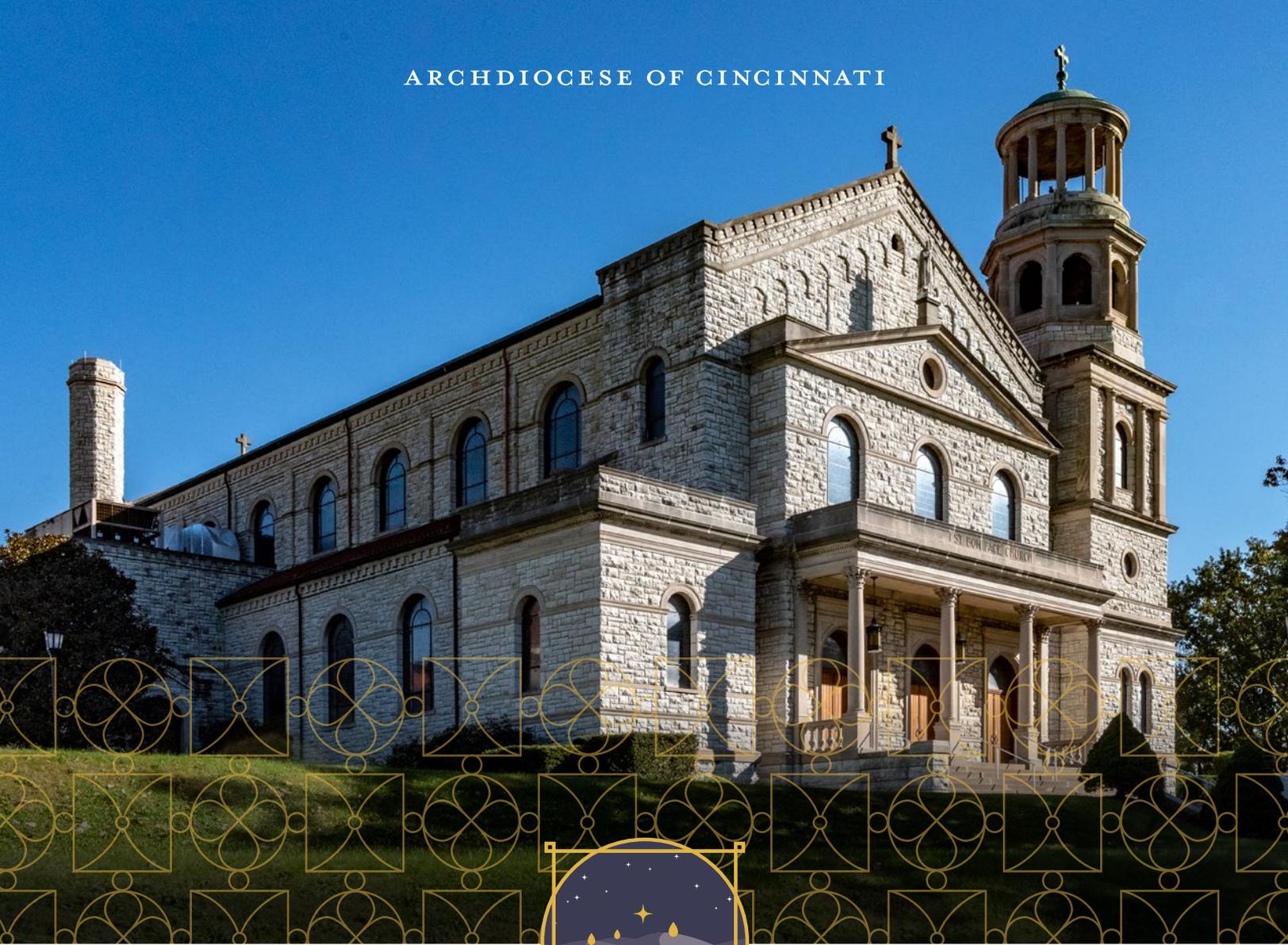


ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI



BEACONS *of* LIGHT

Parish Vitality

6 MONTH REPORT

February 2023



Contents

What Is the Parish Vitality Report?	4
Summary Observations	5
Beacons of Light General Info	6
Pastoral Planning Principles.	7
<i>Eucharist</i>	8
<i>Church</i>	9
<i>Leadership</i>	10
<i>Stewardship</i>	11
<i>Evangelization</i>	12
<i>Love in Action</i>	13
<i>Administration</i>	14
<i>Communications</i>	14
Upcoming Training, Guidance and Support . . .	15



