

# Feasibility Study Report

for

**St. Mary's Parish  
Taylorville, IL**

**January 2026**



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January 19, 2026

Fr. John Burnette  
St. Mary's Parish  
116 W Adams Street  
Taylorville, IL 62568

Dear Fr. Burnette,

Serving St. Mary's Parish through this Feasibility Study has been a privilege. A total of 34 households participated in the study (representing 48 individuals).

We learned a great deal about the parish in the study. Most encouraging is that a high percentage of parishioners feel their spiritual and social needs are being met and there is a high level of confidence in the pastor, parish staff and the parish leaders. The study reveals that the parish will financially support a three-year Capital Campaign to pay off our diocese debt, school building debt, and plumbing and deferred maintenance issues.

Given the information gathered and received in the study, and our work with many similar parishes, we project that St. Mary's Parish could raise **\$750,000 - \$1,250,000** through a well conducted, three-year Capital Campaign based on member engagement, clear communication, stewardship education, and prayerful discernment.

Enclosed is a complete review of the information and data we gathered through the Feasibility Study. We have also provided concerns, recommendations and a proposed calendar for a Capital Campaign. All of this is provided to assist the leadership to better understand the church and the direction God is moving the parish. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at any time.

Thank you for allowing Church Development to spend time with your fellow parishioners and learn more about the great things St. Mary's Parish is doing in our Lord's name.

Respectfully,

Denis Greene, President  
Peter Kardash, Senior Consultant  
Darryl Prater, Senior Consultant  
Bob Zeller, Consultant



St. Mary's Parish

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2026, 34 households participated in the Feasibility Study, representing 48 individuals.

### Executive Summary

1. One hundred percent (100%) in the study agreed or strongly agreed that St. Mary's Parish is effectively meeting their spiritual needs.
2. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that St. Mary's Parish is effectively meeting their social needs.
3. Eighty-three percent (83%) in the study have a high level of confidence in the pastor, parish staff, and the volunteer leaders to make wise decisions regarding the future of the parish.
4. The following chart shows the level of support for the various projects as listed in the case statement.

Project	% Positive
Address our building plumbing issues.	100%
Pay off diocese debt, \$321,000 & school building debt, \$206,000.	97%
Address our building deferred maintenance.	91%

5. One hundred percent (100%) of the participants in the study said they would be willing to financially support a Capital Campaign at some level.
6. Eight (8) households in the study indicated that if a three-year Capital Campaign were held tomorrow, they would consider committing **\$20,300** over and above their regular giving to the parish. This is an average gift of \$2,538. **This is an unusually low response level for this question. This usually indicates that a culture of stewardship, in which the pastor regularly offers a sermon on money and giving, has not been a high priority. To estimate potential giving levels we will therefore revert to the initial**

**questions in the survey and the positive responses therein. We then will examine the unrestricted offertory, which was approximately \$550,000 in the previous fiscal year, as a basis for forecasting capital campaign giving.**

7. Twelve (12) families (43%) in the study indicated they would be willing to remember St. Mary's Parish in their estate plans; 8 families have already included the parish in their estate plans; and 7 families need more information. The industry norm is 3%.
8. Twenty-eight (28) individuals expressed interest in serving on campaign teams (Prayer, Events, Thanks, Youth, Ambassador and Communications Teams).

### **Concerns**

1. Members want to know more details including costs associated with each maintenance project.
2. Members would like more transparency and better communication from the diocese.
3. Parishioners' specific financial intentions were very low in the study. However, there was a high level of support for giving at some level to the campaign. This may be an indicator that we need to plan for a heightened level of stewardship education (not fundraising) based on 1 Peter 4:10, that God's blessings were meant to flow through us to do His work.
4. There is some concern about the current state of the economy, the effect of inflation, and how this could affect a Capital Campaign.

### **Financial Forecast**

Based on the parish's annual unrestricted giving of **\$550,000**, the results of the Feasibility Study and the **\$20,300** that was offered by survey participants, Church Development projects the following Financial Forecast for St. Mary's Parish.

- **90% probability of raising \$750,000**
- **70% probability of raising \$1,000,000**
- **50% probability of raising \$1,250,000**

This financial forecast is based on a professionally run, three-year Capital Campaign that includes member engagement, clear communication, stewardship education, and prayerful discernment. As mentioned in #6 above, the lack of financial offerings drive us towards a greater level of stewardship education during this capital campaign and in the following three years of stewardship growth. **We have fertile ground as indicated in the high level of support for the campaign in general, and the number of people who said they would include the parish in their estate plans in specific.**

## **Summary of Recommendations**

1. Begin a Capital Campaign immediately with a Commitment Sunday in May 2026.
2. Focus the campaign on prayer.
3. Implement a Stewardship Committee to help build a robust culture of stewardship throughout the parish.
4. Involve all parish members in the dialogue about the vision of the campaign through the campaign events and encourage every parishioner to be a part of a campaign team.
5. Commit to a high level of information sharing each week of the campaign.
6. Encourage gifts of property, stocks, IRAs and mutual funds throughout the campaign.
7. Approach potential top donors during the campaign to ensure gifts of all sizes are included in the effort.
8. Emphasize and educate members about the importance of remembering the parish in estate plans.

## **FOREWORD AND THE ASSIGNMENT**

Church Development's purpose is to serve parishes through planning and Capital Campaign management. Church Development is based on two concepts:

- A) Stewardship is a gateway virtue to living a Christian life. Once individuals discover the experience of acting as a conduit to God's will, they are forever changed. A prayerful approach to seeking God's will is at the center of all our activities. Proverbs 29:18 states, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." This Biblical text could be a modern management bestseller. When a parish has a powerful vision in which all are involved in creating, God will bless and use their efforts.
- B) Building the strength of each parish we serve is more important than money. If we can successfully increase the connections between people seeking to do God's will, the parish will grow in very measurable terms. After our Capital Campaign is completed, parishes often experience increases in attendance, annual giving, volunteerism and evangelism.

### **The Assignment:**

In November 2025, St. Mary's Parish engaged Church Development to conduct a parish-wide Feasibility Study to determine the readiness of the parish for a Capital Campaign.

In January 2026, Church Development interviewed 34 parish families (representing 48 individuals). An online and paper survey were available for all other parish members to complete.

A total of 34 households (48 individuals) participated in the study.

## **SUMMARY OF INTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

### **2025 Annual Unrestricted Giving**

476 households financially supported the 2025 Annual Stewardship emphasis. The income from parish members which includes the offering plate collection and pledges totaled **\$550,000**. The previous special request for additional funds for the parish in 2025 is a very good indicator of the financial potential for the capital campaign.

## **Case Statement for Capital Campaign**

“As Christian stewards, we receive God’s gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.” I Peter 4:10 (USCCB)

St Mary's Catholic Church, founded in 1845, is an active and healthy parish situated in the heartland of Illinois. We offer a variety of vibrant ministries to serve the St. Mary's family as well as those in our surrounding community. Our Catholic grade school is an icon in the community that has provided quality Catholic education for over 116 years. Most importantly, St. Mary's Catholic Church is a place where the Gospel message of Jesus is proclaimed and lived throughout our parishioners and beyond. St. Mary's is our spiritual home and God has blessed us to be a part of it.

### **1. The Challenges:**

- a. Pay off \$321,000 debt to the diocese and \$206,000 school building debt.
- b. Address issues with the parish center that includes the gym and cafeteria, and our church building (plumbing and deferred maintenance).
- c. Required tithe to the diocese: 10% of what is raised in the capital campaign.

### **2. The Vision:**

As we look to the future, our focus is to expand every age group of our church.

- a. Involve all parishioners in our many ministries
- b. Grow school enrollment.
  - i. Enrollment was 320 students at the peak in the early 1930's; currently 165 students, an increase of 26 students this year.
  - ii. 30% of current school enrollment is non-Catholic.
- c. Build our financial base with funds on reserve.
- d. Increase our weekly Offertory.
- e. Outreach to our community.

### **3. The Plan:**

- a. We are planning to ask every St. Mary's family to make a 3-year pledge or a gift.
  - i. These gifts would be over and above regular giving to the parish as we need our weekly Offertory giving to stay strong and to be a priority for each of our families.
- b. We are asking every St. Mary's family to remember the parish in their estate plans in order to create a school endowment for scholarships.
- c. We are planning to pursue grants.

### **4. Urgency:**

- a. We have positive momentum now with our parish.
- b. If we delay, costs will increase.
- c. We want to pay off the debt as soon as possible to avoid interest costs.
- d. The diocese is expecting us to make a contribution of 10% of the amount raised.
- e. As with those who have gone before us, now is the time for us to step up and be faithful stewards for generations to come.

## **DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the feedback received in the study, Church Development recommends the following actions for St. Mary's Parish.

