

Environment

Direction *Snapshot of current practices*

Diocesan direction

- New pope and new bishop; pastorally driven leadership
- Increasing Diocesan efforts to strengthen and promote Catholic school education
- Pending diocesan capital campaign to strengthen and promote parishes, schools and evangelization
- Consolidated diocesan services and programs
- New, merging and clustering parishes and schools
- Ongoing diocesan directives to parishes
- Shortage and retirement of priests causing changes
- Slight increase in priestly vocations
- Diaconate program being reinstated

Parish direction

- Stable parish; one of the largest in the diocese
- Two priests (pastor and associate) and deacon
- Desire to engage all parishioners
- Seeking stronger financial stability
- Striving to be a stewardship parish
- Continuously growing school and faith formation program
- Growth is taxing existing physical plant/facilities

Trends *Economic, social, religious, political, etc., forces that impact our strategy*

- Increasing moral ambiguity
- "Cafeteria Catholics" pick and choose teachings
- Hesitation of clergy to preach morals due to societal pressures
- Societal expectations/busyness of life hampers faith life
- Societal and political challenges to religious freedoms (misunderstanding, apathy, inaction)
- Disintegration of nuclear family
- Technology provides opportunities and creates challenges
- Globalization

Strategies

Our shared agenda for success

Evangelization: Develop and implement an evangelization plan that educates and prepares parishioners to better share their faith.

Stewardship: Call all parishioners to a full sharing of their time, talent and treasure for the growth of our faith community, including support for OLCEF.

Catholic education: Demonstrate a strong commitment to Catholic education for all parishioners via the parish school and faith formation programs.

Leadership: Strengthen Christian leadership by calling forth and equipping current and future leaders in our faith community.

Liturgy: Nourish people through the sacraments and liturgy within a vibrant and prayerful worship environment.

Critical Realities

Things that affect our work

- Very young parish (younger than average)
- Parish and school landlocked, tight on space
- Lack of diversity; demographics of Rockford
- Large parish communications are complex due to variation in parishioner interests, busyness and attentiveness
- Inconsistency in lay leadership
- Relationship with Consolata Missionary Sisters
- Parish has a thriving school
- High visibility of church in the community

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Mission

Why we exist

We actively invite people to a deeper relationship with Christ Jesus through the Eucharistic celebration.

Vision

What we constantly strive to be

Be a Christ-centered Catholic community that welcomes, serves and guides people to a life of holiness.

Vision Metrics

Quantitative indicators that tell us we are living our vision

- Strong Mass attendance (including weekdays)
- Healthy school and faith formation enrollment
- Sound stewardship (giving of time [volunteer hours], talent, treasure)
- Meeting budget
- Growth of education foundation
- High retention of parishioners
- Participation in sacraments (baptisms, first communion, confirmations, marriages, healing of sick, funerals)
- Effective parish communication; appropriate use of social media
- Active support for homebound parishioners
- Strong or growing number of RCIA candidates
- Ministry/leadership succession
- Strong or growing number of CLOW attendees
- Community recognition
- Parishioner satisfaction survey and exit survey

Perceptions

How we want to be known. By whom?

Engaged Parishioners

- **Family:** "OLC is a welcoming and supportive community with lots of active families; it has become our second home."
- **Young adult:** "OLC challenges me to grow in my faith."
- **Adult:** "I feel a strong sense of community at OLC as I grow in my faith."
- **Senior:** "I appreciate that OLC provides opportunities for my spiritual growth and participation in this Catholic community."

Disengaged Parishioner: "OLC is so big, but I've noticed that they care and are inviting me to participate."

Visitor: "OLC is so friendly; what a wonderful celebration."

Community Partner: "If you have a need, OLC is the go-to parish that will respond and assist."

Larger Catholic Community: "OLC is welcoming, vibrant... and a great community partner!"

Diocese Official: "Friendly and alive, OLC is a generous parish too!"

Local Community: "OLC is a visible and energetic church that is actively engaged in our community."

Competitive Landscape *Why people choose other options*

- Some seek a more liberal/conservative congregation
- Some seek more opportunities for singles and empty nesters
- Perceived lack of excitement in youth program
- Other denominations focus more on entertainment
- Other groups offer greater conveniences (more parking, different service lengths and better timing)
- Some seek smaller congregation for intimacy
- Emerging cultural priorities that supersede church attendance
- Geographic relocation/snowbirds

Congregational Practices *Common issues of Catholic parishes*

How OLC is typical

- Stewardship and evangelization not understood
- Parishioner tithing is minimally practiced
- People are creatures of habit—same Mass time, same pew
- People shop for the parish they like
- Church/parish/Mass not first priority (comes after extracurriculars)
- Many attend Mass regularly without registering
- Minimal cultural diversity

How OLC is atypical

- Tuition free parish education (schools and faith formation)
- Strong focus on educational growth: schools/faith formation
- Wide variety of ministries
- Parish donates locally and globally
- Young parish: age of parish and parishioners

Responsibilities

What we do

- **Celebrate** faith through the sacraments and liturgy, fostering opportunities for prayer, worship, spiritual growth
- **Educate** in the faith throughout life's journey, including sacramental preparation in elementary, middle, high schools, and adult life
- **Serve** by proactively seeking to understand the needs of the community and empowering/challenging each other to fulfill our call to serve
- **Evangelize** through hospitality, inclusion, meeting people where they are and helping them grow spiritually
- **Build** community within OLC by being the best versions of ourselves and encouraging, empowering and challenging each other

Values

What is important to us

- Eucharist as the source and summit of all we do
- The Word of God and apostolic tradition
- Trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit
- Truth and discipleship
- Passion and humility
- Catholic values and education
- Support for life and social justice
- Stewardship, service, outreach
- Community, engaging parishioners