

Next Generation Parish Plan 2020



Saint James the Lesser Catholic Church - Corinth, Mississippi

Corinth, Mississippi had meager Catholic history prior to the Civil War, having only an occasional visit from Memphis priests. On April 6 and 7, 1862 the battle of Shiloh raged and became a crushing defeat to the Confederacy and a costly battle on both sides. The combined casualties totaled 24,000. Nine temporary Confederate hospitals were set up in and near Corinth. Bishop Henry Elder of Natchez and Bishop John Quinlan of Mobile, Alabama hurried to the town, as did several diocesan priests. However, the greatest contribution of the Catholic Church to Corinth was made by the Sisters of Charity who served as nurses.

By the war's end, Corinth was once again served sporadically by overworked priests from Holly Springs and Aberdeen until Father Mouton became pastor. He began construction on a small 65' by 30' church, most likely salvaged from Luka's first church which had been damaged beyond repair in a storm. It was dedicated to St. John the Baptist on April 24, 1874. The congregation was never more than 35 strong. In 1887, Fr. Mouton was sent to Yazoo City. Fr. Auguste Althoff of Holly Springs then served the Corinth congregation. Times were hard for the little church, and when the building deteriorated beyond repair, it was sold by Bishop Heslin at public auction for \$10.45.

In 1919 Corinth became a mission of St. James Parish in Tupelo. Fr. Reitmeier, OSB was the pastor. Mass was celebrated in parishioners' homes and, for a time, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

After WWII Corinth began to develop as an industrial center, and Catholics were among the transplants attracted to the town. The congregation grew. On June 19, 1949, a mission church named St. James the Less was dedicated by Bishop Richard Gerow and Archbishop William O'Brien. Between 1949 and 1956, St. James was ministered to primarily from the seminary at Cullman, AL. Father Brice Joyce, OSB, became the first resident pastor in 1956 and St. James was then declared a full parish.

From 1960 to 1965 Father Charles Reiner, OSB, was the pastor. Fr. Reiner established the first religious education (CCD) classes, and nuns came to Corinth to teach the classes. A diocesan priest, Father Patrick Tierney, served the parish as pastor from 1965 until 1967. Then with the pastorate of Father Kenneth Stoll, SCJ, the relationship between Corinth and the Priests of the Sacred Heart (SCJ) began. Father Tom Lind, SCJ served as pastor from 1980 to 1989. His unique parish was made up almost entirely of transplanted middle-management people connected to Corinth's numerous industries. The steady growth of St. James the Less necessitated a larger church. The new church, at its current location, was dedicated on June 21, 1987. Father John Young arrived in Corinth and served as pastor from 1989 to 1993. Father Tom Burns served as pastor from 1993 to 2009.

As the number of Spanish speaking parishioners grew, a bilingual priest, Father Richard Smith, arrived and served from 2009 until 2013. From 2013 until 2015 the parish was without a priest. Linda Gunther served faithfully as Lay Ecclesial Minister during this period. The current priest is Father Mario Solórzano, who arrived in 2015. In addition to his responsibilities in Corinth, Father Solórzano serves (or has served) St. Mary Mission in Luka, St. Francis of Assisi in Booneville and Lady of Guadalupe Mission in Belmont.

St. James The Less in Corinth today, under the leadership of Father Solórzano, is a thriving, diverse parish. Bilingual, English and Spanish Mass and Faith Formation are offered to best serve the very unique makeup of parishioners.

July 4, 2020

Dear St. James Parishioners,

Did you know that we could be considered the 5th generation of our parish? The parish as we know it formed in 1919 as a mission of St. James Parish in Tupelo, with a handful of the faithful celebrating Mass in parishioner homes and, for a time, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Saint James the Less was declared an independent parish in 1956. Since our humble beginnings, St. James has seen the ordination of one of its own parishioners, the construction of our modern, current facility, and the growth of our membership to an average Sunday attendance of 340.* Masses are celebrated daily and streamed live to the internet in two languages!

We have reason to be proud of our history and the current state of our parish, but we should not allow our pride to cause us to be complacent. The Bible instructs us to "go forth and make disciples of all nations," and given the diversity of our parish, one might say the nations are coming to us!

