

**ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND**



**Report of the Parish Visitation  
of  
Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski  
Vicar, Eastern Vicariate**

## PARISH HISTORY

The parish of St. Mary's has a rich history beginning with the Jesuits as early as 1704 at St. Mary's City. For many years the Jesuits served the Catholics in Annapolis as a mission. The Redemptorists who established themselves in Annapolis in the early 1800's took over the parish in 1852, when the Jesuits left. Records indicate that the number of Catholics living in the area at the time was from 13 to 60. The new pastor of St. Mary's, Father Wissel, conducted a census in early 1853 which concluded that about 100 Catholics lived in the Annapolis area, which was predominately Protestant. Within a few years, a larger church was needed to accommodate a growing number of parishioners. Fundraising began and by 1858 the cornerstone was laid and blessed by Bishop John Neumann (St. John Neumann). In 1860, a church stood contiguous to a large Novitiate and house of studies for the Redemptorists.

In 1862 a parish school was opened and staffed by a lay teacher, Miss Josephine O'Donoghue, with 50 students in attendance. Through much negotiating, the School Sisters of Notre Dame arrived to assume administration of the school in 1867. The Sisters were given the old Jesuit rectory as a convent. The School Sisters continued to serve the educational needs of children for many years.

By 1878, official reports stated that the parish had 600 parishioners—79% of whom were white and 21% were black. The parish continued to grow primarily because of immigration to the United States. Parish records show that most marriages that were blessed between 1853 and 1878 were immigrant couples from Ireland or one of the German states.

Over the next decades, buildings were erected or expanded as the Catholic population grew. Several missions were established by St. Mary's. These included a mission station on Kent Island, Ss. Peter and Paul in Easton, St. Augustine in Elkridge, St. Mary's in Laurel, Our Lady of Sorrows in West River, Holy Family in Davidsonville, Our Lady of the Fields in Millersville, a mission station at Bay Ridge, St. Gerard at Gerardton, St. Joseph at Odenton, St. Agnes at Robinson, St. John at Severna Park and Our Lady of Perpetual Help at Edgewater.

Eventually, a high school was established in 1946. At that time, St. Mary's was the second parish to have its own parochial high school. Today, both the elementary and high schools are flourishing and provide excellent educational opportunities for those living in the Annapolis area.

The 1960s saw a large increase in the Catholic population in Anne Arundel County. A decision was made not to enlarge St. Mary's Church, but to establish a mission church in the area. Thus, in 2000, the Mission of St. John Neumann was dedicated by Cardinal William H. Keeler. Today, the parish of St. Mary's continues to be a Redemptorist parish and continues to serve the Catholics of Annapolis and surrounding area with dedication and pastoral sensitivity as they have for over 300 years.

## **STATISTICAL INFORMATION**

St. Mary's Parish is located in the heart of the city of Annapolis, Maryland. It is bordered on the north by Our Lady of the Fields, on the east by St. Andrew by the Bay and the Chesapeake Bay, on the south by Our Lady of Perpetual Help and on the west by Holy Family. Currently, there are approximately 5520 families registered in the parish. Approximately 4030 registered families live within the parish boundaries. About 400 families who are registered at St. Mary's live outside the boundaries but choose to worship at St. Mary's.

The parish is varied socio-economically, with an average household income of \$92,000. The 30-39 age cohorts represent the largest segment of parish registration. Mass attendance is greatest among the 40-60+ age cohorts. The smallest mass attendance is among the 18-39 age cohorts.

The parish has some diversity. Registration is predominantly Caucasian with some African-American Families, Asian/Pacific Islander families and a growing number of Hispanic families.

The seating capacity of the church is 450 persons. The building is attractive and well-appointed and has undergone two extensive renovations in recent years. The church boasts a ceiling with constellations as they were in the sky of the night the church was dedicated.

## **INTRODUCTION**

As Bishop, I take seriously my responsibility to visit the parishes within the Vicariate. I value the opportunity to spend a day in the parish listening and learning about the hopes and concerns of parishioners. I am keenly aware of the goodness of so many committed individuals who are working daily to carry out the mission of Jesus. The persons who are attended as a result of the wonderful ministries going on are a testament to the faith and devotion of both staff and parishioners. Spending 12 to 14 hours in a parish provides me with a good "snapshot" of the life of the community and offers me a firsthand glance at the good work carried out so diligently and humbly.

I thank you for your welcoming hospitality extended to me and to my pastoral team throughout the visit. Your warmth and your pride in your parish were obvious.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

In this report, I hope to offer support, encouragement and direction as you move into the future as a faith community.

### **Parish Community**

St. Mary's is a well-established and vibrant parish in the region and has many distinctive ministries and an active, involved parishioner base.

