

Mission Plan 2016 - 2017



Holy Rosary Indian Mission
Tucker, Mississippi

Saint Therese Church
Choctaw, Mississippi

Saint Catherine Church
Conehatta, Mississippi

Parish Symbol Explanation

The parish symbol expresses both the ministry of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity and the Choctaw Tribal symbol and culture.

The Thunderbird represents the Holy Spirit and the devotion of the Missionary Servants to prayer to the Holy Spirit.

The Triangle is the traditional symbol of the Most Holy Trinity and the symbol of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity.

The Arrowhead is the symbol of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

The design of the parish logo was created by Father Bob Goodyear, S.T. in 1987.

Outline

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- Leakage from the Church
- Lay Development and Leadership: Forming lay Missionaries
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- Systemic Change

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Context and Criteria

The Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity came to Holy Rosary Indian Mission in Tucker, Mississippi in 1944. The community was young and struggling. We were ready to share the vision of Father Judge but we were also a fledgling religious congregation and few were willing to take the risk of accepting missionaries from this newly formed religious community. Our charism was already clear but our family approach and esteem for the laity were ahead of the time. Bishop Gerow invited the Missionary Servants to come to the Diocese of Natchez-Jackson, the largest diocese east of the Mississippi River and still considered today a missionary diocese. In 1943, the Missionary Servants took a poor black mission in Camden, MS, and the next year the first Missionary Servants came to Tucker. They were our first missions and today are two of our oldest missions.

The Missionary Servant criteria for mission listed below are the foundational components in the proposed plan for Holy Rosary Indian Mission.

Poor and Abandoned. The Missionary Servants work by preference among the poor and abandoned. The Native Americans are among the poorest of the poor. The Choctaw Indians, federally recognized as the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, are poor. There are many reasons for the poverty on the Choctaw reservation that will be discussed later. Obvious reasons Native Americans continue to be among the poorest people in the United States are: federal government policies dealing with Native Americans that have been confused and inconsistent from the beginning; alcohol abuse; persecution and racism. Generations of maltreatment and racism have resulted in what is known as "learned helplessness", a systemic condition that requires long term treatment with only limited success. The Choctaws suffer from "Historical Memory". This psychological phenomenon has a prominent effect on their self-image and perspective on life. Though the present generation did not endure the trail of tears or the other atrocities Native Americans endured in the historical past, they inherit a memory of these events.

Leakage from the Church. One of Father Judge's major concerns when he came South was the leakage of Catholics from their Catholic faith. The lack of priests and of access to Catholic churches was one the reasons so many Catholics were falling away from their faith. The hostile, anti-Catholic attitude the characterized the Southern states, the "bible belt", also contributed to minority Catholics falling away from the Church and made them vulnerable to Protestant evangelization. It was a matter of survival - literally. In 1975 there were 3,200 Choctaw Indians on the Choctaw reservation. Over half of the tribe was Catholic

in 1975. Catholic Choctaws far out-numbered the number of Choctaws belonging to other churches on the reservation. Today there are 11,000 Choctaw Indians on the reservation. The population has tripled in the last 40 years but the number of Catholic Choctaws has declined. There are several reasons for the decline including an increasing number of native non-denominational churches springing up on the reservation, but the bottom line is there is a significant leakage of Catholics on the Choctaw Indian reservation.

Lay Development and Lay Leadership. "Every Catholic is called to be an apostle." As Missionary Servants one of our goals is the development of a "missionary spirit" in the people we serve. In the Gospels, before the Apostles could go out, they had to be taught. After the Resurrection instead of going out they were afraid and hid their faith in the Lord. They were not empowered to go out and teach all nations until they saw the risen Christ and their instruction was ignited by a personal encounter with the Lord.

The poor, with whom we work by preference, have no trouble believing in God. Their problem is believing in themselves. This is acutely true for the Choctaw people. The reservation is a closed community and self-image is defined by fitting in and being like everyone else. A survey of tribal, federal, state, and church service providers asked what they consider the biggest challenge facing the Choctaw people. The answer was "low self-esteem".

