focused efforts that flow from this plan, may the anointing of the Holy Spirit continue to drive us forward!*

All of you, parishioners and friends of the Basilica, are invited to study this plan and pray to learn how God wants you to be a part of this important work for your own personal discipleship and for the benefit of your parish family and local community to whom we are called to serve and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Join the movement that intentionally fosters a sense of greater community among all parishioners, improved engagement and increased participation in parish activities.

In thanksgiving...

While we are excited to look to the future, we do not want to lose sight of the vitality of the parish community up until now. Looking back, even to the earliest days of the community, we are thankful to God for the fruits of their faith enlivened labors and the graces which have flowed from Gods loving care throughout these past 175 years since our establishment as a mission in 1845. We are grateful to all of them as well as Fathers Murphy and Leon who, aided by Priests in residence & Deacons in ministry, Hispanic Ministry Priests and Retired Priests, as well as parishioners and 'friends of the Basilica', continued the work and ministry. Most importantly there has always been and there is still, a stable core of parishioners and 'friends' who have shared their gifts and ensured the continued presence of the Catholic faithful in the heart of Jacksonville.

The faithful who continue to find their spiritual home here, have in various ways formed communities amongst themselves. Parishioners and 'Friends' who worship and share fellowship through bonds of language, Tradition and the unchanging Truths of the faith. Inspired by that faith, supported in community and acting for love of the Church, they have not only cared for each other and their neighbors but also for the physical needs of the Church. They clothed and fed the poor, welcomed the stranger, and have provided for the physical and temporal needs of the structures. Encouraged and consoled by the blessings of both the recent and distant past, we now look to the future and the ways in which God desires us to continue the salvific mission of Christ and the work of our forebears.

Developing a plan...

I think everyone would benefit from a little ‘insight’ into the process that has taken place in order to develop a plan that will strengthen the parish in foundational ways. In 2017 the first steps that were recognized as foundationally important, were for the staff and I to identify and prioritize the physical needs of the Church and Rectory structures. Although much work had been done, the presentations for restoration / renovation had identified many issues that remained. As well, as you know there were numerous new and immediate ‘physical plant’ issues that arose and some of those required immediate attention.

At the same time, there was a need to re-establish both the Parish Council and Finance Council according to diocesan policies for parish governance, strengthen the Stewardship Committee and create a Liturgy Council. Among the first tasks of the Parish Council was to create the 2nd parishioner survey and to analyze the results. They then considered the results of the 1st survey as well as comments / concerns / affirmations / complaints received verbally and in writing. Their careful ‘listening’ to parishioners allowed for an analysis which enabled them to create an overall assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the parish community. They then set upon dual priorities of reassessing readiness for a capital campaign as well as creation of a 3-year parish plan. Using the Diocesan 5 year plan as a blueprint and informed by the work of other parishes in the development of their plans, they began to formulate our plan and envision the future of our parish. As the parish council engaged in their primary tasks, the staff and I in concert and consultation with members of the parish, the parish and finance councils, were able to work on some of the issues and affirmations which were raised in the first survey.

Implementing the plan...

The next step will be to implement the plan. Members of the parish council have identified several ‘implementation teams’ and will be inviting parishioners to join these teams. It is these teams who will organize the parish efforts to achieve the goals of the parish plan. As you read the plan you will notice that the goals do not explain how they are to be achieved - that is the work of teams . As we move forward, the council members will be inviting other parishioners to join in part of the process of implementation in their specific area of focus. Each of these teams will then take time to understand the goals for each priority. Then, each Team will determine the necessary Strategies and Action Steps to achieve the Goals. Finally, the teams will invite more parishioners to become engaged and involved.

If we are to be able to move forward and realize our common goals, we will need to pray, to be guided by the Holy Spirit, to expect an outpouring of grace... but no amount of grace, prayer and Holy Spirit action will achieve our goals without your active involvement. We ask that you begin now to prayerfully consider how you will participate.

So, I repeat this call to all parishioners and friends of the Basilica, you are invited to study this plan and pray to learn how God wants you to be a part of this important work for your own personal discipleship and for the benefit of your parish family and local community to whom we are called to serve and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Join the movement that intentionally fosters a sense of greater community among all parishioners, improved engagement and increased participation in parish activities...

Conclusion:

It's a great joy to be able to embark on this new and exciting chapter in the life of our parish. To be able to use as our guide this plan which identifies the vision for where we want to go. It will be for us a roadmap to guide us in administrative and pastoral decisions...

I offer my profound thanks to those whose time and talent brought this plan to fruition as well as those who provided assistance in the writing, editing and production of this plan. It is the fruit of prayer, of dreaming with God's vision for our parish, and of determining attainable goals that will help us to grow.

