

Pastoral Transition Document

The Parish is Hospitable and Inclusive

The Parish of St. Eugene, as a Catholic community, extends its sense of family and being one body of Christ to include persons of all stations, political persuasions, cultures, races and sexual preferences. Examples include:

Participation by inmates from the minimum security prison in services and social events;

- Retreats and meetings for gay and lesbian members and their families;
- Sensitivity to the manner in which Catholicism is practiced by various cultural and ethnic groups;
- Inclusion of Spanish and other languages in the liturgy;
- Participation in interfaith dialogues and celebration;

Participation by women to the fullest extent allowable by the Church. Girls are welcomed as altar servers; women participate as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist and conduct daily communion services when appropriate. The spirituality of women is supported by Mary and other female role models portrayed in the Bible and Church history.

Parishioners look forward to extending their hospitality and inclusiveness to their new priest.

The Parish is a Community that Celebrates an Intergenerational Spectrum

The mean age at St. Eugene is 37. However, retirees also make up a significant and important portion of the congregation. The parish values worship, education, ministry, activities, music and art that reaches and engages this entire spectrum of ages. Ascending Life reaches out to the interests and concerns of seniors with activities and educational programs. Events such as the annual picnic, the retreats, recreational outings, and service projects of particular church groups are planned to bring generations together.

Young members are important to the parish. Homilies often contain stories youth can relate to and include humor, story-telling, drama and surprise to keep them engaged. The special achievements of the parish's younger members are recognized, and they are sometimes called forward to help the priest make a point during the homily. Three youth choirs perform regularly. Young people read the Word and serve as cantors at some services. They are visible in the larger Asheville community in their outreach ministries. Church youth groups are headed by dynamic, well-trained leaders.

The new pastor will not only be involved with parish youth, but will also be the administrator of next-door Asheville Catholic School and campus minister for UNC-Asheville. Asheville Catholic School is a priority for many church members, who have taught at or attended the school, or have children or grandchildren who attend now. The Catholic community at UNC-Asheville is also an important focus as it continues to grow.

The Eucharist is Source and Summit of the Life of the Parish

The parish has embraced the liturgical changes that have followed the Second Vatican Council, and perceives the weekly celebration of the Eucharist as an opportunity primarily for community worship, with private devotion being encouraged at other times.

Members greet one another before Mass and spend time together afterwards. The congregation, as community, willingly joins in song and prayer, and welcomes thought-provoking, challenging homilies that translate the teachings of the Church into the realities of their daily lives.

The very young are given an opportunity to participate in an age-appropriate liturgy of the Word. Young and old, male and female, are included as liturgical ministers, which reflects the inclusiveness of the parish.

The focus of the liturgical seasons is enhanced through changes in emphasis (such as a special penitential rite during Advent and Lent), appropriate music of the season, and decoration of the interior and exterior of the church building. Revitalized by the gift of the Eucharist and the support of the community, parish members leave the weekly celebration to lead their lives of faith and service.

The Parish Values Music, Art and Education as Part of its Vitality

The active participation of the parish in congregational singing has been noted by many visitors. This participation is encouraged by the opportunity to practice new hymns or anthems before Mass, the leadership of well-trained cantors, and the support of the adult choir. The importance of congregational singing is emphasized by the fact that the choir joins in or harmonizes with the singing, but seldom performs.

The children and youth of the parish are also given a special opportunity to be part of the music ministry of the parish by joining the Cherubs Choir, Children's Choir or the Youth Choir. The music meets the needs of the diverse community by the choice of season-appropriate hymns of different styles, with a mixture of traditional and contemporary hymnody, together with some bilingual hymns.

Parishioners are encouraged to use their God-given talents and creative energy to enhance the worship environment in a variety of ways that accent the community and culture of the parish. Many of the altar linens, ambo coverings, banners and other liturgical decorations are designed and made by participants in the Arts and Environment ministry.