As Missionary Servants we strive to develop the churches we minister to so they can be self-sufficient and we can move on to the next church in need of our gifts. We have been at Holy Rosary for a long time but the change has been slow in the people of the three Choctaw churches on the reservation. The most significant impediment to developing the Choctaw laity is their "learned helplessness". An individual or a population who suffer from learned helplessness believe that there is nothing they can do to change their situation and they learn not to try. Native Americans in general have learned that there is little, if anything, they can do to change their situation. In a phrase, the Choctaws do not believe in themselves. Another possible reason for the lack of development in the Choctaw laity has been the number of religious "servings" at Holy Rosary. In our history at Holy Rosary there has been a wealth of Missionary Servants working here at any given time.

In 1975, Holy Rosary was staffed by 4 ST's, two priests and two missionary brothers, 5 MSBT sisters, and often people in formation doing mission experiences. The people of the mission were overwhelmed by the presence of so many religious and were happy to allow the priests, brothers, and sisters to lead the churches. The reality that there is only one Missionary Servant here now is a significant factor in developing our mission plan this year. Father Bob's health

issues in the past year significantly impacted the implementation of the Mission Plan. Previously Fr. Bob was in very good health and very active. He had a near fatal aortic aneurysm rupture and nearly died. Then he had surgery to remove a bone in his foot and his recovery has been longer than expected and is complete as we begin this mission planning process.

Youth Ministry. Reflecting Father Judge's concern for the youth of our missions, the original Constitution called for our apostles to be characterized by our concern for the youth of our missions. Our 1959 Constitution stated

"Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity shall always be vigilant to safeguard the youth entrusted to their care, especially those youths exposed to the danger of the loss of faith and morals." (# 219, p. 69)

Choctaw youth are especially vulnerable to the loss of their faith because of the situation on the reservation and the particular dangers of living on a reservation. The average age of Choctaw tribal members is 18. According to a recent study, Choctaw children begin drinking alcohol and having sex in early elementary school. Unwed pregnancy is common and accepted on the reservation. Girls begin having babies when they are only tweens themselves. While these things are common among populations that live in poverty, they are especially high among Native Americans who live on federal reservations as the Choctaws do. Recently child sexual abuse has become epidemic on the Choctaw Reservation.

In the past there was little for Choctaw youth to do on the reservation. Today sports have become the new god of the Choctaws. In the past Wednesday evenings and Sundays were reserved for church. Today, Choctaw families are involved in playing sports both on and outside the reservation, often traveling considerable distances to play a game rather than going to church. Youth Ministry is a priority in our new mission plan.

Systemic Change. "Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime." This is the mantra of systemic change, but what if the man doesn't believe he can learn how to fish and doesn't think it will make any difference? The Choctaws face a "system" that is elusive yet dominates their lives. They are mired in a quicksand like system that perpetuates dependence on the federal government. The Native Americans are "wards" of the federal government. They are not permitted to own land. The Reservation is "Trust Land" owned by the Federal Government for the Choctaws. When individual Choctaws purchase a house on the reservation through the rent to own program, eventually they own the house, but they do not own the land the house sits on. At any point and for seemingly any reason, the tribe can take back the land the house sits on. Every aspect of their lives is dictated by the federal government. A recent candidate for the office of

President of the United States stated that he would cut the funding for the Indian Health Service in half and would do away with the Bureau of Indian Affairs if he is elected President.

The Missionary Servants want to move away from providing direct assistance to those in need and instead work towards changing the "systems" that keep people poor and make them dependent on charity. Achieving that goal on the Choctaw Reservation is elusive and veiled in the "red tape" of a bureaucracy. There are a number of assistance programs that provide food and material help to tribal members, but they are ineffective and do not provide needed assistance. In 1976 Choctaw Tribal Chief Phillip Martin created the motto of "Choctaw Self-Determination". That has been the battle cry of the Choctaws ever since, but the goal of becoming independent of government subsidies and control remains a vision unrealized.

