



May 07, 2022

Dear Assumption Parishioners,

Shortly after Archbishop Etienne became our archbishop in September 2019, he expressed his desire to have a unifying vision for ministry in the Archdiocese of Seattle. I will admit that I was skeptical. In only a decade of ministry in our archdiocese, I had already seen program after program be adopted by the archdiocese, pushed to the parishes, and then be abandoned before ever really taking root or bearing fruit. Archbishop Etienne also wanted wide consultation within the archdiocese, with dozens and dozens of discussion groups of various stakeholders in the Church in Western Washington. Again, I was skeptical: I had seen the archdiocesan penchant for meetings and had seen very little good come from it.

However, I am thrilled to say that our Archbishop was right and I was wrong. The process worked. The Pastoral Plan that was eventually published is *beautiful*: it is comprehensive enough to encapsulate the entirety of Catholic life and ministry, while being simple enough to memorize. I fell in love with this plan the first time I read it through, and I grow in appreciation for it the more I work with it.

It is now our responsibility, as a parish in the Archdiocese of Seattle, to implement this Pastoral Plan, a project that has been the primary focus of our Pastoral Council for the last year. My approach to this implementation has changed substantially thanks to their feedback, and I am sure it will change even more as I hear from our wider parish community. Nevertheless, I am thrilled with what the Pastoral Council has helped me develop here as an initial offering, and I hope our wider community will find it equally exciting.

We have had this plan finalized since December of 2021, but we held off on releasing it until after the Synod process was completed, so that the Synod would have the necessary space and focus to do its important work. Releasing the Pastoral Plan now, though, is extremely providential, as it corresponds with the announcement that I am being named Pastor of Assumption – a moment when I have to consider what the next six years may hold for myself and our parish community. What better vision can I offer for our renewed time together than this Pastoral Plan?

May the Lord Jesus bless us as we grow closer to him,

*J. Moore*

## THE PASTORAL PLAN

A full exploration of the Pastoral Plan can be found [here](#) on the Archdiocesan website. It consists of a mission statement, three focus areas and four core values.

### Mission Statement

“Jesus said to his disciples, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”  
-Matthew 28:18–20

### Focus Areas (“What we do”)

- Encounter Jesus Christ and one another
- Accompany each other, as one human family, on the journey of discipleship.
- Live the unconditional love and joy of the Gospel.

### Core Values (“How we do it”)

- Faith in Action
- Hope in Resurrection
- Truth in Love
- Unity in Diversity

## APPLICATION TO THE PARISH

The Pastoral Plan was intentionally broad enough to encompass all Catholic entities in Western Washington, including parishes, schools, and Catholic Community Services. However, because it is so broad, it requires a *specific* application to each context. Given that the parish is the *ordinary context* for living out the Christian life, the application of the Pastoral Plan to the parish context will look very much like asking *what an ordinary Christian life* ought to look like.

In this sense, Assumption will be implementing the Pastoral Plan by providing a template for what an ideal Christian life should look like, and we will be pairing this template with a commitment to reorienting our parish programs and structures so that their exclusive purpose is to help our parishioners achieve these goals.

## **AN ASPIRATION ...**

Christianity can be maddening because Christian perfection is never achievable this side of Heaven. We all have sins and vices we are working to uproot and virtues we are striving to develop, and just when we have beaten one vice, another one always reveals itself, prompting the process to begin again. For this reason, it is important to remind ourselves that God never expects us to be perfect, he only expects us to *aim for perfection*. As long as we are trying to be holy, as long as we are striving to increase in holiness every day, we have met the expectations of the Lord. The list of things “required” by a good Christian life may seem daunting, but it is an *aspirational* list, a list of things we are *striving for*, even if we have yet to achieve them.

## **... WITH A FIRM COMMITMENT ...**

Nevertheless, complacency is the great enemy of holiness. It is so easy for us to get comfortable with the *status quo*, to believe that we are “good enough as we are” and to stop striving toward holiness and unity with the Lord. The only way to fight this enemy is to constantly recommit ourselves to the process of growing in holiness. It is important to make *an explicit commitment each year* to the foundational principles of a Christian life well-lived, so that we never stop striving for those principles.

It is for this reason that the implementation of the Pastoral Plan at Assumption will be in the form of an “Annual Discipleship Commitment.” The first year of implementation of the Pastoral Plan at Assumption will be a trial year, where community feedback is sought and considered, and the articulation of the principles of a Christian life well-lived are revised for maximal buy-in. However, the hope is that within two years of initial roll-out, the discipleship commitment will become a replacement for the annual parish stewardship push – that is, rather than just committing to giving money each year, parishioners will recommit themselves to intentional discipleship every year.

## **... AND A HELPING HAND.**

Christianity is never lived alone, but always as a communal endeavor. The mission of the Church, universal and local, is to assist the community of the baptized in living out their baptism. As such, the local parish has a special responsibility to assist its parishioners in living the Christian life by providing tools, programs, communities, and relationships which will aid them in the all-important pursuit of holiness. No parishioner should feel that anything in the Discipleship Commitment is difficult or out of their reach, because the parish should provide clear paths through which to achieve or grow in every area of the list.

# Annual Discipleship Commitment

Assumption Parish, Bellingham, WA

I,

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name)

in response to my baptismal calling, choose to follow Jesus Christ and grow in holiness this year by committing myself to the following:

## ENCOUNTER JESUS CHRIST AND ONE ANOTHER

- Attend Mass every weekend, unless prevented by sickness or travel.
- Engage in sacramental confession at least twice a year.
- Pray daily, with a goal of at least 15 minutes daily.
- Grow in faith through study, engaging in at least one experience each year, for example a Christian book, parish class, FORMED program, etc.

## ACCOMPANY EACH OTHER, AS ONE HUMAN FAMILY, ON THE JOURNEY OF DISCIPLESHIP

- Share about my relationship with the Lord in a small faith-sharing group at least bi-weekly, keeping in mind that a family is itself a small group.
- Help shoulder the spiritual, emotional, and/or material needs of at least one fellow parishioner each year, either on my own initiative or through a parish pastoral care ministry.
- Look after the needs of my parish, by contributing each week at least one hour of time (through service to the parish) or one hour of money (at my hourly income rate).

## LIVE THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE AND JOY OF THE GOSPEL

At least once a year:

- Talk to at least one new person about Jesus.
- Practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy as an opportunity to unite my heart to those who are struggling, either on my own initiative or through a parish outreach ministry.
- Model the self-sacrificial example of Jesus by giving of myself in a way that will not be rewarded.

## CORE VALUES

In carrying this out, I also pledge to remain true to the four core values of the parish and Archdiocese, namely:

- Faith in Action – I will not only receive the infinite love of God, but also share it with others.
- Hope in Resurrection – I will choose to remain confident that Jesus always wins the victory.
- Truth in Love – I will profess the fullness of the Catholic faith in a life-giving way.
- Unity in Diversity – I will celebrate how our differences enrich our foundational communion.

Signature: