

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

VISION STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**CHURCH OF
ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA,
NEW YORK**



02 Introduction

04 Recommendations

05 We Welcome All

06 We Worship With Joy

07 We Walk Together With Those in Need

08 We Reverence God in the Wonder of Creation

09 Implementation Plan

11 IP: We Welcome All

13 IP: We Worship With Joy

14 IP: We Walk Together With Those in Need

15 IP: We Reverence God in the Wonder of Creation

17 A Word of Gratitude

Over the past five years, we, the parishioners of the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, participated in a strategic planning process by which we might better understand our mission as an apostolic community. This discernment included asking basic questions about our history as a Jesuit Roman Catholic parish in the Upper East Side, our current identity, and our aspirations for the future, including what we together might contribute to the larger church and the world. A concise *Mission Statement* and a more detailed *Vision Statement* were the initial fruits of that process.

MISSION STATEMENT

The love of Christ impels us to welcome all, to worship joyfully and pray fervently, to walk together with those in need, and to reverence God in the wonder of Creation.

VISION STATEMENT

The full text of the *Vision Statement* may be accessed on the parish's website, ignatius.nyc.

The *Vision Statement* flows from the inspiration and mandate of our *Mission Statement*. In it, we recognize that the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola is a community of faith that shares the gifts each of us brings; a community in which our faith is enriched through the cultivation of a deep spirituality; and a community of diversity that seeks to grow in unity of faith and purpose. The crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic bolstered our resolve to re-encounter one another and create a "new paradigm of Church."

Accordingly, a Planning Committee of twelve diverse and committed parishioners worked to develop this new paradigm. After much prayer, contemplation, feedback from fellow parishioners, and discussion, the committee presented a *Vision Statement* that focused on four assertions (each partially realized, each partly aspirational) that we agree to be essential to our identity as a parish.

We Welcome All
We Worship With Joy
We Walk Together With Those in Need
We Reverence God in the Wonder of Creation

In our strategic planning process, those four statements provided the framework for the creation of more specific goals for action—the next logical step in our discernment process. Four Action Plan Committees were tasked with fleshing out the above statements with recommendations for initiatives to implement the *Vision Statement*.

Those recommendations are on the following pages.

A full-page background image with a blue color overlay. It depicts a woman from the chest up, wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored, vertically striped shirt. Her hands are clasped together in front of her, and her eyes are closed, suggesting a moment of reflection or prayer. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a stone wall or architectural structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a community steeped in Ignatian spirituality, we will continue to welcome to our parish everyone who intentionally seeks out others to experience their faith. It is our fervent hope that more people will want to deepen their engagement in faith with us. Our new paradigm of Church will engender openness and warmth to everyone who wishes to be a part of our parish community. We will accomplish this by:

- creating a parish that is appealing to others because of our spirit of welcome and inclusion, as well as our active engagement with the world beyond our doors.
- ensuring that we respond to contemporary concerns of the world and the Church.
- engaging teens, young adults, and families in programs and activities that foster their faith formation.
- communicating to a wider audience the vibrant nature of our parish and inviting them to join us.
- fostering a meaningful experience of community—at Masses, coffee hours, liturgies, or social, cultural, and educational events and programs.
- being present to senior members of the parish who are now unable to participate actively in the life of the parish.

A second element of our apostolic community is that we “*worship with joy.*” Our encounter with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is central to our identity as a Catholic community of faith and love. We also value the contemplative nature of Ignatian spirituality. It grounds us in our faith and challenges us to be creative in envisioning a new paradigm of church that broadens our horizon beyond the boundaries of the parish. We will accomplish this by:

- offering programs on Ignatian spirituality and opportunities for spiritual direction.
- identifying and providing opportunities for women to participate more meaningfully in leadership positions and liturgical activities and programs of the parish.
- promoting greater participation in the liturgical ministries of the parish.
- broadening our forms of worship that are resonant with Catholic tradition and reflect the breadth of the universal church.

An third part of our identity as a parish is that *"we walk together with those in need."* Inspired by Catholic social teaching, we are committed to the promotion of justice through acts of charity, advocacy, and involvement with like-minded institutions and organizations. To build a more just and equitable world we must accompany those women, men, and children whose dignity has been compromised by social structures, benign neglect, or personal and communal prejudices. Our faith impels us to act when innocent victims are left by the roadside to fend for themselves. We will accomplish this by:

- becoming better versed in Catholic social teaching and advocating on behalf of issues and causes that are consistent with it.
- identifying local, national, and international opportunities for parishioners to engage in volunteer activities that expose them to the lived experiences of those who are in need.
- exploring ways to raise the level of consciousness to the existential importance of issues of social justice among all parishioners, especially among school-aged children, teenagers, and young adults.

