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## Strategic Pastoral Planning Executive Summary Report

October 2023



Catholic Diocese *of* Memphis



**Catholic Diocese of Memphis  
Strategic Pastoral Planning Process**

**October 1, 2023**

**Executive Summary Report**

**Where are we today? Where is God calling us to be?**

The major themes and issues that surfaced in the initial phase of our Diocese's Strategic Pastoral Planning Process based on the Online Survey, Listening Sessions, and Individual Interviews conducted in June-July 2023 can be summarized as follows:

- **Strengths.** The Catholic community in West Tennessee is strong in its loyalty and cohesiveness. Bishop David P. Talley and the majority of Priests are seen as strengths. Racial and ethnic diversity is recognized as a strength. The engagement of lay people in parish life, Catholic schools, and the Church's outreach to those in need are powerful, positive witnesses to the vitality of the Local Church. Spiritual movements are strong and growing.
- **Weaknesses.** Language and cultural barriers prevent the Church in West Tennessee from fully serving its diverse communities. Secularism and its consequences (including ideological differences, the breakdown of marriage and family life, declines in vocations, Mass attendance, and active participation of young people in the life of the Church) cause serious concerns for the future. Catholic schools are seen by many as inaccessible and unaffordable. Financial challenges resulting in insufficient resources (personnel, physical facilities, and operating budgets) threaten the effectiveness of the Church's ministry, especially its outreach to the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable members of the communities served by the Church in West Tennessee.
- **Opportunities.** Ministry with youth and young adults—combined with Evangelization and Catholic education for children, youth, and adults—are seen as providing the greatest opportunities for carrying out the Church's mission and fully engaging Catholics in the life of their Church. Ministry with and among diverse ethnic groups and respectful dialogue by people with different viewpoints and opinions are considered to be essential to achieve unity. Collaboration and consolidation of parishes provide opportunities for better utilization of limited resources. Expansion of social ministries in growing areas of need will make a significant difference in the communities served by the Church.

- **Threats.** Secularism and the many social problems facing local communities are seen as serious threats to the life of the Church in West Tennessee. Safety and security concerns are on the minds of many. Racism and the lack of integration of minorities threaten the Church's unity and create significant obstacles to communication and collaboration. Disunity and ideological differences threaten the effectiveness of the Church's ministry.
- **Hopes for the Future.** There is a strong desire for a unified, vibrant, welcoming, engaged, and faith-filled Catholic community that is committed to evangelization and social outreach in all regions of West Tennessee. Hopes are expressed for strong marriages and families, for an increase in vocations, and for the active engagement of youth and young adults. Hopes also include that a growing number of Catholics will recognize the value and affordability of schools with a strong Catholic identity. Unity among diverse ethnic groups (Hispanics, from many different cultures and homelands, African Americans, Filipinos, Koreans, Vietnamese and others) and the ability to dialogue with people who have different opinions and lifestyles are frequently expressed as hopes for the future.

The Strategic Pastoral Planning Committee chaired by Bishop David P. Talley will use the results of the Online Survey, Listening Sessions, and Individual Interviews to formulate a Vision Statement and Strategic Plan for the future of the Church in West Tennessee. Sincere thanks are extended to all who participated in this important phase of our planning process by their prayers, presence, and responses to the survey, sessions, and interviews.