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It has been four years now since we earnestly began the journey we now call Beacons of Light. Throughout the months leading up to the July 1, 2022, implementation of this initiative and in the months that have followed, I have often spoken about the need for parishes in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to move from *maintenance* to *mission*. It is this phrase that is key to the “WHY” we have spoken of since the beginning. Remember, if we lose focus on why we are doing this, success in our efforts will be hard to come by!

The Parish Vitality Report that follows has been created to provide a means through which to understand the progress of our Families of Parishes toward that great goal in the first six months of the implementation of Beacons from July through December 2022. I am deeply edified and encouraged to report that positive progress is being made. Recognizing, of course, there are also areas of less progress to be acknowledged.

It is important to note that Beacons of Light is designed in phases, with Phase 1 focused on Leadership – having the best people in key roles, building effective leadership teams and coming together to lead the change that is needed at this time. This phased approach provides the flexibility for each Family to do what is necessary to initiate the changes that are anticipated in the future. You will see here that pastors and their people are steadily moving toward or fulfilling the milestones for Phase 1. We know that significant steps are being taken now, and we fully expect to have much more progress to report this summer as we mark the completion of the first year of implementation.

With a change process as complex as the one which we are experiencing in our 57 Families of Parishes, we would expect to have an increase in stress, uncertainty and turmoil. The process has certainly been stressful for everyone. Gratefully, due to the leadership of pastors, staff, parishioner leaders and the support of the people of God, our parishes continue to be places of prayer, companionship and service. I wish to thank all of you who are helping to take the initial steps toward greater mission as you address the principles and parameters which lay the groundwork for what is to come.

Father Jan Kevin Schmidt
Director, Department of Pastoral Vitality



Father Jan Kevin Schmidt
*Director, Department of
Pastoral Vitality*



What Is the *Parish Vitality Report*?

The implementation of Beacons of Light marks a new chapter in the life of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. This *Parish Vitality Report* is intended to provide a snapshot of the movement toward greater parish vitality in the 57 Families of Parishes at the midpoint of the first year.



The report shares evidence of success and early wins in the process of unifying parishes toward greater fulfillment of mission. It also acknowledges the challenges and obstacles that pastors and their leadership groups (staff and councils) face in this process.

The information utilized for this report includes notes from Center for Parish Vitality (CPV) staff, observations of deans and Pastoral Center staff, reporting from pastors in fall 2022 deanery meetings, October Count data (from the past decade including 2022), adoption curve placement, general observations from Beacons liaisons, financials (2020 and 2021), anecdotes and anecdata. It is important to point out that the numbers of Families noted below are a conservative estimate based on the available information from these sources and more complete information will be available when the full year report is issued this summer. The report shares evidence of success and early wins in the process of unifying parishes toward greater fulfillment of mission. It also acknowledges the challenges and obstacles that pastors and their leadership groups (staff and councils) face in this process.

What Does the Report Not Include?

This report is not intended to be exhaustive. It draws on the data and reports of parish leaders that are available for Families of Parishes from July 1 – December 31, 2022, and is limited to insights that can be gleaned from this information. For example, financial giving, which is one indicator of parishioner engagement, is presently not available for the first six months of Beacons of Light, only prior to its implementation. The report is intended to provide an assessment of the current situation in Families of Parishes. Every attempt has been made to depict the breadth of experience — positive and negative — in Families to date.

This report is an interim version of the full year report, which is scheduled to be published in fall 2023.