WE REVERENCE GOD IN THE WONDER OF CREATION

A fundamental cornerstone to our mission is our commitment to “*reverence God in the wonder of creation.*” Inspired by Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’*, we acknowledge the importance of caring for our “common home.” This goal must become both a parish and an individual commitment. Failing to do so not only calls into question the very principles and aspirations that define our parish, but more significantly jeopardizes the very sustainability of life on this planet. Our actions today will ensure a better future for generations to come. We will accomplish this by:

- adopting a *Laudato Si’* platform that engages everyone in the parish.
- converting to the use of environmentally acceptable materials and instituting policies for energy efficiency, waste reduction, and recycling.
- fostering an understanding of creation-centered and ecological spirituality.
- educating and advocating for climate and environmental issues by collaborating with local community service organizations that can offer parishioners opportunities to commit to public space improvement.
- promoting ways to raise consciousness of the importance of climate control.

A blue-tinted photograph showing an elderly woman with short white hair and glasses, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and a striped skirt. She is being assisted by a younger woman with blonde hair tied back, who is leaning over her. The background is a crowded outdoor area with other people blurred. The text "IMPLEMENTATION PLAN" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The multitude of ways to realize the aspirations of the four assertions of the *Vision Statement*, recommended by each Action Plan Committee, far exceed the resources of the parish. However, we can confidently begin the implementation process with the action items that are enumerated below, recognizing at the same time that they are the beginning of an organic process with each one building upon the other and expanding in scope over the next several years. In other words, with the introduction of these action items we initiate the work of building a new paradigm of church that honors our rich heritage as a Jesuit Catholic parish and guides our path to the future.

The action items to implement our vision are on the following pages.

1. Promote greater involvement of families, youth, and young adults in the life of the parish.

It is through the recognition of the parish as a shared responsibility that we will create a welcoming environment for all. As a means to this end, programming will be designed to encourage parishioners of all ages to participate actively in the liturgical, educational, cultural, social, and community service activities of the parish. Of special importance in planning the future of the church is the role youth and young adults have if we are to secure a welcoming environment for all. Youth leadership teams will be created that will work with all the ministries of the parish. The importance of informal events that bring parishioners together is also an important component of creating a welcoming environment. Social events, such as family pizza and spaghetti nights, Friday night family bingo, potluck dinners, dances, etc. will be scheduled throughout the year. Such events allow us to welcome friends and neighbors, who are not parishioners, into our community.

2. Promote greater involvement with our senior members and the homebound who are unable to join us in person.

To welcome all will truly be achieved when we include those who wish to be present in person but are unable to do so. We benefit from the wisdom of those who have had a long history with the parish or who have an ardent desire to participate in the life of the parish from their residences. The joy that we experience as parishioners becomes more authentic when it is shared with those who wish to be among us. Parish families who wish to journey with our seniors and homebound will be invited to participate in a "buddy system." To be invited into our parish as a place of welcome means all forms of barriers, whether physical or discriminatory, must be dismantled. As a shared responsibility, all of us need to be engaged in that work.

3. Create programming that invites parishioners to explore what it means to be Catholic.

Among the first ways of

welcoming and introducing people to the parish is explaining who we are and what we, as Catholics, believe. The planning process revealed the desire among parishioners to have a basic understanding of what it means to be a Catholic, whether as a primer or a refresher course. In other words, what are the basics that every Catholic should know? In addition to the “Back To Basics” presentations that were initiated in the Fall of 2022, lectures on matters of faith, including faith traditions other than Christian, will be scheduled on an annual basis.

1. Promote the primacy of place of Ignatian Spirituality in the faith life of the parish. The richness of the gift of Ignatian spirituality is something that needs to be more widely offered through programs, as well as the opportunity for individual spiritual direction. A qualified cohort of trained lay leaders will play a significant part in expanding the reach of offering parishioners an experience of Ignatian Spirituality, on both the individual and communal levels. To achieve this goal will require a coordinated program of preparation for those interested in being the leaders of individual or group experiences of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, days of recollection, and retreats.

2. Promote greater involvement of lay leaders in the liturgical offerings of the parish, especially among women and youth. Inviting lay leaders to greater involvement requires an explanation of what roles these can be within the rich tradition and doctrines of the Church. A discernment process will be initiated to explore how this goal might become a reality.

