

Strategic Plan



**St. Aloysius Gonzaga
Catholic Church**

Where Shall We Go From Here?

Simon Peter answered Jesus, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

John 6:68

The Purpose of the Plan

This document sets forth long-range objectives and goals for St. Aloysius Gonzaga Parish that aim at helping us become the best possible church we can be. It is primarily directed to the heads of each ministry within the parish, but is also intended to be shared with all members of ministries and the entire congregation. In this way, members of the parish may share the same vision in responding to God's call to love Him above all things and one another as ourselves (Mt. 22:37-40). It is desired that this plan would stimulate all members of the parish to imagine our future and find concrete ways to make it a reality.

We have strived to coordinate this plan with the recommendations of the First Synod of the Archdiocese of Washington (2014) and with the results of the parish listening sessions that were conducted in preparation for the Synod. The parish objectives and implementation strategies detailed here have been aligned with the Synod's five focus areas: Worship, Education, Community, Service and Stewardship.

Vision Statement

We commit ourselves to be an active community of Catholics who, having been formed in Jesus Christ, love God wholeheartedly, love neighbor unconditionally, and make disciples intentionally.

Mission Statement

Guided by the above vision, we faithfully accept Jesus' Great Commission to his Apostles: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19) as we:

- INVITE the people of our area to discover Jesus Christ
- ENGAGE the people of our area through a vibrant parish life
- NOURISH our parishioners with the grace and truth of the Catholic Faith

Worship

Objective 1 – Foster awareness of liturgy as worship

They throw down their crowns before the throne, exclaiming: “Worthy are you, Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things; because of your will they came to and were created.” (Revelation 4:10 – 11)

Implementation 1.1 – Reenergize the Liturgy Committee

The Liturgy Committee, under the leadership of the pastor, should coordinate all parts of worship – the Liturgy of the Word (praise, prayer, proclamation, preaching) and the Liturgy of the Eucharist – so that in a balanced way they are joined to the one eternal, all-sufficient, sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit to God the Father.

Objective 2 – Create a more welcoming worship experience

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels. (Hebrews 13:1 – 2)

Implementation 2.1 – Develop a distinct Greeting Ministry

In order to bring people to Christ through the word of God and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, our parish must create a warm and inviting environment that engages all individuals in active worship. The parish should develop a Greeting Ministry that is focused on making a positive “first impression” for people when entering our church. Distinct from the Usher Ministry, this ministry focuses on welcoming people as they enter the worship space and giving them a sense of belonging at the liturgy.

Implementation 2.2 – Improve the appearance of the interior of the church building and environment

Develop ways to make the church building more visually appealing upon entering. This may include improvements to the vestibule, the use and placement of icons and statues, use of colors, lighting, and seating options.

Objective 3 – Increase Youth and Young Adult participation

Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

Implementation 3.1 – Welcome families with infants and toddlers

For parents with young children, attending Mass can be a challenging and sometimes frustrating experience. The parish must make an extra effort to ensure that families with infants and toddlers know that they are welcome. To assist such families, the parish should provide in-pew activities for toddlers and space, such as the St. Lawrence Room, for them to feel comfortable, so that children may learn how to participate in Mass as they mature.

Implementation 3.2 – Engage and recognize Youth in liturgical ministries

Youth are the present and the future of the Church, so we must find ways to engage them and help them “want to come” to Mass and participate more fully in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. Children and teens who participate in various liturgical ministries have an extra motivation to attend Mass and seem to be more likely to continue to practice the Catholic faith after high school. The parish should continue to reach out to youth by encouraging them to participate in appropriate liturgical ministries. Such service should be rewarded, especially through social outings and events with other young parishioners.

Implementation 3.3 – Engage Young Adults

Mass attendance among those who are between 18 and 35 years of age is significantly lower than that of other age groups. Each ministry should try to identify significant factors that keep young adults from practicing their Catholic faith and take steps to engage them in parish life.

Education

Objective 1 – Increase focus on discipleship

As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. (Matthew 4:18 – 20)

Implementation 1.1 – Focus on discipleship in every ministry

Every Catholic is called to be an intentional disciple of Jesus Christ. Every ministry should aim to strengthen each participant's commitment to knowing and following Jesus Christ by offering insights from Scripture and Tradition, mutual encouragement in holiness, and support in prayer.

Implementation 1.2 – Expand participation in Small Groups

Small Groups are an outstanding way to build community and nourish the faith of parishioners outside of Mass and should be seen as a central part of parish life. In view of this, we should expand the number of Small Groups for both adults and teens. Considering the demographics of our parish (e.g., young adults, men and women, single and parents), Small Groups should satisfy a wide variety of needs and desires. In order to increase the number of participants in Small Groups and opportunities for participation, there should be a deliberate and consistent effort to actively solicit new Small Group hosts.

Objective 2 – Develop capable ministers

Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of the inheritance. (Colossians 3:23 – 24)

Implementation 2.1 – Provide comprehensive training for each ministry

Develop excellent ongoing training sessions for members of all ministries. It is vital that all ministries provide effective and dynamic services to the parish carried out in a Christ-like way. To this end each ministry must strive to train all of its members to be excellent at their ministry: welcoming, energizing, and inspiring faith in all.

Objective 3 – Strive for excellence in Faith Formation programs for all ages

Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:6 – 7)

Implementation 3.1 – Maintain a vital cooperation between Father Andrew White School and our Religious Education program

Coordination between Father Andrew White School and our parish Religious Education Program should involve consistent curriculums and similar envisioned outcomes. The parish as a whole will benefit by this coordination, while acknowledging varied modes and methods of teaching individual children.

Implementation 3.2 – Offer transformative preparation for sacramental initiation

The sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist – lay the foundation for the Christian life, and preparation for them is an indispensable part of the life of the parish. The various forms of preparation for Christian Initiation (e.g., RCIA, 2nd Grade First Communion Preparation, 8th Grade Confirmation Preparation, parental preparation for infant Baptism, etc.) should emphasize our call to conversion from sin to holiness and present the sacraments not only as rites of passage, but as transforming encounters with Jesus Christ. The parish has a responsibility to offer this formation for all persons, including those with special needs or who are in extraordinary situations.

Implementation 3.3 – Extend participation in Faith Formation beyond Adulthood

Childhood knowledge of Catholicism isn't enough to meet the challenges of an adult Catholic life. The parish must continue to offer opportunities for teenagers, young adults, and adults to grow in faith and holiness through Youth Ministry, Young Adult Ministry, Small Groups, and through unique moments of formation such as marriage and baptismal preparation. The parish should proactively invite more parishioners to take advantage of these faith formation opportunities.

Community

Objective 1 – Encourage greater participation in our parish community

Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46 – 47)

Implementation 1.1 – Foster a sense of belonging in the parish community

Develop and support existing programs that reach out to new parishioners, accommodating them both physically and spiritually. This requires that current members of the parish exhibit compassion and care, expressing Christian love so that all may feel welcome, no matter where they are in their journey with Christ. It is incumbent upon all leaders in the parish (staff and ministry heads) to set the tone for a culture where people know each other by name, care for each other, and feel the absence when a member is missing.

Implementation 1.2 – Reinforce the importance of the Sunday Mass

As the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life,” participation in the Sunday Mass is both an extraordinary privilege and a serious responsibility for every Catholic. The parish must seek creative ways to help parishioners make Mass a priority every Sunday and holy day of obligation, charitably reminding them that failure to do so remains a serious sin. Parishioners should be reminded and encouraged to invite others to Sunday Mass.

Implementation 1.3 – Improve communication of parish news and events

The parish must provide more consistent, effective, and organized communication of news and events through both traditional means, such as the bulletin, and through online media, such as the parish website and social media. A Communications/Technology Team should be more formally organized to coordinate these ongoing efforts of increasing the number of ways to disseminate information about parish activities.

Objective 2 – Support family life

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14 – 19)

Implementation 2.1 – Develop family events

The family is the “domestic Church,” where parents hand on the faith to their children through their words and deeds. To support the family’s special mission, the parish should develop a Family Ministry with a goal of scheduling 3-6 events or programs per year. These programs could include events such as movie nights, socials, and retreats, while at the same time providing evangelization and catechesis.