The Choctaw Indians are generations that have been made dependent on handouts. With good intentions the Church has been a part of this system. Sharing our resources, the Missionary Servants have been a part of a system of subsidy dependence. As we try to change our approach to mission, the words of the Lord echo in our consciousness: "The poor you will always have with you and whenever you want you can do good to them." Systemic Change will take time, but what do we do in the meantime? What do we say to a single mother whose children have not eaten in days who knocks on our door and asks for food? What do we say to a man who works minimum wage whose electricity has been cut off because he had to use the money for food and, after being refused by the assistance "programs", comes to the church begging for financial assistance? We would much rather people be independent and take pride in providing for themselves, but how should we respond to them and their needs now? The question is not rhetorical. Our resources are limited and it is sinful to create dependence, but the Gospel also calls us to respond to those in need.

The Choctaws are poor and there are many reasons why they are poor. As already mentioned the policies of the Federal Government force dependency upon them. There are other reasons. Alcoholism, poor self-image, broken families, unwed pregnancy, wide spread depression are all ingredients in the poison of poverty. There are cultural reasons for the poverty that has created generations of dependency on the reservation. Choctaws live in and for today. They do not think or plan for tomorrow. This results in the Choctaws being very poor at budgeting their resources. If a Choctaw wants a beer today, knowing he will need the money to buy food tomorrow, he will spend the money on beer and not think about tomorrow. Choctaws are not *time oriented* as most people, especially Americans, are. Choctaws are *place oriented*. Their concept of history is about *where* things happened and *who* was involved, *not when*.

The goal of changing the system that perpetuates poverty and dependence among the Choctaw Indians is supported but how to accomplish it presents more questions than answers at this point. At this point, we have decided to work towards developing more leadership and responsibility in the churches on the reservation as the first step toward working to change the larger "system" on the reservation. The methodology for accomplishing this will be discussed in the "Mission Plan" section.

The Process

The model for creating this Mission Plan is simple and involved answering three questions:

- What have we accomplished and what have we failed to do?
- What are the priorities for the coming year?
- How specifically are we going to accomplish the goals we set?

The joint pastoral council of the three reservation churches immediately identified two factors that have played a major role in the life of the churches in the past year. The first was Father Bob's two surgeries which required significant recovery time and meant he could not be as involved or present to the churches. His leadership and active participation in striving towards the goals set were sorely missed. While several different priests filled in for Father Bob during his recovery periods, they were only visiting and had no knowledge of the mission plan goals.

The second factor, also a result of Fr. Bob's health issues and recovery periods, was a deepened awareness of the role of the laity in the Church. In other words, an awareness of the need to form lay apostles (missionaries) in the churches dawned more profoundly on the people of the churches. One of last year's priority goals was the development of more responsibility and leadership in the members of the church. Fr. Bob was not able to do the training and formation we had planned, but his condition awakened a sudden realization of that the people of the churches must do more and be more if the churches are to grow. This realization, a roundabout blessing, resulted in some members of the church taking the next step from just coming to church to becoming leaders and showing initiative in the churches. God sometimes writes with crooked lines!

Together we reviewed what we said we were going to do in the past year using the Priority Areas and Action steps as a way of evaluating our progress.

Mission Plan for 2015-2016

In last year's mission plan the Joint Parish Pastoral Council and other church members identified the following priority areas. It was decided to retain these priority areas.

Priority Areas

1. Development of Lay Leadership and Involvement.
2. Youth Ministry
3. Finances
4. Fellowship
5. Choctaw Hymnal/Culture

These priority areas represented a shift in direction and emphasis from the last few years. The churches have put a great deal of time and energy into reaching out to inactive Catholics and inviting new members to join the churches. While this remains a concern in prayer, it was decided to shift our efforts to developing and improving the churches. This is another way of inviting people to become members of the church and invite those who have fallen away to return. There is a deep awareness that the people of the church needs to take on more leadership and responsibility for their churches. A new priority was the desire to establish a youth ministry program. In the past youth ministry has been part of the religious education program, but more is needed.

For the sake of brevity, the rationale for the priority areas is omitted from this year's mission plan and a brief report on actions taken on individual action steps is noted below.

