This booklet summarizes the shared insights and wisdom of our parishioners. A great number of ideas, hopes, and concerns have been captured and recorded during the Season of Discovery. This booklet summarizes and prioritizes the top ten challenges and opportunities that are real for Saint Mary's at this time.
What We Have Done

St. Mary began Mission 150 last December. Through it the St. Mary’s Community is trying to understand what God wants us, each of us personally and the Parish as a whole, to be and to do. Following the Spirit’s lead, we gain understanding through prayer, listening, study, questioning and discussion. It is our hope that through the Mission 150 journey we will encounter Jesus and be led into a deeper participation in the life of God.

STEP ONE – DISCOVERING IS FINISHED
We completed the first of three seasons of the Mission 150 Journey - Discovery—with a Sundae Fest last May. The Season of Discovery helped us learn from one another. Together we named key strengths and challenges that are real for St. Mary at this time. While we have captured and recorded a great deal (survey data, hopes, program ideas, concerns, feelings and key issues) the heart of our work has been summarized in ten opportunities and challenges. These issues have long-term impact on our lives, will not go away by themselves, and need to be taken seriously as we look to the future. These key issues are each detailed in this booklet.

We invite you to pray over them and sit with them, and reflect on the many questions posed. They set the environment in which we live and from which God is calling us into a faithful future.
Looking Ahead

STEP TWO – SEASON OF DISCERNMENT
The next season of Mission 150, “Discerning God’s Vision,” begins this fall. This is a time of asking and answering anew, “What is God calling us at St. Mary to be and do at this time in our history?” You have told us what is important to you; now we must discern what is important to God. Your prayers throughout this quest are essential. As we approach our 150th anniversary as a vibrant, progressive Catholic Community, we are called to “seek together what is God’s vision for us as a parish.” As a community we are now called to the very things the Catholic Church engaged in 50 years ago with Vatican II led by our Pope John XXIII.

Often when we sing and pray, we say, “Ask and it shall be given unto you; seek and ye shall find.” That is just what we must do now. Imagining God’s dream for our future requires us to slow down, pray, listen together and discuss together what God has in store for us.

During this season we will be sharing with you different resources and ways that you can participate in and prayerfully support this time of discerning God’s vision for our parish through the fall months.

This is an exciting and important time in the life of our parish. God has given us all gifts to be used for the sake of the Parish. We hope you will find the appropriate ways to enter into this rich time and to prepare yourself to receive the gift of God’s Vision as it comes to us personally and as a parish.
#1 What Is Your Priority?

Today's culture speaks to a "go, go, go" and a "do, do, do" mentality that makes it difficult to slow down and discern who God is calling us to be and how God is asking us to spend our time.

In our Discovery Season of Mission 150, many people stated that they feel stretched thin and overwhelmed with the demands of life. We have so many choices to make on a daily basis it's hard to know even where to begin.

**Where does GOD fit into our daily schedule?**

**Are we choosing how we spend our time, or is each day swept away by what we believe we "have to do"?**

All of this impacts how we live our lives as Christians and on how we discover God’s will together in the dynamics of our world today.
#2 Are You Leading by Example?

Members of our parish have identified that passing on our faith to our children is a huge challenge in today's world and have claimed it as a top priority.

Research says that faith is caught, not just taught. We all learn by example.

The opportunity and challenge we share is to use all our time and talents to create a stronger faith community. Responding to this challenge will require the example set by all of us.
#3 Have You Used Your Gifts Today?

Many parishioners expressed desires to engage more fully in parish life but feel constrained by lack of time as well as a lack of awareness of their God-given gifts and talents.

Are you making good use of your abilities?

Fear and doubt can block our desire to identify, develop and use the rich blessings we have received. Together we can help one another identify, develop and use our gifts. Recognizing the many gifts God gives each of us can move us from a mind-set of scarcity to one of abundance.

In our “St. Mary’s Neighborhood,” we have the tremendous opportunity to enrich each other’s lives by sharing our gifts and learning from one another.
#4 Do You Love Thy Neighbor?

Parishioners named very strongly that the community at St. Mary’s is one of our greatest strengths and gifts. Learning together, spaghetti suppers, God’s Groceries food pantry, our response to crisis in the face of loss, death or need demonstrate our mutual commitment.

They also named this fellowship as one our greatest opportunities and challenges. When parishioners have been most involved and connected to one another in shared faith and service, they reported that they felt most blessed, supported and spiritually alive.

Parishioners need one another to be good and faithful Catholics – being the Church is a team sport. We live in times that reflect individualism. It is easy to become isolated from one another, even uncomfortable with meeting one another.

As we look to the future, this is a key issue for the parish as we cannot live Christian lives without one another, but rather must live for one another.
#5 Are You There Yet?

Becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ is a journey that requires a lifetime of effort to reach the final destination. Whether we were raised in the church attending Catholic school or participating in faith formation or converted later in life, we are all faced with challenges in our faith journey.

Parishioners expressed a strong desire for continued spiritual formation, to be part of a "community that matures them in the faith."

At the same time the data collected shows that as a percentage, few parishioners engage in the kinds of personal and communal activities that will enable their continued growth in faith and discipleship. Without action, we risk drifting away from Christ or remaining in a static relationship, void of true discipleship.

As a result of our often very busy and fragmented lives, our opportunity and challenge as a parish is to fuel the fire of continued learning in our faith.
#6 Do You Feel Welcome Here?

Feedback from the parish is mixed. Many parishioners expressed deep sentiment towards the parish, identifying the "welcoming" feeling they have experienced.

Other data suggests that the size of our parish inhibits a personal connectedness among parishioners. Some even expressed a feeling of disconnect between various parish groups.

Who is really responsible for this feeling?

We are! We are the handshakes, eyes, smiles and hugs of Jesus. Sunday mass is just the beginning of our week's journey in showing hospitality to our fellow parishioners and community.

As a parish, our opportunity and challenge is to include, support, nurture, value and accept EVERYONE who walks through St. Mary's doors and into our hearts.

Why? Because.... all are welcome in this place.
#7 How Big Is Our Neighborhood?

Why do we care about what happens outside of our church?

Why are we going to Guatemala?

Why are we welcoming children from Nicaragua?

Why do we share God’s Groceries with those in need?

Do we enlarge the St. Mary’s Neighborhood by embracing these opportunities?

Vatican II says, “The church is missionary by its very nature.”

Parishioners echoed that sentiment repeatedly throughout the Season of Discovery. One mother said, “If you want to raise your children as Christians, involve them in service.” Parish responses widely affirmed the opportunity and challenge of being a parish that exists for the sake of the world and not just for our parishioners.
“Whom do we serve?” was a key concern raised by your feedback.

This was expressed especially as passion, care, and concern for how the parish ministers to children, tweens, teens and young adults. There is no lack of concern for ministry to adults and seniors. However, looking at all the opportunities and challenges in the “St Mary Neighborhood” a desire to support, engage, involve and nurture teens and young adults is a special concern.

Members of these groups bring wonderful gifts, but also face unique and in some cases unprecedented challenges to live as Catholics today.

As a parish we call one another to embrace creatively and dynamically this concern for being the church together – all generations, living our faith with and for one another.
#9 Are You Plugged In?

We are living in the digital age, where information can be at our fingertips in a matter of seconds. Many people have embraced this reality but some have not, thus creating the digital divide.

**How do you communicate with your family on a daily basis?**

**What is the most effective form of communication for you?**

During the Season of Discovery, many parishioners named communication efforts as a key issue related to the effectiveness of our parish. Meeting the diverse and ever-changing communication needs of parishioners can be a challenge but also a unique opportunity.

If we don’t embrace new modes of communication, we risk isolating members of our parish. By embracing new avenues of communication, we have the opportunity to reach more people and inspire them as they continue to enrich their faith journeys.

---

**Looking Ahead**

**STEP TWO – SEASON OF DISCERNMENT**

The next season of Mission 150, “Discerning God’s Vision,” begins this fall. This is a time of asking and answering anew, “What is God calling us at St. Mary to be and do at this time in our history?” You have told us what is important to you; now we must discern **what is important to God**. Your prayers throughout this quest are essential. As we approach our 150th anniversary as a vibrant, progressive Catholic Community, we are called to “seek together what is God’s vision for us as a parish.” As a community we are now called to the very things the Catholic Church engaged in 50 years ago with Vatican II led by our Pope John XXIII.

Often when we sing and pray, we say, “Ask and it shall be given unto you; seek and ye shall find.” That is just what we must do now. Imagining God’s dream for our future requires us to slow down, pray, listen together and discuss together what God has in store for us.

During this season we will be sharing with you different resources and ways that you can participate in and prayerfully support this time of discerning God’s vision for our parish through the fall months.

This is an exciting and important time in the life of our parish. God has given us all gifts to be used for the sake of the Parish. We hope you will find the appropriate ways to enter into this rich time and to prepare yourself to receive the gift of God’s Vision as it comes to us personally and as a parish.
#10 Are You Called to Be a Leader?

Our pastor and staff continue to drive most of what we do at St Mary. If we are to address the opportunities and challenges of our parish, we need to affirm, develop, empower and welcome the leadership gifts of all members.

You strongly affirmed this opportunity and challenge with your feedback. You acknowledged the gift of Fr. Pat and the staff, but you also affirmed that through baptism all members are called to leadership and ministry.

As we look to the future it is essential to cultivate vocations for Christian leadership among us. Without our prayerful attention and response to the call of the Spirit, we risk a leadership vacuum in the midst of challenging times for the church.

We have an opportunity to foster lay ministry and vocations to the priesthood and religious life that recognize the necessity of these gifts for our faith community.
Saint Mary’s Church

321 East Joliet Street
Crown Point, IN 46307
219-663-0044
www.stmarycp.org