

Mission Plan for Coachella, CA 2016 - 2019

Mission Sites: Our Lady of Soledad Parish and the Valley Missionary Program

- 1. Our Lady of Soledad Parish:** The Parish serves the City of Coachella and the rural County areas of Thermal and Oasis. In 2015 it became the largest Parish in the Diocese of San Bernadino, in both Catholic population and territory. It has two designated Mission Chapels:
 - a. El Senor de Misericordia
 - b. San Felipe de Jesus;and two outreach Chapels: **a.** Avenida 70 and **b.** Chiriaco Summit

The Parish is in the midst of a campaign to raise \$5 million for a new Church and \$360,000 for a new Mission Chapel. Half the funds have been raised for both projects.

The 4 mission stations are evangelization and worship centers for farmworker communities. Most “campesinos” are undocumented, some have worker visas. Most live in trailer parks off the main roads. About 1/3 of this population is seasonal and follow the harvest to Northern Calif. A growing population of campesinos originated from the Michoacan tribe of ‘Purepechas.’ Another population of tribal natives originated from Oaxaca. Two deacons serve in the Mission communities.

The Parish is the home to mostly first and second generation immigrants from Mexico. Most of the third and fourth generation of an immigrant base make up the smaller English speaking community. The Parish faithful are primarily employed in lower wage service jobs: farmworkers, maintenance workers for the hotels, resorts and Golf Clubs, construction workers, domestics, gardeners, mechanics and restaurant workers. Some of the third generation faithful work in local schools, City and County positions. Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworker Union were instrumental in organizing and developing leaders in this community. Several of the faithful are employed in programs for farmworkers. Two deacons serve in Parish ministry.

A minority of the youth continue in or remain in higher education. This remains a focus for increased participation and preparation.

2. Valley Missionary Program

The purpose of VMP was founded in 1984 by the Rev. Joseph Pawlicki, C.S.C., of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Its purpose is to reach out to those who have been alienated from the Church and from God, to bring them back into a loving relationship with Christ and His Church, and to integrate them into a network of small faith communities, where their rediscovered faith can be nourished, sustained and shared. Although the method of evangelization employed by the VMP was designed to meet the particular needs of the immigrant Hispanic population of the Coachella Valley, it has been used with equal success in other Hispanic populations outside this Valley and in many parts of Mexico.

The Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity have been taking pastoral care of the VMP since July 2010. Basically we are responsible for assuring continuity of the mission that the Congregation of the Holy Cross started previously.

Currently the VMP has 107 Communities in Spanish and 18 in English. The VMP active members are about 1200. All of them are members of different parishes in the Valley of Coachella as well as other parishes out of the area. Most of them are leaders in their parishes or people involved in the different parish ministries.

The VMP offers different retreats yearly: 5 for men and 5 for women in Spanish and 2 for men and 2 for women in English; 3 retreats for teenagers and one for Young Adults. Our facilities are also used by groups of other parishes or ministries in the Coachella Valley such as “Grupos Unidos Para Cristo, KAIROS, Prevención y Rescate”.

Mission Plan

Duration: June 2016 – June 2019

Planners: Guy Wilson, Arturo Quezada, Jesus Palomares, John Seymour, Florence Waters.

The Mission Plan for the next three years builds on the Mission Plan of 2015-2016.

1. Forming Laity as Missionary Disciples.

The four tiered model of **Kerygma, Koinonia, Didache and Diakonia** for forming missionary disciples has entered its 5th year in Coachella. It is a collaborative effort of both the Parish and the Valley Missionary Program.