Now that we have defined the direction, we would like our parish to take... how will you get us there?

Sincerely,

Father Blair



OUR VISION

The Basilica of the Immaculate Conception is a sacred place of worship. Here, upon the Altar, heaven meets earth during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Ever aware of this, it is our mission to ensure and sustain an environment where reverent liturgy, sacred music, beautiful art, and constant prayer quiets the noise of the outside world and connects us to the Divine so that we may give Him due praise and thanksgiving.





Worship



Catechesis



Community

COMPELLING STRATEGIES

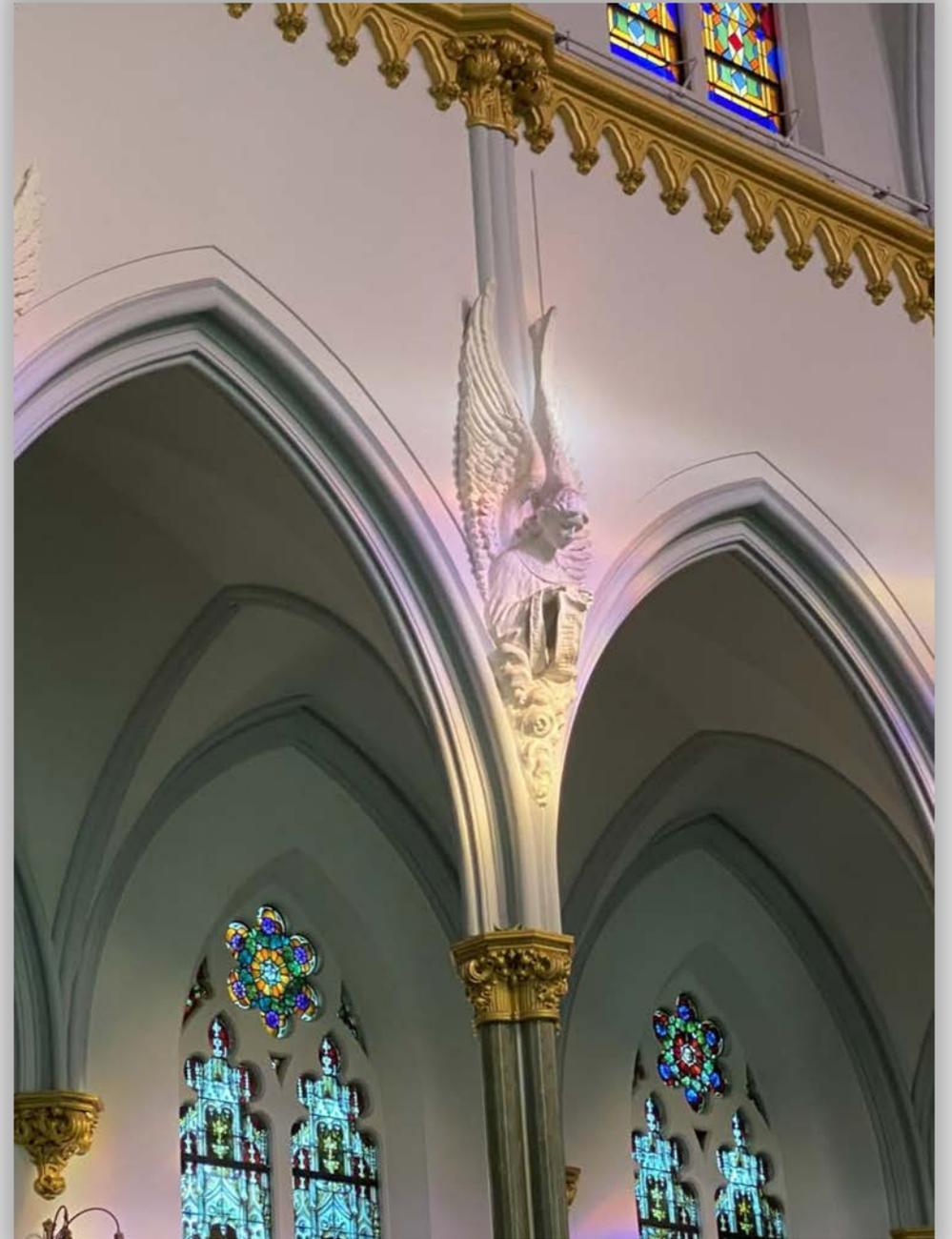
Three-Year Parish Plan

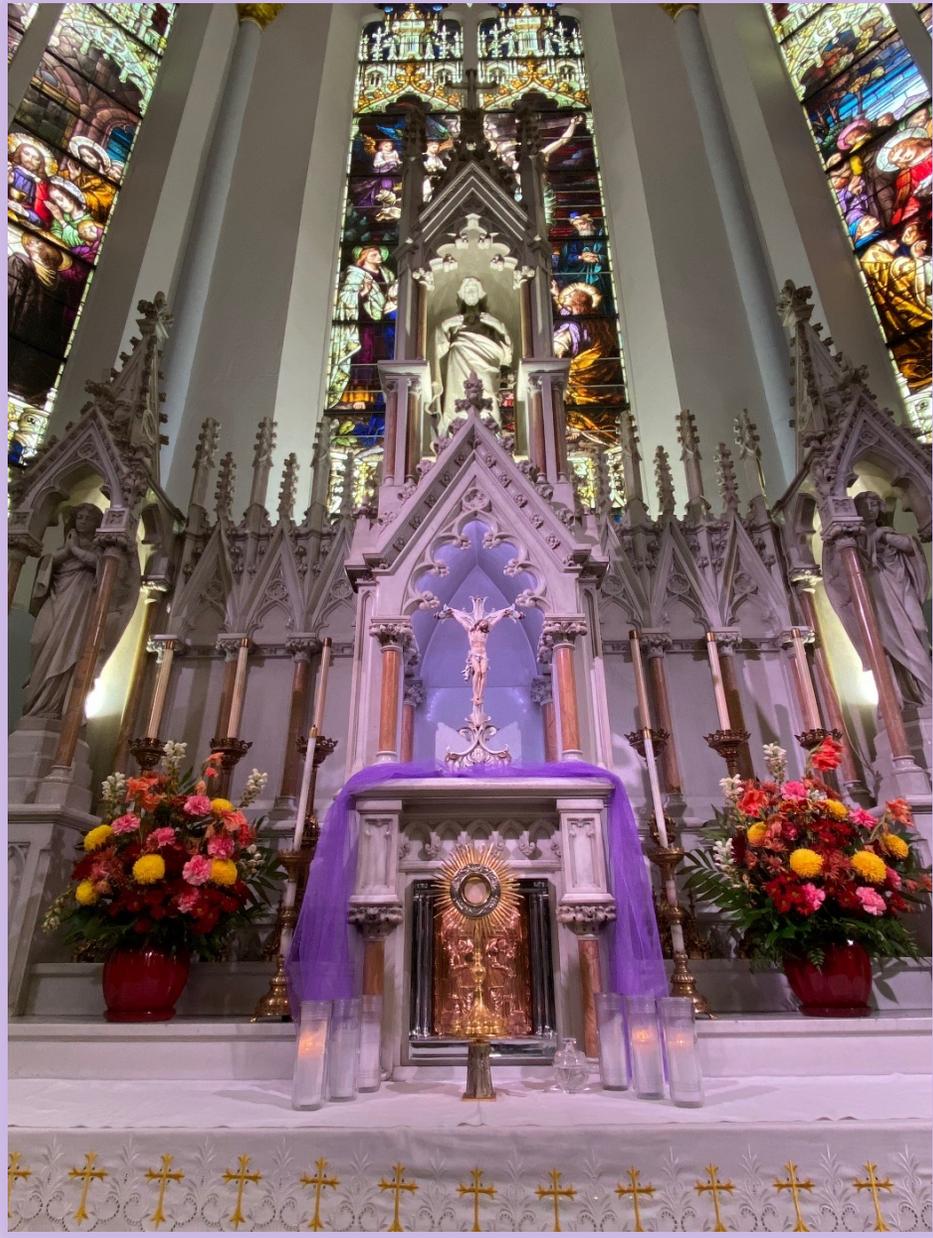
Worship

The Act of Contrition reminds us that “God is all good and deserving of all our love.” One of the most important ways that we can love God is through reverent worship in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

We come to worship God at Mass, and Jesus comes to us through the Eucharist. Our relationship with the Immaculate Mother of God gains us full recourse to the special graces she obtains for us which protect and perpetually lead us to Her Divine Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

In addition to the Mass, we have rich traditions and devotional forms of prayer. We seek to foster a love for worship and prayer in the people of the parish so as to illuminate and stir up faith which stokes the fire of the Holy Spirit in each person; through this we become increasingly open to receive and be filled with the fullness of God’s infinite grace and mercy.





Worship

Priority: To know, love and serve God through reverent worship and traditional devotionals.

Actions:

- ✓ The celebrations of the liturgical year are to be prepared and carried out with great care, especially the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter; therefore, we are to develop the means & resources to ensure increasing and consistent excellence of liturgical celebrations.
- ✓ Celebrate “special” Masses within the Basilica:
 - To make clear the particular bond of communion by which the minor basilica is united with the Roman cathedra of Peter, every year there must be celebrated with particular care, the Feasts of Chair of Peter, Saints Peter & Paul Apostles & the anniversary of the Supreme Pontiff's election or inauguration into the supreme ministry.
 - Other Masses might include Extraordinary Form High Mass, Masses for Veterans, First Responders, Young Peoples Mass etc.
- ✓ Continue to offer daily Confession and Mass (2-3 /day, 7 days/wk)



Worship

Priority: To know, love and serve God through reverent worship and traditional devotionals.

