

## **A vision for Most Holy Trinity – St. Mary Parish<sup>1</sup>**

### ***1. The sound of bells***

The towers of Most Holy Trinity – St. Mary Church contain five bells; ranging from 5,000 pounds to 450 pounds. The bells were cast on May 14, 1891 in Troy, NY by the Meneely Company. The bells of our church rang throughout the community; calling the faithful to prayer, helping people to sanctify the day and mark milestones in the lives of our parishioners and community.

Our bells are of high quality, cast in bronze, and they are in good condition. The bells are rung by strikers that hit the bells to make the sound. Over the years, these strikers and the rest of the bell ringing instruments have worn-out, and in some cases, have collapsed on the bells; dulling their ability to sound as effectively as they could. Some of this is due simply to age, but it's also because of the environment around the equipment that have corroded them.

Our parish has recently completed the repairs of our bells. We have updated the electrical system to provide adequate power to the equipment. We have selected a computer system that will keep the bells ringing on time and will adapt to the needs of the time; for a funeral, a wedding or to call us to prayer. Finally, the actual strikers that make the bells ring have been replaced to more effectively create the best sound possible. We also identified a donor to pay for this project.

The bells of our church are an apt metaphor for our life as a parish. The bells represent our parish community; historic, diverse in size and sound, high quality and in good condition. We and our faith in Jesus Christ are the bells. And like the bells, our parish's mission or purpose is to ring out into the community and encounter our neighbors, wherever they might be; at home, school, work or on the streets; we exist as Church in order to evangelize.

The bell ringing equipment represents all the tools, customs, approaches we have used to make the "sound" of our parish and our faith extend out to the community. Over time these too have corroded and become less effective due to age and the environment around us. We no longer live in a society that is based on Judeo-Christian values. This has affected the effectiveness of the instruments we have used in the past to connect with people in the community. Whereas in the past everyone recognized the sound of church bells and what they represent; today most of our neighbors have no idea why the bells ring. In the same way the "sound" we make as a community, our traditional ways of engaging with our parishioners and with the people outside the church are not as effective as they once were.

Just as with the bells, we also need to renovate our parish and to reimagine how we, as a community, make a beautiful sound that spreads out to every corner of our community. The process of updating the bells required us to pause the ringing of the bells. Our parish will need

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to look at how we function as a parish and determine what needs to be paused, adapted, retired or refreshed moving forward. This will require change. Change in order to be more effective in our mission.

The new upgraded bell-ringing system will include a computer that will help keep the bells on time and functioning well. For our parish community to stay up-to-date and to be effective we will also need an upgraded leadership model. Our parishioners will need to take up God's call to live out their baptism by being leaders in the parish. It can't be just the friars and sisters that lead. All of us must do our part. Parishioners will need to ask themselves: "How has God blessed me? What are my gifts? How can I put my talents at the service of the Christian community?".

Finally, in order for the new bell system to work effectively had to completely renovate the electrical wiring and bring in new power to the bells. In a similar way, none of our efforts as a parish to become effective in our mission will be successful if we are not powered by prayer. We will need to develop a culture in the parish that is dedicated to praying for the success of our outwardly focused mission of evangelization; the ringing of our bells.

## ***2. Coming to Mass***

If our parish was able to move from a posture of maintenance of the "status quo" to become focused on our mission of evangelizing; what could it look like when you came to Mass?

First of all, our church bells would ring beautifully throughout our part of Williamsburg and our neighbors would know it was the sound of Most Holy Trinity – St. Mary Church inviting them to pause and reflect on their day and if they wanted to, an invitation to come and pray.

Those who started to make their way to Montrose Avenue would be greeted by our restored twin steeples that pierce the skyline as a beacon of hope that says; here you can find community, belonging, peace. The church building would shine as a well-maintained historical anchor for our community. Grounded in tradition and history yet up to date and fresh looking.

As you walked in to the church for a Liturgy you would be warmly yet gently greeted. It would feel like home. There would be clear signage and parishioners ready to assist with any questions you might have. A "welcome table" would be staffed where you could ask questions, set up an appointment or sign up to volunteer in one of the ministries.

Once inside the church you would notice how clean and uncluttered the church is. The architecture, windows and art would shine. The elegant and intentional decorations would set the tone for the season and liturgy and direct your gaze to the Altar of Sacrifice.

As the community prepared for Mass you would notice various members actively engaged in preparing for liturgy. You would also feel the hospitality both from the Ministers and also from the people around you in the pew. In fact, you would be surprised by who you saw in the pews.

All people would be welcome. Everyone. Without judgment, discrimination or gossip, all would be welcome to engage on their path towards God.

The Liturgy would unfold in a way that speaks to authenticity, excellence, beauty and prayer. Without making it a performance, everyone would work together to offer the best of themselves to make the liturgy an inspiring and meaningful experience of prayer. You would take note that the lay Ministers appeared well trained, confident in what they were doing, able to problem solve the normal hiccups that happened and clearly not dependent on the friars or clergy for direction at every step. This will require teams of parishioners who take responsibility for the celebration of Sunday liturgies, for Baptisms and other parish events.