How Is the Report Organized?

Following summary observations and a brief overview on Beacons of Light, the report is organized by the six guiding principles of Beacons of Light and two additional areas of focus, Administration and Communication. Each section includes the milestone(s) identified for the principle; a link to the full principle, parameter and vision points; and a brief summary of progress and movement in Families toward the principle. Objective data and pastoral insights are included when available.

Summary Observations

At the six-month mark of the Beacons of Light planning process, we generally observe:

The majority of our 57 Families are where we would expect or ahead of schedule. Only a handful of Families are seriously behind in the process, and the issues are clear. The remaining Families are more or less on track, perhaps with some significant challenges to overcome. **For a change management process such as Beacons of Light, these are favorable results at the six-month mark and are within expectations.** We are working to support all pastors specific to their progress and needs.

Qualitative measures of pastoral planning progress indicate that the faithful are open to this change process and also provide evidence that many Families of Parishes have had early successes along the path to greater vitality and canonical unification.

There are reasons for hope, based on objective measures of vitality (such as Mass attendance and financial giving). There are also reasons for concern consistent with the overall need for Beacons of Light. Mass attendance, although up from last year, has not recovered from COVID-19. Many pastors are stretched thin as they accommodate new assignments and the ramp-up of Beacons of Light.

Where Families of Parishes have taken advantage of the resources (digital, liaison, in-person events, etc.) provided for their assistance, success has come a bit more quickly.

BEACONS of LIGHT

General Info

Phase 1

Phase 1 of Beacons of Light began on July 1, 2022. Each Family of Parishes, with its assigned pastor and parochial vicars, began the work of pastoral and strategic planning. The pastoral planning work focused on Leadership: bringing parish leaders together to serve the Family; organizing pastoral councils; forming a Family Leadership Team; promoting from within or hiring competent and qualified staff to serve the Family in administration, evangelization and worship, as well as recruiting champions for Stewardship and Love in Action. The strategic work has focused on “first things” in the areas of finances, human resources, schools and other administrative matters. Many parishioners, therefore, have heard little about Beacons of Light in the last six months but will be hearing more in the future.

Leading up to the creation of the Annual Planning Report (due to Archbishop Schnurr in July 2023), each Family of Parishes has been working on realizing the six Beacons of Light principles, while also working toward conformity with the planning parameters.

Formation for Parish Leaders

In undertaking such an effort as Beacons of Light, it was important to provide formation for parish leaders. Even the most seasoned pastors, deacons and lay staff need formation and skills training in fields like change management, organizational leadership, human resources, communications strategy and more.

The multi-day quinquennial Presbyteral Convocation from September 26-29, 2022, was a week of intense formation for our priests on new modes of leadership and the central role that evangelization plays in building vital and healthy Families of Parishes. Both Father James Mallon, author of *Divine Renovation* and pastor of multiple parishes, and

Mr. Dan Cellucci, executive director of Catholic Leadership Institute, were well-received by our priests and offered insights into the critical role that pastors and parochial vicars play in this process.

The Center for Parish Vitality collaborated with other offices and departments within the Pastoral Center of the archdiocese to provide a number of formation events over the past six months, many of which are listed within the principles below, including:

- **Beacons Roundtable:** An online monthly series that brought together hundreds of parish leaders to share best practices, receive timely updates on Beacons of Light and focus on skills and tactics for effective parish leadership. Beacons Roundtable is an ongoing series that continues in 2023.
- **Leading from Your Strengths:** A one-day event during which pastors and staff (including 147 leaders from 21 Families) were introduced to strengths-based leadership, using CliftonStrengths talent identification assessment.
- **Emails from the Center for Parish Vitality:** Weekly emails that included links to various resources that can assist parish leaders in their work and growth in their skill sets to manage this change process. These weekly emails continue in 2023. Sign up at resources.catholicaoc.org/offices/parish-vitality/news.

Families of Parishes

There are 57 Families of Parishes (8 are single-parish Families, 49 include more than one parish)

It is important to note that one-parish Families are expected to address the pastoral planning goals of Beacons of Light, planning for growth and moving more fully toward mission.