- A. **Kerygma:** The VMP remains predominant in the Kerygma process through its 4 day Encounters, days of reflection, Missionary Conventions, Young Adult and Youth retreats. The Parish continues this process through its days of reflection, mini-retreats, weekend retreats and programed speakers.
- B. **Koinonia:** The VMP promotes the Koinonia efforts through participation in 125 small faith communities that meet weekly. Many of the Parish faithful participate in the VMP faith communities. Many also meet weekly in apostolic, ministry and prayer communities which are based in the Parish and its Missions. Formal workshops to train and prepare Coordinators of the Small Faith Communities continues to be a priority in the overall Mission Plan.
- C. **Didache:** Other programs of formal instruction and apostolic formation, the Didache phase, continue to expand.
 - 1) 45 Parish faithful and VMP coordinators has been selected for the three-year Diocesan formation program of leadership.
 - 2) Six men and their wives formally enter the Formation Program for Deacons in September 2016 with the hope of Diaconate ordinations in 2019-20.
 - 3) Beginning September 2016 a new program will begin which dedicates one evening a month for the formation of Parents to transmit their faith and strengthen their parenting skills.
 - 4) A team of 8 farmworkers and organizers has solidified. They are receiving formation in evangelization, naturalization and citizenship training to help serve the growing “campesino” community.
 - 5) The next 3 years will continue the plan of continuing formation of the Liturgical Ministers and Extraordinary Ministers to the sick and homebound.
- D. **Diakonia:** Those who received formal faith formation and training in the past two years have been commissioned to serve in evangelization, especially to:
 - 1) visit the homebound and their caretakers, (John Seymour)
 - 2) coordinate small faith communities, (Arturo Quezada)
 - 3) form the uninitiated, (Guy Wilson)
 - 4) accompany youth, (Florence Waters)
 - 5) promote civic engagement, (Guy Wilson)
 - 6) prepare couples for marriage, (Jesus Palomares)
 - 7) accompany married couples in the challenges of their marriages. (Jesus Palomares)

2. Collaborating with the Missionary Cenacle Family

- A. Sr. Florence Waters, MSBT enters her fourth year as Director of Youth Ministry in the Parish. Her contract is reviewed and renewed each year by the MSBT leadership and Pastor.
- B. Martin Sullivan of the Parish and VMP serves on the ST Mission Committee.
- C. Both the Parish and the VMP are models of lay apostolic formation. Missionary Cenacle values are present but we have yet to develop a local Cenacle of the MCA.
- D. Beginning in the Fall of 2016 we will host a monthly meeting on the Missionary Cenacle Spirituality.
- E. We will continue to collaborate with the ST formation programs as mission sites for the pre novitiate candidates and the Professed.

3. Preserving the Faith especially among the spiritually abandoned and economically poor

The population of working poor grows at a steady rate in our Parish territory. Agriculture and the entertainment and resort industry is expanding in our area. (For example: Coachella Fest is initiating events for the Fall 2016 and expanding their Spring events; Thermal Club is a new resort that caters to millionaires who want to race their cars on a NASCAR track; Zanzibar Ranch is a new resort being developed in Coachella). All of these industries rely on low paying wage workers. Few receive benefits. Many live in the shadows to avoid contact with Immigration agents.

- A. We still need to build a centralized Mission Chapel to better serve this expanding farmworker population. We were unable to establish a Mission Chapel at the Native American Reservation population. With God's grace and local funding we hope to purchase land to build a Mission Chapel in the rural sector. Until a Chapel is established we will continue to serve weekly in mission outposts.
- B. A recently Parish formed committee for Immigration Reform and Rights is collaborating with organizations to serve the needs of the immigrant communities.
- C. Outreach to Youth remains a priority. Youth catechesis and ministry is being adjusted to serve our young population. To reach many of our Youth we need to reach their parents.
- D. Beginning Sept. 2016 Faith Formation for Parents will be consolidated. This program will meet the fourth Thursday of each month. Its goal is to fortify the faith and parenting skills of our parents.
- E. The Food Distribution Program is under new management. Parish Volunteers are being supervised by the Latino Commission of Riverside. The Program has applied for more grants to expand its outreach.
- F. The Organizations - Alcoholics Anon., Alanon, AlaTeen, Narcotics Anon. and Gamblers Anon. have been centralized in Parish facilities to expand their meetings and outreach. The Old Church has been renovated and equipped for these meetings.