Implementation 2.2 – Encourage family prayer

Encourage and promote family prayer by providing education on prayer and opportunities for family devotions. Examples include family rosaries and novenas, seasonal devotions for Advent and Lent, and praying with the Vocations Cross. All appropriate ministries should strive to encourage family prayer.

Implementation 2.3 – Embolden parishioners to fully live out the Church’s teachings on marriage and family life

The Church’s teachings on marriage, family, and sexual morality remain a significant obstacle for some Catholics. The parish should brainstorm new ways to ensure that Catholic teachings on these subjects are correctly understood and fully embraced. The Communications/Technology Team, and other ministries should make available multi-media resources (print, online, classroom sessions, etc.) that emphasize in a positive light the correct Catholic teachings about marriage and family life.

Service

Objective 1 – Provide opportunities for all to serve

Now in regard to spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be unaware.... To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes. (1 Corinthians 12:1, 7 – 11)

Implementation 1.1 – Aid parishioners in discernment of spiritual gifts for ministry

The Holy Spirit gives unique spiritual gifts, or charisms, to every member of the Body of Christ. The parish should begin to offer opportunities, such as workshops, for each parishioner to both understand the role of the Holy Spirit in their spiritual lives and discern the distinct charisms that they have been given, so that they may more effectively discern how God may be calling them to serve.

Implementation 1.2 - Invite all parishioners to serve in a parish ministry

Invite all, including those with special needs and those in extraordinary circumstances, to participate in the life of the parish by developing ministries in which everyone can participate. Additional opportunities for ministry might include prayer teams, visits to the homebound and elderly, or bereavement assistance. Additionally the Parish Pastoral Council should ensure that new members receive a “join the ministry” form with follow-up phone calls and that all parishioners receive yearly invites to join ministries.

Objective 2 – Address needs for service in our area

Jesus said, “You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.” (John 13:13 – 15)

Implementation 2.1 - Connect parishioners to opportunities for service in the community

There are a number of valuable service organizations and efforts in our community, and our parish should consider ways to partner with them, encouraging parishioners to volunteer their time to assist them. In order to increase effectiveness, parish ministers should develop partnerships with existing organizations in our community that have similar objectives (e.g. pro-life and Care Net, etc.) in order to better serve the community.

Implementation 2.2 – Increase the parish’s ability to respond to immediate needs

The parish ministries should carefully identify the most pressing physical and spiritual needs of those in our local community, especially the poor, and take concrete steps to better meet these needs. Efforts should be made by our St. Vincent DePaul Society in collaboration with the Communications/Technology Team and others to increase parishioners’ awareness of the significant hardships that many people in our area face every day and then mobilize parishioners to creatively respond to these needs.

Stewardship

Objective 1 – Promote the full understanding of Stewardship

“The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? 43It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.” (Luke 12:42-44)

Implementation 1.1 - Highlight the responsibility of financial giving

In addition to offering their time and talent to God through service, every Catholic is called to offer their “treasure” to support the parish. The responsibility to generously offer our financial resources for the service of God is found throughout Scripture and Catholic Tradition. Catechesis on the fullness of the Church’s teaching regarding financial stewardship should be made available to all parishioners. The Finance Council in conjunction with the Communications/Technology Team should develop the messages and media to educate the parish on this responsibility.

Objective 2 – Maintain and expand facilities adequate to meet the needs of the parish

He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. (Luke 16:10)

Implementation 2.1 - Maintain existing facilities

Ensure that the current parish facilities are properly maintained and adequate to meet the needs of parish activities. As the parish ministries identify pressing facility needs, the Finance Council should insure that there are funding streams to meet these needs. This may require initiating special giving campaigns or directed fundraisers to support longer-term strategic building projects or facility upgrades.

Implementation 2.2 – Move forward with the building project

In order to meet the needs of the expanding number of parish ministries and activities, the parish should continue to move forward with plans to build new parish facilities as our *Growing in Grace* giving campaign progresses.