One of the highlights of the past year was the "mission trip" of some college students from the University of Southern Mississippi to Holy Rosary. The students came to help as part of their Spring Break. In the time they were here they taught bible school programs in each of the churches, went to Jackson to cheer for the Choctaw Central High School girls basketball team playing for the State Championship, and spent two days painting and repairing the exterior of the rummage building at Tucker. The youth had a banner made to welcome the students and each of the reservation youth and children signed it so the USM students could take it as a remembrance. Besides the obvious merits of this mission trip, the youth and some adults from Holy Rosary took the initiative to

arrange dinners, tours, and social times with the students. The director of the USM students is already planning to return next year. Below is a report on the actions taken based on the priorities set in last year's mission plan. These action steps will carry over to this year's mission plan.

**Holy Rosary Indian Mission
Saint Therese Church,
St. Catherine Church**

2015-2016 ACTION STEPS

Priority Area 1: Development of lay leadership and involvement

The goal of this priority is twofold: 1) Form lay leaders in the church and 2) Involve more people in the various activities and ministries both current and planned.

Action Steps:

1. Train a new class of Eucharistic Ministers and all Eucharistic Ministers in presiding at Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest and taking Eucharist to the sick and shut-ins. These classes will begin in September, 2015
This step has been accomplished at Holy Rosary and St. Therese Churches
2. Train a new class of altar servers at Holy Rosary and St. Therese from the First Communion Class.
This was done at St. Catherine Church and is scheduled for Fall, 2016.
3. Recruit Catechists for 2015-2016 and begin formation and work towards diocesan certification for all catechists by 2016.
This turned out to be a continuing task throughout this year. Some catechists had unexpected health problems and had to be replaced.
4. Adult Faith Formation classes using a lectionary based bible study and faith sharing model. These classes will take place at both Holy Rosary and St. Therese church.
This was not done because of Father Bob's periods of recovery but will be part of the 2016-2017 Mission Plan. It was noted that in addition to their liturgical ministries, people of the churches were called upon to do more because of Fr. Bob not being available: setting up the church for Mass, hosting the USM students, arranging socials.

Priority Area 2: Establish a program of Youth Ministry

The goal of this priority is to reach out to and form the teens of the churches who are vulnerable to falling away from the Faith and involve them in the churches.

5. Identify and recruit adult church members who are interested and suitable to youth ministry.
6. Explore the possibility of making our youth ministry program a joint effort with Holy Cross Church in town.
7. Coordinate with the reservation Boys and Girls club who could provide transportation and facilities.
8. Contact the Diocesan Youth Ministry Office and solicit their assistance and resources in establishing a youth ministry.
9. Involve our youth in diocesan wide retreats and events.

This area met with several problems. The diocesan youth director suddenly quit and a temporary director was overwhelmed. A new Youth Director was just announced in April, 2016. The youth themselves formed an informal group and were involved in several projects, but a formal plan of youth ministry was not created. Some of our youth are involved in the Boys and Girls Club on the reservation. The mission trip of the Catholic Students Association of the University of Southern Mississippi was an unexpected blessing. Our youth are now in contact with Catholic college students and planning next year's mission trip for the college students.

Priority Area 3: Finances

The goal of this priority area is to make the churches financially self-supporting. This area falls primarily under the Finance Council but also involves the joint pastoral council.

10. Make and keep the people of the church aware of the financial situation by publishing a quarterly financial report showing the sources of income and a detailed explanation of expenses.
Quarterly reports are published to the churches.
11. Work to improve the ministries of the churches to invite more members by making the churches more attractive and inviting.
12. Prayer for benefactors during Liturgy to keep people aware of their kindness to us.
13. Review of the 5-year Financial Plan by the finance council and continued discuss of way of helping the churches become financially independent.
There is an increased awareness of our dependence on outside benefactors for our churches to continue.

Priority Area 4: Liturgical Music, Choctaw Hymnal, Choctaw Choir

The goal of this priority area is to increase the use of Choctaw Hymns in the weekend Masses by completing the work on a new Choctaw Hymnal and the formation of a Choctaw Choir. This will help preserve the Choctaw language as well as make the churches more inviting to new Choctaw members.

14. Complete the work on updating and revising the Choctaw Hymnal by August, 2015 and then explore ways of meeting the cost of publishing the new Choctaw Hymnal.