The music, the homily and the whole experience of the Mass would really speak to your life, comfort you, challenge you and send you back into the world to live your faith; in service and in witness.

### ***3. Evangelization***

Most parishioners would recognize in the parish many of the traditional groups and devotions that are common to Catholic parishes. However, it would be evident that the priority is placed on the missionary and evangelizing functions. Just as the refurbishment of the bells required a financial commitment; the budget will have been adjusted to prioritize evangelization.

There would be a clear and easily accessible path for those new to the faith to begin the journey of faith. Alpha would be a regular and ongoing part of the parish's life and various teams of parishioners would run the course. This would be supplemented with small groups of faith sharing that would sustain people both new-comers and parishioners. Opportunities for growth in the faith and in service to those in need would be clearly advertised and readily available.

There would also be a well-developed program of engagement with the neighbors, regardless of their faith or lack of faith. This would especially be focused on arts, music and culture. These programs would seek to build bridges and highlight common values and to help neighbors come to know us.

### ***4. Faith Formation and Religious Education***

While Evangelization is the top priority of the Parish, we would still have a robust and effective program of faith formation and religious education. The program would involve a team of ministers and catechists who assist in sharing the faith; not only as "content" to be learned but first and foremost as an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ.

### ***5. Spirituality & Culture of the Parish***

A key difference to this parish would be a strong accent on the spirituality of Francis and Clare of Assisi. Franciscan feasts, traditions and spiritual practices would be privileged in the parish.

These would highlight key Franciscan values of humility, prayer, community, service, equality and radical hospitality.

There would be a concerted effort to help form all parishioners in the faith and also in Franciscan spirituality. All of the parish organizations and ministries would have a Franciscan flavor. The groups in the parish would be active in the on-going formation of their members especially when it comes to current Church teaching and in providing members with the tools necessary to be evangelizers.

- a. **Humility:** the Friars, Sisters and Secular Franciscans foster a culture of humility in the leadership and ministry of the parish. Although some elements of hierarchy are necessary in the Church; our parish would focus on more collaborative style in the parish and this would spread as a favored approach among all the ministers.
- b. **Prayer:** everything done in the parish would be grounded in prayer so as to keep us all focused and attentive to God's call for each one of us and for our community.
- c. **Community:** there would be one community in the parish built from various linguistic groups, cultures and backgrounds. While respecting differences, the priority is given to what brings us together and our commonality. The parish as community would be celebrated through various social occasions and events that help bind the members to each other more closely. Special attention would be given to building and maintaining a sense of community among our youth, young adults and also our seniors who may feel isolated.
- d. **Service:** the members of our parish and new comers are actively engaged in the work of Trinity Human Services and in the work of reflection, advocacy and justice in collaboration with Franciscan Action Network.
- e. **Equality and Radical Hospitality:** all the members of our parish, our visitors, those receiving services and our neighbors are welcomed without discrimination, judgement or gossip. We would very much share the vision of Pope Francis for the Church as a field hospital for the injured not a club for the perfect.

## **6. Stewardship**

The parish would be on solid financial ground making use of the rental income provided from the lease of underused properties for capital projects, maintenance of the buildings. The day-to-day operation of the parish would be funded through the generosity of our parishioners who are committed to a sacrificial offering model of giving that supports the ministry of the parish.

The facilities of the parish; church, offices, ministry spaces, friary and convent would have a well-developed plan for maintenance, updating and renewal that is sustainable.

## **7. Leadership**

The leadership of the parish would reflect Franciscan values and also be most current approaches to sustaining parish leadership. Leading heavily on Divine Renovation's model, the focus of the Pastor would be on developing the Vision of the Parish, steering the parish in keeping with the Vision and supporting the key ministry leaders in enacting the Vision. The Pastor would be supported by a Senior Leadership Team which would meet regularly to reflect and discern the means for implementing the Vision of the parish. The Pastor would also be assisted in this by Parochial Vicars and Pastoral Associates of various kinds. There would be an active Pastoral Council and Finance Council to advise the Pastor in the development and implementation of the Parish Vision.

A Franciscan, collegial mode of ministry would permeate the parish. The leadership of the parish and the various ministry leaders and parish staff would receive the training, preparation, support and space to exercise their leadership effectively. They would also be accountable for achieving their assigned tasks and goals. All parish staff would receive regular feedback, support and performance reviews.

#### ***8. Part of the Diocese of Brooklyn***

Although the spirituality of the Franciscan Friars and Sisters will permeate the fabric of the parish and its approach to evangelization, it will be important to be grounded in the Church of Brooklyn and aligned with the pastoral priorities of the bishop. Our parish will be actively engaged in the local deanery of parishes and committed to sharing resources and working collaboratively with other parishes on common priorities.