Were you aware that our parish was selected by an anonymous donor to be one of several in North Mississippi to take part in the Next Generation Parish program offered by Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI)? This process began in February 2019 when every member of the parish was invited to fill out a survey. One hundred twelve parishioners participated, and the resulting data from this information-gathering process are referred to as the Disciple Maker Index (DMI).

Follow-up interviews were conducted by Miguel Santos of CLI with over 40 parishioners. For the second phase of the process, Father Mario was asked to put together an Envisioning Team comprised of faithful members of our parish from various backgrounds and walks of life who would analyze the DMI results, along with other data, to develop a priorities plan for our parish. For the past six months, our team, with the help of Dennis VanAuken, a consultant with CLI, has prayed, reflected, and worked to discover our values, define our mission, and discern our priorities. Our greatest hope is that the plan we have created will strengthen our parish and the Church at large. Your Envisioning Team believes our mission at St. James is: "To use our diversity and gifts to minister to the needs of our faith community, so that we share the Good News of Christ to the world."

We have high hopes and big dreams! Our plan builds on our strengths and assumes the laity will fulfill its responsibility and respond to our call for shared leadership in the parish, leaving our priest to guide, serve and support our community. We hope that the values, priorities, and goals we have described herein, will be embraced by the parish to ensure that St. James truly becomes a Next Generation Parish!

Sincerely in Christ,

Father Mario and your Next Generation Parish Envisioning Team: Pat Wilbanks, Miguel Cobos, Sharon Awwad, Saili Salinas, Julie Hall and Maria Palomeque

**based on attendance from Oct 2018 to Dec 2019*

Why Do We Need a Next Generation Parish Plan?

#1 Participatory Freefall

- Did you know that Catholic Marriages are down 55% since 1990?

Of course that naturally means baptisms will be down, but did you know that:

- 1 in 5 babies Baptized will not receive their 1st Communion and 2 of 5 Baptized will not be Confirmed
- 85% of those who ARE Confirmed will stop practicing their faith by the age of 21

91% of our children leave.

Of those who are attending Mass regularly, not the 60%-70% of non-practicing Catholics, but of those sitting in the pews on Sunday...

- 50% Believe in the Teaching Authority of the Church
- 30% Never go to confession
- 75% Believe Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist

We have 22 Million Catholic Baby Boomers (60% are Practicing their faith)

We have 16 M Catholic GenX'ers (30% are practicing their faith)

5-7% (Mostly Boomers) Provide 80-90% of the time and money needed to run the church

As the Baby Boomers age and we lose them, the Catholic Church in the U.S. is going to start losing about 8 Million people a year and will experience a \$5,000,000,000 ANNUAL loss of revenue.

#2 Identity Crisis

Our current model is based on assumptions that are no longer true. (That the domestic church – homes – are strong.)

Our parishes are trying to play a role they can never fulfill. The Domestic Church (families) are in crisis, as we saw from the information above. Parish-based religious education and even Catholic schools are based on the assumption of strong formation at home.

- 60% Of parents believe that passing on the faith is their primary (most important) role
- 28% Feel adequately supported by the church

#3 Practice of the Faith dependent too much on priests instead of God

Priests have a disproportionate effect on parishioners.

- Parishioners are 11X more likely to recommend their church if they like their priest
- Parishioners are 4X more likely to say the parish is helping them to grow spiritually if they like their priest
-

Priests:

Outcome oriented (change and conflict READY): 8%

People-oriented (change ready, but conflict avoidant): 26%

Process-oriented (change avoidant, but conflict ready): 21%

Service-oriented (change and conflict avoidant): 45%

#4 We have too much stuff (and we can't take care of it)

Fear of Losing Stuff. Laity are resistant to giving things up: Mass times, Favorite ministry projects. Sometimes people want the RIGHTS of their parish, but not the RESPONSIBILITIES.

The early church had nothing to lose but their lives!

The truth of WHERE we are is never as important as the truth of WHO we are. We are facing a crisis of authenticity. We are facing a crisis of fidelity – to our vows, to our baptismal promises.

The truth of WHO we are is that we are One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

One – Division is easier. Work for unity.