Pastoral Planning Principles

*The entire Beacons of Light Pastoral Planning Pathway is organized around six foundational principles.
For Phase 1, each principle included a milestone to help focus efforts and measure progress.*



EUCCHARIST



CHURCH



LEADERSHIP



STEWARDSHIP



EVANGELIZATION



LOVE IN ACTION



EUCHARIST

The Mass is the source and summit of the whole Christian life. Accordingly, the Eucharist is the essential moment for building up and strengthening the parish community, along with the sacraments and other celebrations of the paschal mystery – the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Phase 1 Milestone: Hire or promote from within a director of worship who will be appointed to the Family Leadership Team.

Status: In response to the workshop on worship commissions in fall 2022, many Families are forming or strengthening parish worship commissions. Families of Parishes are also beginning to hire or promote from within directors of worship for their Families. Additionally, many parishes changed their Sunday Mass schedules to more closely conform to archdiocesan policy (reiterated in Parameters 4 and 5) regarding the number of Masses per priest per day and scheduling to reach at least 50 percent capacity at Sunday Mass.

- **Changes in Mass Schedule:** Total Masses for the Sunday obligation in the archdiocese:
2019: 588 2022: 512
- **Mass Attendance:** October 2022 counts for Masses in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's churches, chapels and oratories saw an encouraging increase, **up six percent** from 2021 (though still down 19 percent from 2019 pre-COVID-19 numbers).
- **Utilization:** Even after reducing 55 Masses and reducing seating numbers in 43 churches, 152 of our 207 churches have a utilization percentage less than 50 percent. **Eighty-two of these 152 churches were below 30 percent utilization.**



Learn more about Sunday Mass attendance throughout the archdiocese, including data and analysis for the last 10 years, reporting by deanery, Family, parish, and more at:
pathway.catholicaoc.org/pathway-tools/october-count-2022

- **With Zeal & Patience:** This workshop for parish worship commission members brought together liturgical leaders from **over 40** Families of Parishes to focus on the important role of the parish worship commission and to look ahead to the creation of a Family Worship Commission.



CHURCH

Each of us is called to actively participate as a member of a parish, the universal Church and our local Church, led by our archbishop. Parishes continually deepen the bonds of communion with other parishes.

Phase 1 Milestone: Begin building a faith community through common prayer, social time among parishioners and gatherings of leaders.

Status: Most Families have focused intentional prayer, activities and attention toward bringing together parishioners from the parishes within the Family, helping them become acquainted with one another and familiar with the parish churches, facilities and ministries of each of the parishes in the Family.

- **Families Named:** Fourteen Families have adopted a name as a means of identification and an activity toward unification.
- **Inventories:** Parish inventories have been offered to parish leaders to facilitate awareness of current parish practices. Many Families have reported use of at least one of the parish inventories. These internal tools will help to inform Family leaders in the development of their annual plan.

Disciple Maker Index Survey

Families are using the DMI survey to enhance understanding of the current state of parishioners' satisfaction with the parish, beliefs, spirituality and faith practices. Number of Families participating: **35**

I am convinced that Beacons of Light, born of great hope, will enable us to form stronger parishes, centered on the Eucharist, that radiate the love of Christ and joy of the Gospel... God has abundantly blessed our first two centuries and will certainly bless the next.

ARCHBISHOP DENNIS M. SCHNURR



LEADERSHIP

Pastors, in collaboration with parochial vicars, deacons and lay ministers, according to their proper roles and charisms, share responsibility for pastoral leadership. The spiritual, physical and mental health and ongoing support of ordained and lay leaders is vital for Families of Parishes.

Phase 1 Milestone: Form a unified Family Pastoral Council, Family Leadership Team and staff, each rooted in prayer and supported by healthy teamwork.

