St. Thomas Aquinas Parish

Message Mission Ministry Music Maintenance

Saint Thomas Aquinas
2020 Pastoral Plan

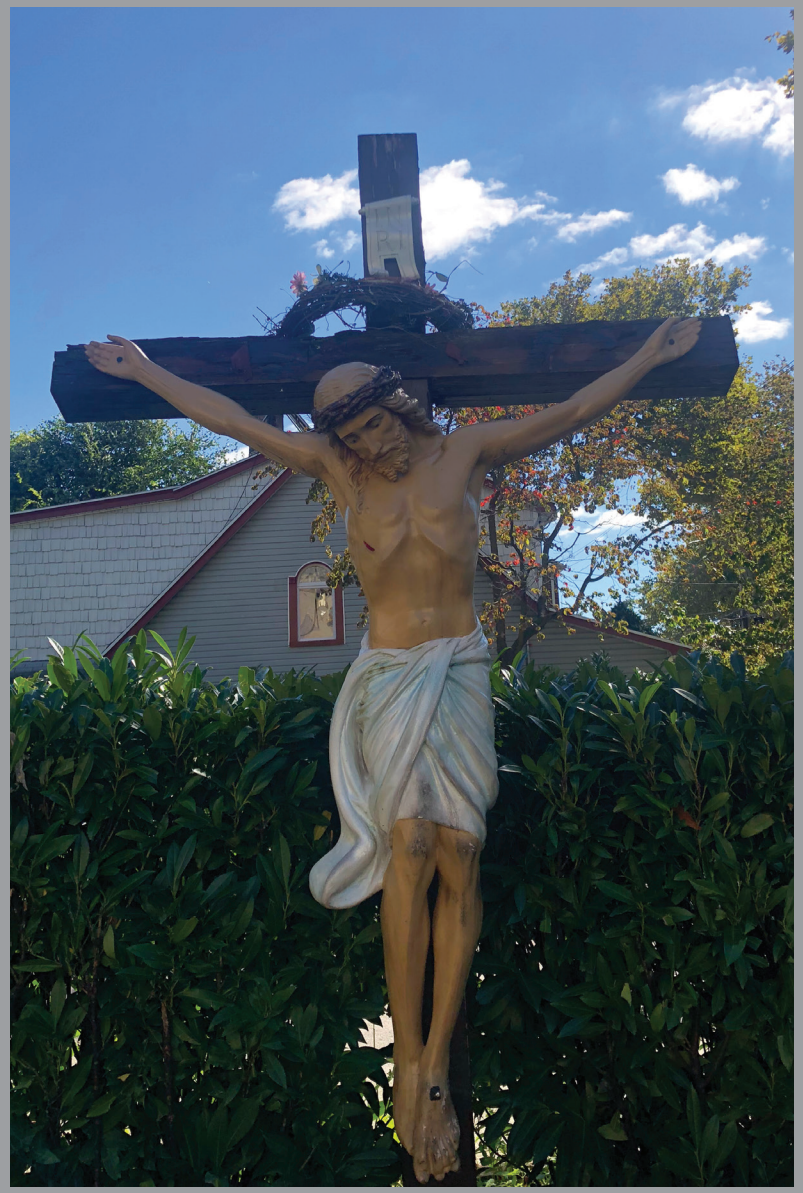
"The authors of the New Testament are not trading in generalities and abstract principles; they are telling the world about a revolution, an earthquake, an emergency. Jesus is risen from the dead, and therefore your whole life has to be rearranged around him."
– Bishop Robert Barron, in the Foreword to
The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium) by Pope Francis

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In 1884, construction began on a small mission Church on Flatbush Avenue. In January 1885, St. Thomas Aquinas Church opened its doors. Our number of parishioners quickly outgrew our capacity to serve them, prompting the opening of Resurrection parish in 1924 and the parishes of Good Shepherd, Our Lady Help of Christians, and Mary, Queen of Heaven in 1927. Our parish built a new, larger Church building on Hendrickson Street that Bishop Molloy dedicated on October 30, 1932.

In 2020, we will celebrate 135 years of ministry to the People of God in Flatlands and Marine Park. In 135 years, the neighborhood and the world has changed, but the urgency in the Message of the Gospel remains.

As we continue with the ministry begun 135 years ago, we contemplate the good fruit we must produce to ensure that Christ is at the center of our lives and the Church is at the center of our neighborhood. To that end, we contemplate **Message, Mission, Music, Ministry, and Maintenance.**



Message

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?
He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord, your God,
with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.
This is the greatest and the first commandment.
The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The
whole law and the prophets depend on
these two commandments.'"
– Matthew, 22: 36-39

In considering the message, we endeavor to break open the Word of God at Mass and in faith-sharing groups, listening and having an encounter with Christ in the Gospel. We will focus not only upon faith but also upon works, striving to bring the Word of God into our every day lives. Thus, we consider our mission and ministry.

