



Thank you for allowing me (Stratis Christakis) to represent our parish at the 2024 Clergy-Laity Congress and experience the connections and learnings that came from it. I appreciated both the big ideas that were shared, and the small acts that were suggested. There is a lot that is being asked of us (which can feel overwhelming) and we can take solace in that the small things are how the big things get done. Below is a list of 12 big and little things we can do as a parish, and individually to move forward, inspired by the interactions, panels, and workshops I was a part of.

12 Big Things a Parish Can Do:

1. **Foster a Welcoming Environment:** Ensure that everyone feels included and valued, creating a culture of hospitality and acceptance.
2. **Strengthen Community Bonds:** Build strong, supportive networks both within the parish and with the wider community to foster connections and mutual support.
3. **Empower Personal and Spiritual Growth:** Provide opportunities for personal and spiritual development through educational programs, retreats, and mentoring.
4. **Embrace Technological Advances:** Use technology to enhance communication, streamline parish activities, and reach a broader audience.
5. **Promote Holistic Health and Wellness:** Support the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of parishioners through health initiatives and wellness programs.
6. **Encourage Lifelong Learning:** Offer a variety of educational opportunities for all age groups to promote continuous learning and growth.
7. **Practice Financial Stewardship:** Encourage responsible financial practices to ensure the sustainability and growth of the parish community.
8. **Enhance Worship Experiences:** Continuously improve the worship services to make them more meaningful and engaging for everyone.
9. **Increase Community Outreach:** Get involved in service projects and outreach programs to support and uplift the local community.
10. **Foster Intergenerational Relationships:** Promote activities and programs that encourage interactions between different generations within the parish.
11. **Cultivate a Shared Vision:** Develop a clear, collective vision for the future of the parish that aligns with its mission and engages the entire community.
12. **Encourage Active Participation:** Motivate everyone to take an active role in parish activities and initiatives, fostering a sense of ownership and involvement.

12 Little Things a Parish Can Do:

1. **Greet Each Other Warmly:** Make a point to greet fellow parishioners with a smile and a kind word.
2. **Keep the Parish Clean:** Help maintain a tidy and welcoming environment.
3. **Participate in Events:** Attend and support parish events and activities.
4. **Offer Help:** Lend a hand to those in need, whether it's a small favor or more significant assistance.
5. **Share Ideas:** Contribute suggestions and feedback to improve parish life.
6. **Express Gratitude:** Thank volunteers and leaders for their efforts and contributions.
7. **Promote Inclusion:** Ensure newcomers and visitors feel welcome and included.
8. **Stay Informed:** Keep up to date with parish news and announcements.
9. **Pray for Each Other:** Include fellow parishioners in your prayers.
10. **Engage in Small Groups:** Join or form small groups for discussion, study, or support.
11. **Be Positive:** Spread positivity and encouragement within the community.
12. **Show Kindness:** Perform small acts of kindness to brighten someone's day.