



## NEXT GENERATION CATHOLIC PARISH PART TWO

Last weekend through the Parish Bulletin, our Parish Website and our weekly video message, we introduced the **Next Generation Catholic Parish** initiative, noting that we are truly blessed to be selected to participate in this unique experience. As we mentioned previously, the **Catholic Leadership Institute**, which is sponsoring the initiative, is the organization which sponsored the Disciple Maker Index in the spring of 2018.

To be clear, the **Next Generation Catholic Parish** is not a program and it is not an Archdiocesan initiative. Although it has the permission and indeed the support of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, this is an independent initiative being offered to several parishes within the Archdiocese as a pilot, with perhaps some other parishes being invited at a later time.

We begin by acknowledging some very disturbing facts about parish life today throughout the United States. According to CLI, the disturbing facts regarding Catholics and their practice of their faith are as follows:

- 60-70% no longer practice their faith;
- 13% attend Mass once or twice a month;
- 10% attend Mass weekly, mostly out of habit;
- 7% are highly engaged with their faith.

With these statistics in mind, we can readily see that nationally only approximately 30% of Catholics are attending Mass sometime throughout a given month. Here at St. Frances Cabrini Parish, our attendance rate is actually much less. Before the pandemic, our attendance rate was only 22%. Since the pandemic, our attendance rate is only 12%. With these statistics, we have much work to do. The challenge before us is certainly formidable but not impossible. We want to do more than just survive; we want to thrive as a Community of faithful Catholics.

Having personally witnessed the ever-decreasing level of participation over the last 30 to 40 years and especially the rapid decrease in the last few years, I am not surprised at some other alarming national statistics as follows:

- Catholic marriages are down 55% since 1990;
- 1 in 5 children baptized do not receive their First Holy Communion;
- 2 in 5 children baptized do not receive the Sacrament of Confirmation;
- 85% of children confirmed stop practicing their faith by age 21.
- 91% of children will be leaving the Catholic Church.

These are alarming statistics for the Church in the United States. Our own experience here at St. Frances Cabrini is even more troubling. Marriages and baptisms have drastically decreased in the last 29 years. In 1990, there were 58 marriages and in 2019, there were only six marriages. This is a decrease of 90%. In 1990, there were 169 baptisms and in 2019, there were only 24 baptisms. This is an 86% decrease. Given the current state of affairs here at St. Frances Cabrini, we are blessed to be afforded this special opportunity to do something. Not every parish is being given this special gift of being mentored at this time. For the good of the Church, and especially for the good of our children and grandchildren and future generations, this is the time for our church-going parishioners to become fully engaged in the Next Generation Catholic Parish initiative. As a parish community, let us praise and thank God for this unique opportunity to assess where we are today, and where we want to be in five years and beyond.

~ Monsignor Michael P. McCormac