3. Provide more opportunities to gain a deeper appreciation of the Bible and other forms of worship. Our hunger to know more about what it means to be a Catholic is accompanied by the desire to learn more about the Bible and to experience a wider range of how to worship together. Presentations on the books of the Bible will be enhanced from the number that have been recently offered. Bible study groups will be formed. Other opportunities to gather together will be offered, such as days of prayer and reflection, roundtable discussions, Eucharistic Adoration, and communal penance services.

1. Promote an awareness of “those in need” and how we are to accompany them. If we are to walk together with those in need, we need to be able to know who they are. Catholic Social Teaching is a primary resource that grounds our understanding not only of who they are, but also of why we must accompany them. A presentation on the Social Encyclicals will be offered as part of the series, Back to Basics. The poor among us is not limited to the economic condition of someone or a group of people. Rather, “the poor” encompasses all those who are victimized by all forms of social injustice, discrimination, and any manner of systematic prejudice or violence. A meaningful way to accompany those in need requires us to have an actual experience of what it means to walk in their shoes. Immersive simulation workshops and activities will be offered to parishioners who wish to experience what it is like to be victims of social injustice. Volunteer service trips to regions where help is needed to care for the poor will be offered.

2. Publicize local area service opportunities. At times, to walk together with those in need will entail rolling up our sleeves and actually getting our hands dirty. As a parish, we will sponsor a “Week of Service” and identify local community opportunities to assist neighbors in need, locally and regionally.

3. Commit parish resources to accompany those in need. Good intentions will take us only so far in walking together with those in need. More is required if we are to actualize our vision for the parish. We will investigate ways to be present, on a regular basis, to those in our community who are in need: the hungry (a parish food pantry); the victims of domestic violence (referrals to shelters and counseling services); migrant families in NYC (formal sponsorships); LGBTQ and transgender teens/young adults who are homeless or suicidal (referrals to organizations that are equipped to care for their needs); etc.

1. As a parish and individually, adhere to the principles and practices of the *Laudato Si'* Platform. The sustainability of life on our planet will require sacrifices by everyone. We will join the effort to reduce our carbon footprint. We will monitor our consumption of goods, including our reliance on fossil fuels and other natural resources. Where possible, we will compost waste and recycle. A parish ministry will be established to assist us in ways to care for all God's creation.

2. Promote a greater awareness of the urgent need to care for creation and address global warming. Practical steps of caring for creation need to be accompanied with prayer and educating ourselves about the nature and scope of ecological awareness. There will be an annual Mass for the Care of Creation. We will explore ways in which to incorporate our concern about the environment into our liturgical practices (for example, an interfaith prayer service).

3. Collaborate with other parishes and organizations. Systemic and structural changes on a far larger scale than at the parish level are needed to address this issue. We will work together with other parishes and organizations to promote the care of creation and advocate for ecological awareness among leaders of industry and government. To do less would be an act of surrender to those who continue to ignore the urgency of the need to care for our planet and safeguard for future generations the sacredness of creation.

**OUR PARISH,
OUR HOME**

**OUR MISSION,
OUR VISION**

Our Shared Responsibility

A photograph of an older man with glasses, wearing a dark suit jacket over a clerical collar, speaking at a wooden podium. A microphone is positioned in front of him. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "A WORD OF GRATITUDE" is centered over the image in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

A WORD OF GRATITUDE

With the publication of this Implementation Plan we conclude our five-year strategic planning process. I now take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in this initiative—the members of the Mission Statement Committee, Vision Statement Committee, and Action Plan Committees, parishioners who submitted responses to the survey prepared by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), and participants in either the virtual “Town Hall Meeting” or the listening sessions that were facilitated by members of the Vision Statement Committee. The final phase was guided by the wisdom of the members of the Parish Council. When added together, more than 1,400 parishioners actively participated in the strategic planning process. To each of you, a heartfelt thank you!

Now the real work begins. A roadmap has been prepared for us to guide our actions and decision-making as we build a new paradigm of church, built on the strong foundation of our heritage as a vibrant Jesuit Catholic parish of the Upper East Side. However, we must keep in mind that our vision is not limited to the geographical boundaries of the parish. Rather, relying on God’s grace we will labor in his vineyard and embody a sacred place that welcomes all, worships joyfully, walks with the poor of the world, and reverences all that God has created.

As we begin our journey of implementation, let us pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that everything we do redounds to the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Dennis J. Yesalonia, S.J.
Pastor

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Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, New York
980 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10028
(212) 288-3588 | ignatius.nyc



Church of St. Ignatius Loyola
A Shared Responsibility