- I commend the parish community for their outstanding outreach to those the surrounding community. In particular, I note the offering of ESL classes and the newly initiated effort to educate on the environment and sustainability of the environment.
- 
- I commend the parish community for their participation in outreach to the marginalized through Birthright, Blanket of Love, the Gabriel Project, Habitat for Humanity, Haven, Rachel's Vineyard Ministries, St. Vincent de Paul Society and the work of the Respect Life Committee.
- I note that the parish is generous in its assistance to those in need through emergency financial assistance, temporary housing, food, holiday gifts, and emergency medical assistance. This is commendable.
- I commend parishioners for their active participation in the many family life organizations that are sponsored by the parish.
- I commend the parish community for their welcoming spirit and gracious hospitality extended to me and my staff during the pastoral visit.
- I note that the parish has an established Hispanic Youth Ministry—Juventud Luz de Esperanza. This is an important ministry to engage Hispanic youth and to promote their full incorporation into the life of the parish.
- I commend the parish for providing opportunity for quiet prayer and reflection in the 24 hour Reservation Chapel.

### **Parish Leadership**

The pastor and staff are intentional about building Christian Community in the parish. It is evident that this is a priority among them.

- The commitment of all staff persons to “respond” to the needs of people
- The excellent leadership and guidance of the pastor, Rev. John Kingsbury and for his good stewardship of the resources of the parish. His availability and approachability are commendable. This clearly enhances the ministry of the staff and contributes to a sense of oneness among them. The pastor relates collegially—asks advice and listens. He does not micro-manage but trusts the abilities of his staff.
- The commitment to long range planning by the pastor, staff and pastoral council that is parish focused.
- The knowledge base and dedication of the Lay Corporators,
- The good oversight of the business management of the parish under the guidance of Mr. Steve Linhard, the Chief Administrative officer.
- The well-established and functioning Development Office under the guidance of Mrs. Barbara Kappel.
- I want to acknowledge, in appreciation, the pastoral presence, dedication and leadership of the Redemptorists who have administered the parish for so many years and who attend to the pastoral needs of the parish with dedication and sensitivity.
- I commend the Pastoral Council, under the leadership of Dr. Laurence Scipio, for their keen oversight of the pastoral concerns of the parish and for the development of a five-year plan. Their focus on extending the parish to the wider community through strengthening relationships and community outreach is outstanding. I am particularly impressed by the Pastoral Council’s desire to assist parishioners in finding something they can hold on to and working to embody a sense of “home” for those who come.
- St. Mary’s is an extremely active and very large parish, which requires a strong and well organized administrative staff to handle the details of planning and implementing programs and services on a big scale. It is clear to me that the parish has developed an organizational structure –four pillars of spiritual, community, education and finances--that works and allows the many programs and ministries to operate with efficiency. .
- I commend the Pastoral Council for their knowledge of the parish and their commitment to bringing to the Council table issues and opportunities which are reviewed and discussed with insight and vision. They are well trained and understand their role as a council. I note that the Pastoral Council is involved in an evaluation process at this time.

## **Faith Formation**

St. Mary’s has an extensive Faith Formation Program to address the spiritual and formational needs of many at all age levels. I commend and note the following:

- The comprehensive program for children and for the creative summer bible school.

- The DRE, Steve Beard, for the establishment of a bilingual religious education program which has significantly increased in the Hispanic enrollment to 150.
- The incorporation of catechesis for human sexuality into the religious education program.
- The initiation of “whole community catechesis” in the parish.
- The more than 100 volunteers who assist in faith formation in the parish.
- The diversity of spiritual and adult faith formation opportunities present in the parish.

### **St. Mary’s Elementary School**

St. Mary’s Elementary School maintains its tradition of providing an excellent education for students both in academics and Catholic identity. Despite the constraints imposed by the limited space for both the high school and elementary/middle school, the strong skills of both principals and their openness to working together augurs well for the continued contribution both schools make toward a robust positive parish climate.

I commend, in particular, the following practices, attributes and achievements of St. Mary’s Elementary School:

1. The outstanding leadership of the pastor, principal and assistant principal on behalf of the elementary school.
2. The excellence and the dedication of all the staff, from the well-prepared classroom teacher, to the office assistants and the various members of the coordination team.
3. The strong academic and Catholic identity instructional programs evident throughout the school and in its 2007 Test Scores Report.
4. The inclusion of strong technology integration into classroom instruction, especially with the mobile laptops practice.
5. The integration of a requirement for ten hours of community service.
6. The well-kept and spotlessly clean school facilities.
7. The status of Green School recently awarded to the school.

### **St. Mary’s High School**

St. Mary’s High School has been serving young men and women in grades 9-12 for more than 60 years. As a college preparatory, parish high school, the school operates under the sponsorship of both the Redemptorist Fathers and the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The administrators are highly qualified, dedicated, cheerful and caring; they vision and plan with one main goal in mind: to ensure that each student at St. Mary’s

reaches the fullness of his/her potential. The teachers, most of whom are tenured and possess advanced degrees, take pride in the long tradition of academic excellence and spiritual growth and strive to ensure the continuance of both in the school. The students, who are consistently well mannered, well spoken and friendly, are happy being a part of the "St. Mary's Family;" they appreciate the numerous opportunities they have and the many values they learn and see modeled by their administrators and teachers.