1. St. Mary's Parish should immediately begin a three-year Capital Campaign with a Commitment Sunday in May 2026.
2. The campaign should focus on prayer, stewardship, and be a discerning implementation of God's will. The Prayer Team should be integrally involved in providing prayer resources for the parish to engage in prayer during the campaign.
3. Concerns that arose during the Feasibility Study should be thoroughly addressed in the campaign communication and opportunities for dialogue. The campaign should place stewardship a high priority, implementing a Stewardship Committee as the first step. Church Development would provide guidance and resources for the Stewardship Committee to assist parishioners to grow in their understanding and practice of managing God's gifts to them through time, talent and treasure.
4. A high level of member involvement should guide the process. All members should be encouraged to serve on a campaign team (Prayer, Events, Thanks, Youth, Ambassador, and Communications), each team meeting 3-4 times during the campaign. The campaign would provide many ways for members to be involved on the teams (e.g., meetings in person, via Zoom, conference calls, etc.).
5. A high level of information sharing should be available to members weekly through newsletters, e-blasts, videos, bulletin announcements, website, e-mails, social media and pulpit announcements.
6. The Capital Campaign should include a customized, comprehensive strategy to encourage estate planning gifts.
7. The donation of property, stocks, real estate, IRAs and mutual funds should be part of the campaign effort.
8. Potential top donors should be approached during the campaign to ensure that gifts of all sizes are included in the effort.
9. In order to meet the needs of the parish, the campaign should follow the proposed calendar in this report.
10. Three years of Follow up: Church Development takes on more of an advisory role during the three years of follow up. A Follow up manual explains the division of labor. We will assist with the following:
  - Fulfilling pledges, tracking pledges and assisting with planned giving and Annual Stewardship Campaigns.

## PROPOSED CAPITAL CAMPAIGN CALENDAR

### **JANUARY 2026**

- 1/21 Recruit Management Team members and begin weekly meetings.
- 1/22 Begin recruiting PETYAC Team co-leaders (Prayer, Events, Thanks, Youth, Ambassador & Communications Teams); provide Zoom training for each co-leader.
- 1/25 Begin parish-wide communication of the Capital Campaign through newsletters, e-blasts, videos, bulletin announcements, website, e-mails, social media and pulpit announcements.
- 1/25 Bulletin insert #1 with summary of the Feasibility Study and information about attending the upcoming Volunteer Organizational Meeting (VOM) and joining a campaign team; include key campaign dates.

### **FEBRUARY**

- 2/8 Bulletin insert #2 promoting VOM.
- 2/11 5:00 pm - Advisory Committee Meeting #1.
- 2/11 6:30 pm - Host VOM with a light meal; all interested volunteers encouraged to attend; this is the official kickoff of the campaign.
- 2/12 Teams begin meeting individually and developing resources for the campaign (e.g., campaign prayer, event schedule, and campaign logo/slogan).
- 2/15 Bulletin insert #3 with recap of the VOM; encourage everyone to serve on a team.
- 2/22 Bulletin insert #4 with upcoming event schedule; Invitation to attend the upcoming Parishwide Town Hall Meeting which sets the stage for the projects and the campaign; explain projects in depth with estimated costs.

### **MARCH**

- 3/7 Advisory Committee Meeting #1.
- 3/7&8 Parishwide Town Hall Meeting - explain projects, campaign plans and estimated costs.
- 3/9 Events Team begins hosting a series of events; encourage every parish family to attend one event (events continue through 4/26).
- 3/13 Bulletin insert #5 with event recap and initial list of campaign FAQs.
- 3/28&29 Lay speaker in each Mass.
- 3/29 Palm Sunday (no campaign activities during Holy Week).

### **APRIL**

- 4/5 Easter
- 4/11 Advisory Committee Meeting #2.
- 4/12 Bulletin insert #6 - continue publicizing campaign FAQs, promote remaining events; announce upcoming Prayer and Discernment and packet pick up.
- 4/16 Send all commitment packet pieces to the printer.
- 4/19 Events conclude.
- 4/25&26 Lay speakers in each Mass.
- 4/29 Volunteers assemble commitment packets at the parish.

### **MAY**

- 5/3 Parishwide Town Hall to summarize the projects and campaign.

5/3 Prayer and Discernment begins (14-day prayer emphasis).

5/3 Packet pick-up before and after each Mass (every family gets a packet).

5/4 Mail leftover packets (1st class).

5/5 5-min. video summary of the campaign events.

5/6 Ambassadors begin making phone call reminders and answering campaign questions (continue through 5/13).

5/10 Bulletin insert #7 with reminders to continue Prayer and Discernment and Commitment Sunday.

5/12 Send out the pastor's 1-min. video, "How to Make a Prayerful Decision."

**5/17 Host Commitment Sunday (bring completed pledge cards to Mass)**

5/24 Begin publicly thanking donors.

5/24 Bulletin insert #8 with Commitment Weekend recap; encourage others to give/pledge to the Capital Campaign.

5/25 Memorial Day

5/31 Thanks Team writes / mails personal thank you notes (continue writing thank you notes for 6-8 weeks).

## **JUNE**

6/4 Mail follow-up letter to all who have not yet made a gift/pledge.

6/13 Ambassadors begin making follow-up calls (continue through 6/20).

6/28 Bulletin insert #9 with next steps with the campaign projects; introduce the Follow-up Team; explain Church Development's role over the next three years of Follow up.

## **JULY 2026 - MAY 2029**

Three years of Follow up: Church Development takes on more of an advisory role during the three years of follow up. A Follow up manual explains this division of labor.

We will assist with the following:

- Fulfilling pledges
- Tracking pledges
- Assisting with planned giving and Annual Stewardship Campaigns