The draft hymnal was completed in September 2016. As we began a group to learn the Choctaw hymns, we discovered that the different dialects would be a problem. Words in one community mean something else in another community, so we had to agree on vocabulary and melodies

15. Form a Choctaw Choir to sing at wakes and during Liturgy as a way of preserving the Choctaw culture and inviting new members. Contact Diane Comby to ask her to help with this project. The first meeting of those who want to be a part of the Choctaw Choir will be the third week in August, 2015.

The Choctaw Choir was formed and has met for the last year learning the melodies and refining the translation. The next step will be to record the music, then find funding to print copies of the hymnals for the church.

16. Teach Choctaw hymns to the congregation of the church after the Choctaw Choir is formed and functioning.

Priority Area 5: Fellowship

The goal of this priority area is to develop a sense of community and fellowship within the members of the churches by providing opportunities for fellowship outside of Mass.

17. The Joint Parish Pastoral Council will assume this area rather than establishing a separate social and fellowship committee. The council will schedule opportunities for parishioners to gather together for fellowship scheduled around holidays and other significant events in the life of the churches.

We have scheduled several social events but this area is still a priority.

The final step in the Mission Planning process is to establish priority areas and formulate special action steps to accomplish the goals discerned.

Mission Plan 2016-2017

1. Development of Lay Leadership and Involvement.
2. Youth Ministry
3. Finances
4. Fellowship
5. Choctaw Hymnal

2016-2017 Action Steps

1. Develop and Implement Methods forming lay leadership and involvement in the life of the churches; forming lay missionaries.

1. Form Adult Bible Study/Faith Sharing groups at Holy Rosary Church and St. Therese Church.

Faith is the foundation of the apostolate. There is great interest in learning more about the Bible and understanding the mission of disciples of Jesus today. Father Bob will set up and teach these two bible study groups using a Lectionary Based methodology.

2. Liturgical Ministry Training and Faith Formation: Eucharist

The Eucharist is the sun and center of our lives as Catholics. The more we understand about the mystery of the Eucharist, the more we get out of it.

This Year of Mercy offers opportunities for people to grow in their understanding of the Eucharist as well as how the Gospel calls us to be as merciful as our Father is merciful. Holy Rosary is a "Pilgrim Church" for this holy year. Fr. Bob and the joint pastoral council will develop a plan of events for the Year of Mercy and the Eucharist.

New classes of Eucharistic Ministers have been trained this year, so the focus will shift this coming year to the training of servers, lectors, and music ministers.

The formation of Catechists and improving their teaching methodology as they echo God's Word to their students is a priority. This year the CRE's took on additional responsibilities for recruiting catechists and their formation in the areas of child protection and catechesis. The goal is for the CRE's and catechists to assume responsibility for setting up and implementing the religious education programs. In the past, Fr. Bob has done this.

2. Establish a comprehensive program for Youth Ministry.

Every three years we have a special Confirmation program. This is the year for our Confirmation program which will involve the youth in a more comprehensive program of faith development and forming them as lay apostles. It is also an opportunity to renew the faith of the churches.

Work with the new Diocesan Youth Ministry Director to involve our youth in diocesan retreat and other activities offered by the diocese.

Develop the relationship between our youth and the CSA of the University of Southern Mississippi as we plan their next mission trip to Holy Rosary Indian Mission.

3. Finances

The goal of this priority area is for the three reservation churches to become financially independent or least less dependent on outside sources of income. Towards this end the people will be kept aware of the incomes and expenses of the churches through bulletin announcements and quarterly financial reports published in the bulletin.

Continue to invite and encourage new members to join our church and welcome those who are returning to the Church.

Prayer for our benefactors.

Finance committee will continue to review and implement the 5 year Financial Plan for the churches.

4. Liturgical Music, Choctaw Hymnal, Choctaw Choir

The Choctaw hymnal is now completed and will soon be ready for publication. Funds for the printing of the hymnal will be needed. The pastoral council will identify and contact potential sources of funds for the printing of the new Choctaw Hymnal.

Once the hymnal and music are printed, the Choctaw Choir will help teach the Choctaws hymns to the three churches. This will be another step in honoring and preserving the Choctaw language and culture on the reservation and, importantly will affirm Choctaw and the self-esteem of Choctaw people.