4. Establishing methods and programs for Systemic Change (Social Justice & Concern)

We continue to collaborate with PICO, Latino Commission of Riverside, City of Coachella, County of Riverside, United Farmworkers and Comite Latino to promote systemic change at various levels. However, the Anti-immigrant rhetoric inflamed by political candidates requires a clear response by the Church. Because of the large concentration of recently arrived immigrants our Coachella Mission is at the heart of efforts in systemic change.

- A. At the multi Diocesan level we collaborate on planning events for "Justice for Immigrants" and "Faithful Citizenship." These are ongoing Committees and strategies. We have been designated by the Diocese of San Bernadino as a Center for Naturalization and Citizenship.
- B. At the Parish level we collaborate with organizations for workshops and actions. We have a two- year plan for workshops on Naturalization and Citizenship applications. We have

initiated continual Voter Registration.

- C. At the Civic level we collaborate with City and County programs:
 - 1. City of Coachella Faith Alliance.
 - 2. Meetings and dialogue with the Sheriff's Dept.
 - 3. Plan to reach the addicted and at-risk youth.
 - 4. Ministry to jails and Juvenile Detention Centers.
 - 5. Programs for the homeless.
 - 6. Program for Foster Care.

Our presence in Coachella was initiated to develop a working model of CALF. Likewise, this Mission was accepted to train ourselves and our young men in formation in the method and vision of Lay Apostolic Leadership Formation. We consider this as one of the most crucial methods at Systemic Change for our Congregation. We plan to receive other ST's and formation students to further develop this model.

5. Collaborating with Diocesan efforts.

- A. The largest collaboration with the Diocese is in the area of fund raising and construction of a new Worship Center for the Parish as well as for a rural Mission and a new entrance and parking lot for the VMP.
- B. We collaborate with the Diocese to promote immigration reform and justice.
- C. We have assisted the Diocese in formulating a policy of Parish Missions. We now will help in its implementation.
- D. We work together with the Native American Ministry of the Diocese for continued outreach.
- E. We have been in a 1 ½ year process to establish the Valley Missionary Program as an official ministry of the Diocese.

Evaluation:

We evaluate the Mission Plan each year in January and June. This schedule is for financial and pastoral planning, adaptations and accountability. The Director of the VMP and the Pastor of the Parish facilitate the evaluations.

STATISTICS: PARISH AND VMP

1. How many people do we serve in this Parish and its missions?

We have about 3,850 active registered families in our parish. Approximately an additional 3,000 families participate but are not registered.

Valley Missionary Program:

107 Communities in Spanish and 18 in English. The VMP active members are about 1200.

2. Native Americans or indigenous peoples.

Native Americans 15. Native Mexicans, Purepechas & Yaquis 525.

3. African Americans or Afro-descent.

10.

4. Immigrants:

We are a community of first, second and third generation Mexican Immigrants. Small community from El Salvador.

5. Recovery programs:

We have several support groups that meet once to twice a week in our parish ranging from 6 to 20 persons per group. AA Anonymous (twice a week), Narcotic Anonymous (once a week), Gambling Anonymous (once a week).

6. Jails/prisons:

We have 15 individuals that visit the jails, prisons, and the Juvenile Hall. Each facility has 15 to 30 units that can be visited. That can range from 5 to 10 persons per unit. Juvenile Hall once a week, prisons once a week, jail twice a week.

7. Food program:

15,000. Per year, our food bank is open five days a week.

8. Retreats/programs for apostolic development:

Parish mini retreats which there are five of 101, 201, 301, 401, 501, both in English and Spanish which meet throughout the year which serve about 2,200 in a year. Each class is given by our parishioners. Mini retreats are for evangelizing our parishioners who come for Sacramental participation.

9. Youth and Young adults:

About 450 youth under 18 and 60 young adults age 18 to 30.