The parish recognizes the importance of continuing education to nourish its faith and maintain its vitality. Series of talks, single lectures and/or workshops on a wide variety of topics are welcomed. Subjects as diverse as scripture, the sacraments, Christology, Mariology, Church history, the Church's position on war, and social justice issues, have been presented by the pastor as well as guest speakers, and have been well attended.

The Parish Assumes its Baptismal Call to Ministry and Service

The willingness of the members of the parish to respond to its baptismal call to ministry and service is reflected in the programs available to the entire community. These include more than 50 programs for those wishing to become active members of the church; the Landings program for those who have been away from the church, and Ascending Life for the mature members, to mention only a couple.

The youth of the church have heeded the call with service to the community. They work with the homeless shelters providing meals and minister to those who have great need. They also participate in service projects within the parish (i.e., the fall Rake 'n Run).

The parish shares its faith throughout the community by holding interfaith services and services with the other churches (St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Groce Methodist Church). Our tithe of 10% of each weekly offering enables ministry and service to be shared with an even greater number of community ministries.

The Parish Embraces the Challenges and Experience of its Children, Youth and Young Adults

St. Eugene is in the forefront providing meaningful ministries that involve our young people, enabling them to share their faith and to serve the community; e.g., serving meals at the local shelter or the children's choir singing at a nursing home.

Our Catholic school fosters the development of a service mentality, as well as providing an excellent education. The school is central to the parish community. Educational programs of all kinds are made available to young people of all ages.

Outreach to college students at UNC-Asheville has grown to be a recognizable entity on campus. The goal of the parish is to continue to welcome all youth and encourage them to feel that they have something to contribute to the church and to the community as they grow in their faith.

**The Parish Stands as a Positive Sign
of the Diversity of Catholicism
in our Vicariate and in our Diocese**

The Parish of St. Eugene embodies the very nature of what it means to be Catholic: open, affirming, embracing and inclusive – all in the name of Jesus. Women and youth are active in liturgy.

The elderly and infirm are ministered to when homebound. Ethnic customs and languages are integrated into the worship services. Parish activities are open to all regardless of sexual orientation, station in life, or socioeconomic status. The parish relishes the opportunity to evangelize. It humbly accepts its baptismal call to service and works in solidarity with the larger community in efforts toward social change. The parish promotes the universal acceptance of all of God's people.

**The Parish Embraces the Faith Journey,
Renewed by the Spirit,
Since the Second Vatican Council**

The Parish of St. Eugene, as *Gaudium et Spes* suggests, is a pilgrim people on the journey to the Kingdom.

As a body of believers united in Christ, the parish thrives in a post-Conciliar atmosphere. It focuses its time, energy, talents, prayers and financial gifts on a theology based on love and compassion with God as companion. The parish strives to respect everyone, to bear witness to the Word and to manifest a deep commitment to the needs of its members, and the community at large, wherever they are on their spiritual journey.

The parish respects the authority of God the Father, is inspired by the love of Jesus Christ the Son and is led by the Grace of the Holy Spirit. The liturgy is central to the parish, and nourishes every aspect of its communal life.

Summary

The Parish of St. Eugene celebrates the vast diversity of cultures, political persuasions, and stations of life as one church. With a mix of ages and socioeconomic backgrounds, the parish is able to recognize its strengths and use various talents in the abundant ministries that reach out to the parish and the surrounding community. To celebrate the Eucharist, the parish incorporates a varied style of worship appropriate for the season allowing for the inclusion of music, art and hymnody. The parish celebrates the liturgy of the Word by assuming its baptismal call to ministry and service, striving to apply the teachings of the Church in the daily realities of parishioners' lives. St. Eugene stands as a tribute to Catholicism in our Vicariate, involving the various sub-communities of youth, collegians, retirees, and the other various groupings, embracing the post-Conciliar atmosphere.

*Through the varied ministries, the array of devotional opportunities, and the continual educational outlets, the Parish of St. Eugene continues to message to all its people: **All Are Welcome.***

Respectfully submitted,

Pastoral Council
The Parish of St. Eugene
of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlotte
Asheville, North Carolina

March 2005