I commend the high school in the following areas:

1. The school administrators and teachers truly embrace their mission and daily strive to have their students become more deeply human: young men and women of faith, dignity, sensitivity and integrity.
2. The school has a very strong college preparatory academic program with honors and AP courses available to students. The administrators and faculty successfully utilize the block schedule which allows students to experience great depth in their coursework.
3. The school has a strong and varied co-curricular program which allows their students to pursue their interests outside of the classroom. Whether athletic, academic or recreational in nature, all co-curriculars are handled within the context of Catholic values.
4. The administrators have overcome past difficulties/obstacles and have developed a superb communication network with: a) their pastor, b) their faculty/staff, students and parents/caregivers; c) the elementary school administrators and faculty, d) their fellow administrators in other Catholic high schools, and e) the Division of Catholic Schools.

## **Financial Management**

The financial management of the parish is well-organized and staffed by competent and experienced persons who are vigilant regarding the use of the financial resources of the parish. The Finance Council is comprehensive and includes the church budget, the elementary and high school budgets. I commend the following:

- The five-year surplus of the parish
- The establishment of a "rainy day" fund, which is substantive and wise.
- The designation of ½ of Lenten Appeal funds to financial assistance.
- The commitment to provide adequate and competitive salaries to all employees.
- The practice of conducting a yearly audit of the parish by an outside auditing firm.
- The comprehensive Annual Report to the Parish provided by the Advancement Office under the guidance of Barbara Kappel.
- The number of families enrolled in Faith Direct.
- The budgeting process which is a collaborative effort.
- The issuance of monthly year-to-date reports to staff.
- The practice of building in budget depreciation, which creates a cash surplus when needed.

## **Facilities**

The maintenance staff works efficiently under the direction of Don Jackson. All are highly competent and experienced. I note the following:

- Handicap accessibility
- The good relationship between the facilities staff and the Office of Facilities Management for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.
- The efforts to make the plant “green.” I was particularly impressed by the collection of rainwater at the school which provides the water supply for plants.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

A significant purpose of the Pastoral Visit is to bring to the attention of the Pastoral Leader, the Staff and Parishioners specific recommendations and directives that should be addressed. These are based on observations and information gained through the pastoral visit and through various archdiocesan offices that track specific data. As Bishop, I wish to bring these matters to your attention in the firm belief that you will make every effort to attend to them to strengthen the administration and ministries of the parish and the community.

### **Recommendations regarding Faith Formation**

I am aware of efforts being made to address Hispanic Ministry in the parish. In line with this:

- I ask that the Faith Formation Staff continue to explore creative ways to expand bilingual catechetical opportunities for children and adults.

### **Recommendations regarding Catholic Schools**

- **St. Mary Elementary School**

Based upon my visit, I recommend the following actions for the continuous improvement of the school program:

- I ask that the Curriculum Mapping project which has begun be continued through its successive stages as timelined and as considered satisfactory by Central Office staff.
- I ask that the strong student leadership potential in St. Mary’s Elementary School continue to be fostered and expanded in appropriate venues.

- I ask that the collaboration between the elementary principal and high school principal be an intentional process which will evolve to even greater benefit for both schools.

- **St. Mary's High School**

Based upon my visit, I recommend the following actions for the continuous improvement of the school program:

- I ask that continuous, diligent efforts be made to maintain accurate and complete records and update all policies and procedures in order to be in full compliance with both state and Archdiocesan requirements.
- I ask that the school continue to pursue its desire to have a scholars/honors program and more effectively market the academic, leadership and service components of the school.
- I ask that effort continue to enhance the already good working relationship with St. Mary's elementary school; this could be done in areas of spirituality, academics and co-curriculars.
- I ask that the school make every effort to renovate certain parts of the school (i.e.: Marian Hall) and continue to make the most effective use of the limited space the school has available.

### **Recommendations regarding Pastoral Life and Ministry**

- I ask that the Pastor, Staff and Pastoral Council evaluate current communication processes to determine more efficient and effective means to share information internally and with the wider community.
- I ask that the Pastor, Staff and Pastoral Council examine current and anticipated realities regarding clergy staffing for St. Mary's and St. John Neumann Mission and begin to develop options to address the ongoing pastoral care of parishioners.
- I ask the Pastoral Council to develop focused strategies to channel peoples' desire to serve into ministries in the parish, including, in particular, the Hispanic community.

### **Acknowledgement:**

I am aware of the space challenges that the parish must deal with daily. I applaud the efforts of all to manage the flow of traffic in the parking lot and the use of building space

for an active parish. I know that this places stress on persons and programs. I trust that you will find creative solutions as you continue to explore options.

## **CONCLUSION**

During the pastoral visit, I became more aware of the strong bonds of community that permeate the parish. It was obvious to me that parishioners care deeply about their parish and take great pride in its vitality. I sensed a strong energy among parishioners and parish leadership and have no doubt that you will continue to bring the Gospel message to many. It was a pleasure to be with you. As your Bishop, I promise my support and prayers as you continue to be the presence of Christ in the community and in the neighborhood. I ask your prayers and support as I become acquainted with the blessings and challenges of my new vicariate—the Elizabeth Seton Vicariate. I wish you God's blessing.