

What are three particular strengths of this parish that attract members and keep them involved?

1) *Rich Heritage* - As the Mother Church of the Archdiocese, the Cathedral, located in the heart of Kentucky's largest city, serves as the visual embodiment of the Catholic presence in central Kentucky with its 19th century Gothic Revival architecture which inspires awe and reverence in the faithful and reflects the heritage of the archdiocese since its construction in 1852. The Cathedral serves as the seat of the archbishop and functions as the primary location for priestly and diaconate ordinations, Chrism Mass, marriage anniversary celebrations, Martin Luther King, Jr. celebrations, organ concerts, Archdiocese History Center, and other diocesan and civic functions that gather the Catholic faithful and the citizenry of Louisville on a regular basis. Its social outreach of providing lunch meals to the poor and needy downtown has been a mainstay ministry for nearly a century.

2) *Excellence in Liturgy* – Masses at the Cathedral are beautifully enriched by traditional and contemporary choirs who sing a varied repertoire of sacred music. Few parishes offer such a rich collection of hymnodies from traditional sacred composers such as Tallis, Palestrina, Mozart, Bach and Byrd as well as contemporary composers of today such as Tony Alonso, Marty Haugen, Michael Joncas and Laurie True. Lectors, servers, Eucharistic and Hospitality ministers create a profound sense of reverence and peace.

The liturgy is well organized, highly professional with a consistent expectation of excellence for everyone who participates in the ministries. As one parishioner noted, "There is beauty in every movement, each activity is done with a high level of attention to detail and coordination. All of this provides an awesome, sacred opportunity for worship."

In addition to the laity, the Cathedral has been blessed to have pastoral leadership that delivers spiritual nourishment in homilies, and other doctrinal matters to guide the faithful.

Collectively, these ministries reveal active participation from the congregation in creating a solemn and reverent liturgical experience that is awe inspiring and rooted in God's all-inclusive love.

3) *Diversity* – The Cathedral is an intentional parish that draws the faithful from throughout Louisville and Southern Indiana. Our congregants are wealthy and poor, married and divorced, single, gay and straight, White, Black, Hispanic, Asian and more. The Cathedral has traditionally been a home for the disenfranchised and those on the

margins of society. Our diverse community makes us stronger, more broad-minded and better informed and compassionate. Since the Great Depression, daily meals have been served to those in need. Currently we serve about 40,000 meals a year.

Due to our downtown location, we receive many out-of-town visitors who are attracted to the Church's historic architecture and the experience of worshipping in a Cathedral church. The Cathedral works to be a welcoming, inclusive faith community. Visitors often comment that the Cathedral is a welcoming, inclusive faith community

What are three significant challenges facing the parish?

- 1) *Downtown location* – As an urban church, the Cathedral campus is compact and does not have readily available, off-street parking for Masses and events. Perceptions in the community about crime, homelessness, and safety make some reluctant to attend Mass here and make it difficult to schedule evening events. Reductions in the downtown workforce have reduced the number of people in the downtown area during the weekday which has resulted in fewer participants in weekday Masses. Stalled residential development projects downtown have slowed the potential for congregational growth from within the Downtown area.
- 2) *Aging Cathedral complex* – While the historic buildings in the Cathedral complex are a draw and the Cathedral inspires reverence and beauty in worship, on-going maintenance costs are a challenge for a congregation that is aging and largely unchanged in terms of growth.
- 3) *Fewer Active Catholics attending Mass* - The Cathedral parish is not immune to national trends in organized religion where regular church attendance in mainline denominations is on the decline. We are also experiencing an aging of members which follows the national trend as well.

What is the unique mission and ministry of the Cathedral parish for its members and for the wider community?

As the Mother Church of the Archdiocese of Louisville, the Cathedral of the Assumption is a congregation that embodies the all-inclusive, welcoming love of God through its varied

ministries. Our emphasis on sacred liturgy and social justice outreach, the use of our sacred space as a backdrop for diocesan-wide celebrations and civic functions are central to our mission. We are not only a beautiful historic building but the practicing heart and soul of our Catholic faith in the community of Central Kentucky.