Holy – We are Sacred Vessels (Do we see ourselves that way, do we see each other that way?)

Catholic – The Church is Universally relevant TODAY. There has never been a better time to evangelize. People need to spot us a mile away. Our light is brightest in darkness!

Apostolic – Perfect truth handed down through the most imperfect means (the line of Peter, the bishops and our priests). God does not call the equipped, he equips the called. Laity has an important role in governance, but we must claim our baptismal call to leadership without forsaking theirs. We must love our priests and bishops in a way that reminds them of the truth of who they are!

What can we do?

Give witness to your faith. Pray in the presence of others. Tell people how your faith has blessed you.

Speak truth with love. (Priests need our feedback.) We need to work on building relationships of trust, in which we can tell the good and the bad.

Mentor someone! When you are asked to do something in the church, find more than one replacement candidate and teach them how to do the job. Yes, Jesus talked to crowds, but in the bulk of Scripture Jesus is talking to 12 guys and most of the time just 3!

Support courageous leaders – stand with those trying to renew the Church.

Stay close to the Lord. Don't buy into the idea that you don't need the Church to do so. Stay close to the Lord in the Word, the Sacrament, the Ministers and the People.

We need to be ambassadors for Christ. The mark of a good ambassador is not how many Masses you attend, but what you do when you leave.



VISION:

Saint James parishioners are enthusiastic, harmonious, children of God.

MISSION:

Our parish purpose is to use our diversity and gifts to minister to the needs of our faith community so that we share the Good News of Christ to the world.

VALUES:

Love – the decision to accept others as they are, seeing their best

Live it! – Embrace diversity, welcome strangers, speak and act kindly, forgive all wrongs

Generosity – selfless giving and concern for the needs of others

Live it! – Volunteer as you are called, sharing responsibilities and resources

Evangelization – teaching and promoting the Christian faith by word and example

Live it! – Educate children, their parents, and other adults; invite people to Mass and events; share faith openly with others; pray with and for others

PRIORITIES:

I. **Shared Leadership** – distributing leadership and workload throughout the parish

Rationale: Getting everyone involved connects people, promotes ownership of the work of the parish and allows for balance in personal lives

- Goal – Develop a procedures manual for all ministries by 12/31/2020
- Goal – Implement a shared leadership model by 05/30/2021

II. **Faith and Community Enrichment** – providing experiences such as classes, workshops, retreats, and other events that offer opportunities to invite guests

Rationale: Providing faith-enrichment and fellowship opportunities within small groups increases faith and strengthens relationships, which improves the health of the parish as a whole

- Goal – Create 3-4 small, faith-enriching groups by 5/30/2021

III. **Service and Vocations Encouragement** – creating a servant-minded environment

Rationale: The future of the Church depends on everyone's taking responsibility and dedicating themselves

- Goal – Implement a service ministry engaging 5% – 10% parishioners by 12/31/2021
- Goal – See 2-4 people considering a religious vocation by 12/31/2021

Saint James the Less

Priority Plan and Model of Alignment



Church Vision

Parish Vision

**We are enthusiastic,
harmonious
children of God.**

Parish Mission

To use our diversity and gifts
to minister to the needs of
our faith community, so that
we share the Good News of
Christ with the world.

Parish Values

Love

Embracing diversity,
welcoming strangers,
being kind & forgiving

Generosity

Volunteering, sharing
responsibilities and
resources

Evangelization

Educating, inviting,
sharing faith, praying
with & for others

Parish Priorities

Shared Leadership

*Connects people,
promotes ownership,
allows personal balance*

Goals:
Create operations
manuals for all
ministries
Implement a shared
leadership model

**Service and
Vocations Focus**

*Builds servant-minded
responsibility &
dedication to God,
Church, and fellow man*

Goals:
Implement a new
service ministry
Foster vocations

**Faith & Community
Enrichment**

*Increases faith, builds
relationships, improves
parish morale*

Goal:
Create small, faith-
enriching groups and
events

**Sacraments
&
Worship**

**Education
&
Formation**

**Governance
&
Finance**

**Social
Services
&
Outreach**

**Vocations
&
Evangelization**

5 Foundational Ministries