5. Fellowship

The goal is to create opportunities for church members to bond and establish an increases sense of fellowship and mission in the churches. The past year has shown us that Fr. Bob will not always be here and while he is here we need to do all we can to building a sense of community in our churches that will lead to greater involvement in the various ministries of the churches. Fellowship should not be seen as simply social events, but should include other activities and events outside of Liturgy. Fellowship supports and encourages missionary efforts.

Final Reflections by Fr. Bob Goodyear, S.T.

Decades ago, as the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity were a young struggling religious community; we accepted an invitation to come to Holy Rosary Indian Mission on the Choctaw Reservation. The Choctaws are among the poorest and most abandoned people in our country. Their culture and their lives are unique. In spite of their history of persecution and prejudice, they have survived. The Catholic Church has played an essential role in their survival both giving them the hope and faith they needed and serving as advocates to encourage and protect them. In the last 40 years, the Choctaw population on the reservation has grown from 3,200 to 11,000 tribal members. Their average age is only 18 which means the majority of the Choctaws are young people who face challenges people of their age are not equipped to deal with. In addition to the despair and feelings of helplessness, they now live in a world dominated by alcoholism, drugs, violence, and poverty. In the "old days" a Choctaw man could have as many wives as he could support. Today Choctaw men are promiscuous and have as many women and children as he is inclined to have. This has resulted in a high rate of HIV infection, broken families, suicide, and child neglect and abuse. I offer the following example.

A 12 year old Choctaw girl grew up without knowing her father. He has nothing to do with her mother or her. She was raped by her older brother. When she was 17, her boyfriend told her he would kill himself if she didn't have sex with him. She did and got pregnant. She and her daughter live with her mother, grandmother, three sisters and their children. Once she got pregnant the father of the child has nothing to do with her and has gotten five other girls pregnant. Her daughter, now five years old, was sexually assaulted by her 11 year old cousin. She and her mother could not continue to live in the house. Holy Rosary uses the former convent building as a safe house for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. The mother and her daughter lived in the convent building for 2 months until we could find a tribal house for them. Her dream was to become a teacher on the reservation, but for the last three years she has worked at the casino and will likely not go to college to become qualified to teach. The cycle will continue as it does for the Choctaws.

The point of this example of the needs on the reservation and how the Church responds is to demonstrate the challenges ministry here faces. The Choctaws are obviously poor and abandoned in more ways than the superficial observer can see. Systemic change will happen one Choctaw at a time rather than for the Choctaws in general. It will require a great deal of time and focus to help the Choctaws and teach them they have the gifts and abilities to help themselves.

The mission here must strive to respond to the myriad of problems that the Choctaws face by intervention when we can and by providing the spiritual strength that is attacked by the situation they live in every day. The best gift we can give is hope, and then working with the Choctaws to make hope a reality. The Action Steps are a way of focusing our efforts but can only provide an oasis to address the needs that often defy measuring or quantifiable success. The goal is to focus on a few in the hope of forming them as apostles to reach out to the many. The planned bible study and faith sharing groups are an invitation to become apostles, missionaries to their own people.

One of the challenges of Holy Rosary Indian Mission is it is not one church. It is three and they are relatively far apart, requiring a drive of 90 miles to get around to each church on Sunday. Another challenge is the fact that Holy Rosary has six building, all but one of which is over 100 years old. They are challenge to keep up and maintain. A goal is to use the buildings as much as possible, for example using the former convent as both a guest house for groups like the Catholic Student Association who came here for their mission trip and as a safe house for victims of domestic violence and/or sexual abuse. Hospitality is a Cenacle virtue.

As a work, working with Native Americans has become a work that is increasingly abandoned by some other religious communities who have a history of working on reservations. Our commitment to working with the Choctaws represents a very long and extensive commitment of confreres and resources. We have done well but things have changed on the Choctaw Reservation. In some ways it is as if we had just arrived to preach the Gospel and share our belief that every Catholic, every Christian is called to be an apostle. What are we planning for our future with the Choctaws? We can not focus only on the problems of the reservation. We must see the enormous potential in them and in the churches here.

For the poor believing in God is not difficult. Their biggest problem is they find it difficult to believe in themselves.