Status: Phase 1 of Beacons of Light is largely focused on the identification of key leaders, formation or unification of parish leadership groups and the leadership development of pastors and their staffs. This is particularly timely in the early stages of Beacons of Light, as pastors need time to become acquainted with and understand the formation and skill of the existing leaders in the Family as they plan for the future.

Families of Parishes

- **Pathway Team:** Most Families have formed a Pathway (transition, planning) Team, composed of staff and parishioners from each of the parishes in the Family.
- **Family Leadership Team (FLT):** Sixteen Families have identified members of their Family Leadership Team, with most other Families progressing in the discernment of this important leadership group.
- **Unifying Pastoral Council:** There are **20** Families in some stage of bringing councils together to form a unifying pastoral council. Many Families have assembled their councils for social, prayer or other informal time together.
- **Finance Council:** **Thirteen** Families are working to form a unifying finance council at the Family level.
- **Liaisons:** Pastors have been offered the support of a liaison who has familiarity with the goals and milestones of Beacons of Light and expertise in change leadership and project management. **Forty-three** pastors have a liaison or other designated support through the Center for Parish Vitality, the Catholic Leadership Institute or the Center for the New Evangelization, including **five** which were added after September.



PHASE 1: LEADERSHIP

Having the best leaders in place is essential to bring about parish vitality. During this phase, staff and parishioner leaders are identified, formed and trained for co-responsible leadership.

Priests

The pastors and parochial vicars are responding to the need to implement new structures and are working with staff and parishioners to envision the future of pastoral care in their Families. They are seeking to get to know (if they are newly-assigned to the Family) their new parishes and striving for collaboration among staff, parish councils, finance councils and other leadership groups.

Many of the priests have not been accustomed to working with other priests in the past. The model of multiple priests working together in a Family has required a change in perspective and day-to-day approaches to ministry, as well as changes in communication, division of work and roles, etc.

The priests relate that the greatest difficulty is getting to know their new parishioners, which is taking longer than in the past because of less frequent celebration of the sacraments at a given parish due to multiple churches in the Family of Parishes.



STEWARDSHIP

Families of Parishes are communities of grateful disciples. Recognizing God's gifts, they use their talents, skills and resources to build up the Church and live as Christ's Body in the world.

Phase 1 Milestone: The pastor and staff participate in stewardship formation. Identify a staff point person and form a parishioner-based Stewardship Core Team.

Status: Since few parishes in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati have previously fostered stewardship as a way of life and knowing that most Families have been focused on Sunday Mass, bringing people together and forming leaders, it is understandable that few have begun to address the Phase 1 milestones for Stewardship at this time.

- **Stewardship Network Day:** In October 2022, the archdiocese held its first Stewardship Network day. Representatives from **40+** Families of Parishes attended, each working to build a culture of stewardship in their Families.



EVANGELIZATION

As centers of missionary outreach, Families of Parishes find new ways to foster discipleship among all the baptized. Schools, parishes and indeed the domestic church itself are centers of this essential work.

Phase 1 Milestone: Hire or promote from within a director of evangelization who will be appointed to the Family Leadership Team.

Status: Families of Parishes are taking time to lay solid foundations in evangelization leadership in order to address this essential area for the future.

- **Director of Evangelization:** Five Families of Parishes have named a director of evangelization, with at least three more Families well on their way to hiring or promoting from within a person for this key position on the Family Leadership Team.
- **Missio Days:** Leaders from 16 Families attended these live events focused on the evangelizing mission of the Church.
- **Collaboration:** Many Families are working with the staff of the Center for the New Evangelization to assess their current evangelization processes and plan for future processes.

What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race.

JOHN 1:3 - 4



LOVE IN ACTION

Families of Parishes will be communities of charity and justice, serving those most in need and working to change systems that oppress and marginalize.

Phase 1 Milestone: Build a parishioner-based Love in Action Transitional Team, get to know each other, and understand what activities are already being done.

Status: Many Families of Parishes have continued service, outreach and respect life activities that were previously in place in parishes. A few Families have identified Love in Action coordinators and leadership groups to date.