Actions Continued:

- ✓ Construct an Adoration Chapel in the former bookstore space and establish guidelines for parishioner access and attendance by 12/31/21

- ✓ The active participation of the faithful is to be promoted both in the Eucharistic celebration and in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, especially at Morning and Evening Prayer.

- ✓ Approved forms of devotion are to be suitably fostered:
 - Daily Rosary to be elevated to a ministry within 1 year
 - Consecration to Jesus through Mary (Annually Ending on Namesake Feast)
 - Divine Mercy, Sacred Heart of Jesus
 - First Friday, First Saturday
 - Other devotional / novena prayers



Catechesis

All generations are called to evangelize.

"Jesus commanded his apostles to go and make disciples of all nations."

(MT 28: 19-20)

In the spirit of the above command, St. Thomas Aquinas has rightly observed that we cannot give what we do not have. Thus, in order to bring Christ's light to the world, we need a well-formed and educated 'Body of Christ'.

Proper catechesis builds a strong foundation for Faith. It is a life-long process of initial conversion, formation, education, and on-going conversion. Through word, worship, service and community, it seeks to lead all God's people to an ever-deepening relationship with God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. In this we become firmly rooted in 'the way, the truth, and the life' of God, and we become empowered to share the good news with others as Christ commanded.

Catechesis

Priority: Provide programs that establish initial faith foundation and build on it throughout a lifetime.

Actions:

- ✓ The word of God is to be diligently proclaimed either in homilies or in special sermons.
- ✓ Establish groups concerned with liturgical activity, by special courses of instruction given in a series of conferences, and by other programs of this kind.
- ✓ Provide Conferences that promote the study and popularization of documents coming from the Supreme Pontiff and the Holy See, especially those pertaining to the sacred liturgy.
- ✓ Create Catechism Ministry (Expert and Outreach) by 3/31/21



Catechesis

Priority: Provide programs that establish initial faith foundation and build on it throughout a lifetime.

Actions Continued:

- ✓ Conduct Retreats or Missions at the parish (Seasonally)
- ✓ Encourage regular reading of the Scriptures by continuing to conduct Bible Study groups (re-start in 2021).
- ✓ Conduct talks about the rich history / traditions of the Church ~ Rosary, Eucharistic Adoration, Early Church Fathers, Liturgy, Magisterial Documents by 4/1/21.





Community

We must welcome others through our hospitality and encourage and inspire each other on our faith journey.

In response to Jesus' command, our parish community shares the Gospel message throughout its territory and greater Jacksonville.

By forming a strong community of joyful Catholics, the parish supports the Family as 'Domestic Church' and encourages participation in the universal mission of the Church to save souls.

Through active 'Love of God' & 'Love of Neighbor', we continually build and deepen our relationship with God and others.





Community

Objective: Establish a Catholic culture of hospitality and reverence.

Actions:

- ✓ Grow the Usher and Greeters Ministry to ensure personal connections are established with parishioners and visitors 2021.
 - Formalize and revitalize the Usher Ministry (Decorum, reverence, security, honor, distinguished).
 - Offer education to upgrade knowledge of the rich 175-year parish history.
- ✓ Establish a Volunteer Pool for parishioners to commit to assisting at least once/yr at special parish events or when there is a special need for resources. (First Half 2021).
 - ✓ Serve the poor, marginalized, forgotten, and all others in need through spiritual and corporal works of mercy.
 - Conduct Parishioner outreach training & awareness (2021).
 - Resume community outreach events (eg: grill-out, clothing drives, baby supply drive, etc...2021).



Community

Objective: Establish a Catholic culture of hospitality and reverence.

Actions Continued:

- ✓ Address ways to foster “one community” among the three unique constituencies at the Basilica: Latin Mass, Spanish, Novis Ordo (form action team in early 2021 to develop approach).
- ✓ Coordinate community building outside the Church such as zip code potluck dinners.
- ✓ Evaluate conducting Christ Renews His Parish program by 2022.
- ✓ Continue to engage in Cathedral District activities as area develops (Ongoing).
- ✓ Provide Mass schedule info to hotels, and sporting/cultural event hosts that bring visitors downtown (as needed/ongoing).

Addendum

There are three significant initiatives which have been identified and discussed but not formalized :

- ✓ Parish Restoration /Renovation Project
- ✓ Repurpose of former Catholic Charities Facility/Parish School Project
- ✓ Organ Project

If prioritized, they could impact overall plan.