Mission

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."
– Matthew, 28: 18-20

As we contemplate our mission, we contemplate who we are and what we are to do in light of the risen Christ. In Pope Francis' most recent publication, *Rejoice and Be Glad (Gaudete et Exsultate)* he noted that he would like to insist primarily on the call to holiness that the Lord addresses to each of us, personally: *"Be holy, for I am holy"* (Leviticus, 11:44; 1 Peter, 1:16). He noted that holiness is the most attractive face of the Church, and he contemplated the holiness present in the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, and in elderly religious who never lose their smile. Pope Francis spoke of the saints "next door".

Accordingly, our mission is to live the message and answer Pope Francis' call to holiness by loving God, loving our neighbor, and creating disciples. In creating disciples, we aim to embrace our responsibility to invite friends and family to Mass to hear and share the Word of God.

In furtherance of this mission, our parish just received excellent news. **We have been selected as one of only 20 pilot parishes in the nation to participate in the Dynamic Parish initiative.** This initiative aims to trigger deeper levels of engagement and faith practice in a parish, and comes along with significant resources (books, videos, events, consultants, etc.) at no cost to us but with a value of approximately one million dollars. As the Dynamic Parish initiative seeks to inspire parishes and individual parishioners to become ever vibrant parts of the body of Christ through which faith and works flow with energy and joy, it will be an exciting blessing as we live out the call to urgency from Bishop Barron and the call to holiness from Pope Francis. We will hear much more of this initiative in the coming months, and I am excited for all of us to be deeply involved as we move toward our 135th anniversary.

Ministry

"Just so, every good tree bears good fruit …" – Matthew, 7:17

In considering ministry, we focus on works and the practical means in which we aim to show our love for God and our neighbor and create disciples.

We aim to embrace a renewed commitment to ministry in our parish, and we endeavor to focus on service and volunteering in caring for those in our community and around the world. We will build on programs that we have already begun, such as collecting clothing for the homeless in New York, and collecting donations for Catholic Relief Services to help them provide food and necessities to the poor and those in need all over the globe. We will aim to provide opportunities for every parishioner to participate in living out the Gospel through service, and the Dynamic Parish initiative will provide invaluable resources in furtherance of our ends.

Music

"… be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father."
– Ephesians, 5:18-20

"He who sings prays twice." – Saint Augustine

We have four choirs at St. Thomas Aquinas, consisting of the choir of the bells, the adult choir, the contemporary choir, and the children's choir. We will seek to expand and explore new types of music to enhance our Mass celebration, and I ask that any parishioners with musical talent and ability share their talent with our parish community by joining our music ministry.

Maintenance and Renovation

"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."
– Walt Disney

Construction of our parish buildings began on the Little Church over 100 years ago in 1884, before Flatlands was part of Brooklyn, and before Brooklyn was part of New York City. The passage of time inevitably brings changes, with construction of our main Church building in 1930, conversion of the Little Church to a gymnasium in the 1930's, and restoration of the Little Church as a place of worship in the 1940's. In 1955, construction began on our school building on Hendrickson Street, the auditorium (later named Msgr. King Hall), and the Brothers' residence on Flatbush Avenue. 1969 brought the beginning of reconstruction and modernization of our main Church building, and we renovated the Little Church in the 1990's.

Against this backdrop, as pastor, I contemplate our parish needs in preparing for the future. It is in this spirit that we develop our 2020 plan that pertains not only to our parish community but also our parish buildings. We want to ensure that we leave a vibrant parish community and modernized parish resources for future generations, for whom we want Christ at the center of life and St. Thomas Aquinas parish at the center of the neighborhood.

The time has come for air conditioning in the main Church, so that we can make full use of the building, even during the summer months. The pews have already been removed from the Little Church, but much work remains to complete a renovation into a multi-purpose center that can serve as a gathering place for our parish family before and after Masses, and when having group meetings and events. Finally, we need to keep up with basic maintenance on all buildings.

Thanks to your generosity in caring for the needs of our neighbors in the Annual Catholic Appeal, we have exceeded our goal and the excess funds will come back to our parish for our general needs.

Thanks to your generosity in the Generations of Faith campaign, money has become available to begin our air conditioning project.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

I humbly ask you to consider re-committing to your Generations of Faith pledge and, if possible, to increase your pledge. Our ability to complete renovation of the Little Church in time for our 2020 celebration of our 135th anniversary will be dependent upon your continued support. We aim to begin our celebration on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on January 12, 2020, to commemorate the first baptism recorded in our parish in January 1885. Our celebration will continue throughout the year and conclude with a celebration on November 1, 2020, to commemorate Bishop Molloy's dedication of our main Church on October 30, 1932.

I am also eternally grateful for your increased support in our weekly collections. I thank you for your continued support in helping our parish pay our basic bills, and we will dedicate a second collection on the third Sunday of each month in specific support of our 2020 plan.

My brothers and sisters, with so much always going on at St. Thomas Aquinas, I am joyful at all we have accomplished and joyful as I consider the future of our parish that I will help shape with all of you, the saints next door. Let us look to the Holy Family to be our guide and pray that the Blessed Mother will bestow all her graces upon us as we endeavor to live out the Gospel.

Your Brother in Christ,

Fr. Dwayne Davis

Fr. Dwayne D. Davis