- **Point Person/Champion:** Three Families have named a point person/champion.
- **Love in Action Team:** At least two Families have formed or are forming their Love in Action Teams.
- **Love in Action Retreats:** At least two Families have held Love in Action retreats.

Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

MATTHEW 5:16



ADMINISTRATION

The six guiding principles address areas largely related to teaching and sanctifying. The parameters in Administration are focused on the governance of Families of Parishes.

Status: Most Families of Parishes are addressing the first-year objectives and recommended actions for finance, human resources, schools, facilities, and information technology. It is important to acknowledge that the primary focus of guidance and support offered to pastors in the first six months of Beacons has been directed toward pastoral planning and leadership. More attention will be given to areas of administration in the first six months of 2023.

Finance

Based on financial reporting from the end of fiscal year 2021-2022 (as of June 30, 2022), most Families of Parishes are financially healthy. Some specific parishes face financial concerns, including undetermined deferred maintenance and other liabilities.

Schools

The Catholic Schools Office has spent the past six months taking a deeper dive into the current realities regarding the schools within the Families of Parishes. A pastoral planning support specialist was hired to assist pastors and principals in the pastoral planning process, as it relates to Catholic schools. Each Family of Parishes is unique, with different structures, opportunities and challenges. The Catholic Schools Office is in the process of meeting and partnering with each Family to assist in exploring opportunities and addressing potential challenges for the school(s) within each Family of Parishes.

COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communications are necessary to share the Good News within the Family of Parishes and throughout the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Status: Many Families have identified the need for coordinated communications among the parishes in their Families and are aligning staff accordingly. Such coordinated communications include common websites, bulletins and email blasts.

- **Workshop for Parish Communicators:** This full-day workshop brought together nearly 200 parish leaders who edit weekly bulletins, manage parish websites and social media and are responsible for crafting messages from parish leadership.
- **Common Content:** Many Families of Parishes have begun to communicate at the Family level through common content in parish bulletins, common websites, email communications, social media and more.
- **Website Template:** A forthcoming template for Families of Parishes' websites will further facilitate communications at the Family level.

Upcoming Training, Guidance and Support



Jeremy Helmes

Director, Center for Parish Vitality

As we reach the six-month mark of Beacons of Light, the Center for Parish Vitality is grateful to the pastors and parish leaders who are responsible for the leadership of this important change process for the archdiocese. The CPV staff looks forward to continued partnership with parish leaders in the coming months.

Working together and with God's help, we can indeed form stronger parishes, focused on mission, that radiate the love of Christ to the 19 counties of Southwest Ohio and the world around us.

Jeremy Helmes

Director, Center for Parish Vitality

In the coming months, a variety of formational opportunities will be offered to parish leaders to continue their planning work, including:

- **Finance and Canonical Issues in Planning Workshop:** In February, staff from the Finance Department and Chancery will orient pastors to important issues.
- **HR Workshops for New Managers:** Since many parish staffers and clergy are now not only new managers but also perhaps managers of other managers, the Center for Parish Vitality and Department of Human Resources will collaborate on workshops on this topic in spring 2023.
- **Visio Day:** Family Leadership Teams who are ready to begin thinking about Phase 2 will gather in early March 2023 to learn more about the importance of vision in planning and get ready to lead the creation and communication of said vision in their Family of Parishes in the coming year.
- **Beacons Roundtable:** This online series will continue monthly on Tuesday afternoons. A popular online gathering of hundreds of parish leaders, Beacons Roundtable will focus on important news on Beacons of Light, self-care for pastoral ministers and other timely topics for parish leaders.
- **Annual Planning Report:** Required by Parameter 2, the Annual Planning Report is due to Archbishop Schnurr on July 1, 2023. Information will begin to be shared with pastors and parish leaders in February, with live access to the online reporting tool by May 1.

For more information on leadership formation
and training for parish leaders go to:
resources.catholicaoc.org/offices/parish-vitality/leadership



CENTER FOR
PARISH VITALITY

catholicaoc.org