



# ST. MARY'S CHURCH

## PRIORITIES AND GOALS

**PARISH MISSION STATEMENT:** St. Mary's Parish, Kutztown, is a welcoming Roman Catholic faith community nourished by the Word and the Eucharist. We are the Catholic presence in Northeast Berks County called to deepen, strengthen, and share our faith in a loving God while reaching out in service, generosity, and hospitality to our local community and beyond as disciples of Jesus Christ.

In spring of 2024, St. Mary's Parish, Kutztown participated in the Discipleship Maker Index (DMI) Survey by the Catholic Leadership Institute as a diocesan effort to better understand the strengths and opportunities for growth in each parish community. Fr. John Maria with the help of the Pastoral Council has reviewed the results of the survey and created the following Parish Priority Plan for our community.

So, the question arises, what are we going to do with this Parish Priority Plan? Fr. John Maria will identify Priority Point Persons. They will be working with specific committees, who will outline and implement specific tasks to attain the S.M.A.R.T. goals (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) in our Parish Priority Plan. The Pastoral Council will oversee this process. Of course, this involves the entire parish and your participation is vital. If you are already active in the life of St. Mary's Parish, invite a friend or neighbor to join you in attending Mass or participate in a parish event. If you are not, please prayerfully consider participating more actively in the ministries of our wonderful parish. If you have a desire to more directly be a part of achieving a specific priority or goal, please reach out to Fr. John Maria to be a part of this exciting process.

### PRIORITY 1: PARISH EXPERIENCE

Parish Experience encompasses many areas of our church life. We desire to radiate the truth, beauty, and goodness of God to all who encounter us. This experience is most important within the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, as aided by elements such as preaching and music. We also desire our church to be a place of beauty that reminds the congregation of the presence of God while directing them to lift their hearts and minds to higher things.

Our parish strives to be a welcoming community that invites all its members to actively participate in its life, growth, and mission. This goes beyond the Sunday Mass to involve all the ministries and areas of our church life so as to foster an authentic Catholic community of disciples and to meet the needs of our parish, the local community, and greater Church.

- **Goals: By the next DMI survey in 2027, we would like to have...**
  1. 40% to 50% of our parishioners (previously 29% in 2024) describe the physical shape of our church as "lots of beauty! Recently renovated and/or really-well maintained."
  2. 40% to 50% of our parishioners (previously 33%) "strongly agree" with the statement "our parish helps me grow spiritually by offering music that deepens my desire to participate more fully in the Sunday liturgy."
  3. 45% to 55% of our parishioners (previously 30%) "strongly agree" with the statement "our parish helps me connect with a local Catholic community by following up with me when I express interest in becoming more involved"

## PRIORITY 2: FAITH FORMATION

Faith Formation is at the heart of our call as Catholics to “*not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of [our] minds*” (Romans 12:2). Our parish desires to form its members in the teachings of Jesus Christ as revealed through the Bible and Tradition of the Church. This involves the promotion of catechesis for all ages, whether as a church community, in small groups, or in individual faith formation. It also practically includes the use of reliable Catholic educational resources both physical and online.

This transformation necessarily includes growth in an intellectual knowledge of our Catholic faith but goes deeper to a conversion of heart through the prioritization of our relationship with Jesus Christ as the priority in our lives. This includes making time for personal prayer, frequenting of the sacraments, study of scripture, attendance at retreats, and involvement in authentic Catholic fellowship. We want to be a community that is confident in sharing our Catholic faith and witnessing it in all the areas of our lives.

- **Goals: By the next DMI survey in 2027, we would like to have...**
  1. 35% to 45% of our parishioners (previously 27% in 2024) “strongly agree” with the statement “our parish equips me to have conversations about my faith with family and friends growing my confidence in the Church’s teachings so I can answer other’s questions”
  2. 45% to 55% of our parishioners (previously 37%) would describe their Catholic journey as “my relationship with Jesus Christ is the most important relationship in my life”

## PRIORITY 3: EVANGELIZATION

Evangelization is not just a call for the select few but rather a universal mission declared by Jesus himself when he commissioned his apostles prior to ascending to heaven to “*go and make disciples of all nations*” (Matthew 28:19). We desire to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the entire world because this is how God desired it to be done! Our community should be desirous to share the gift of our faith with others. In the world, we strive never to hide our faith “*under a bushel basket*” but rather “*set [it] on a lampstand, where it gives light to all*” (Matthew 5:15).

Our parish seeks to create missionary disciples who are not only transformed by their relationship with Christ personally but also have a zeal to bring others to encounter Him as well. This includes practical skills like sharing the principles of the Gospel with others, giving testimony to God’s working in our lives to others, and walking alongside others in their journey with Christ. Our parish desires to foster this growth in the ministries already existing in the parish as well as growth of new ones.

- **Goals: By the next DMI survey in 2027, we would like to have...**
  1. 40% to 50% of our parishioners (previously 33% in 2024) “strongly agree” with the statement “our parish helps me grow spiritually by forming me as a disciple.”
  2. 30% to 40% of our parishioners (previously 24%) “strongly agree” with the statement “our parish equips me to have conversations about my faith with family and friends by teaching me how to share the story of Jesus.”



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