

the *amazing* parish

VISION - A SIMPLE APPROACH

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Vision – A Simple Approach

The purpose of this process is to allow a pastor and his team to flesh out the basic elements of its vision for the parish. This probably will require between 3 and 5 hours of discussion, prayer and reflection in an environment where interruptions and distractions are minimized. It could be accomplished as part of a leadership team's off-site around becoming a stronger team. Remember, the goal is not perfection, but simply more clarity about the parish's future and identity.

Before discussing the possibilities for your parish's vision, it is important to create a context for the discussion by arriving at general answers to the following questions:

1. Why does your parish exist?

Okay, the primary answer to this question is pretty straight-forward: a parish exists to help people achieve salvation, to know Christ and His Church, and to fulfill the Great Commission of "making disciples of all nations." But here is a variation of that question that will allow your parish to better think about vision: "why does the world need *this* parish?" Or, "how would the world be worse off if *this* parish didn't exist?"

The wrong answer is "well, people would have to drive further down the road to the next parish to go to Mass..." The right answer will have something to do with what your parish does uniquely for the people who live within your parish boundaries, and for those who do more than merely go to Mass (as important as that is!).

2. If your parish were able to do everything possible, with no limitation on time, energy or resources, what would it look like?

In other words, how would your parish and the community that it serves be different if you were able to do all the things you dream about doing? Have you ever articulated those dreams? We often put boundaries around our visions by accepting the limitations that we currently face. It is important to dream big in order to think beyond those limitations, because a great vision, combined with God's grace, can change a situation in ways that we might not have imagined.

3. What makes your parish different than the next parish over?

No two parishes are exactly the same. It is important that every parish understand the unique challenges that it faces, and the unique opportunities it has to do the Lord's work. How is your parish different from others nearby, or from what most people think about as a standard parish?

Okay, now that you've discussed these questions, you're ready to start crafting the rough outlines of a vision.

VISION FOR _____ PARISH

By answering the following questions as a team, you will have established the basis for a parish vision:

One day, new parishioners will describe our parish in this way:

One day, people will say that our parish is different from other good parishes in the following ways:

One day, a reporter will write an article about our parish and it will say:

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR _____ PARISH

By answering the following questions as a team, you will identify how to align your vision with your operational goals.

The biggest gaps between our current reality and our vision are:

The current obstacles that prevent our parish from achieving this vision are:

The clearest priorities our parish must undertake in order to move toward our vision are:

NEXT STEPS FOR _____ PARISH

By answering the following questions as a team and following through on the actions related to those answers, you will be much more likely to make your vision a reality:

How will we capture the answers to all of these questions?

How will we display these answers for easy reference during discussions and decisions?

Which people and groups within the parish need to understand these answers so that they can align their work with the vision?

How can we most effectively communicate this vision to those people and groups in a way that promotes understanding, commitment and action?

