

Diocese of Brooklyn - Office of Pastoral Planning
Vines and Branches: News for Pastoral Planners... and those making the plan a reality

Newsletter -Fall 2007

Graphic-free text version for printing (see our website for graphic/color version...)

A message from the Director...

As Fall approaches and summer fades into memory I am reminded of the necessary turns in the road that are inevitable in any journey. The journey of pastoral planning that we have been a part of is about to take a turn, a hopeful change of course, in the publication of the parish pastoral plans. The plans are new maps, as Ellen Rhatigan writes in this issue, that chart the way forward to an ever more vibrant and life-giving community of faith. The pastoral plan is the response which each parish must make to the world around, a deliberate statement of commitment to make Christ's presence known through our actions.

As with any journey, once you make the turn there is no going back -only forward along a road not of our own making. Once the parish's plan is published, there is no going back- only forward to the accomplishment of the goals. The goals are rooted in the mission of church which we all share. The objectives are markers indicating progress along the path. As we move along on our pilgrimage we do so together, as a body, a community with only this road map – the mission of Jesus – to guide us into the future.

But, this journey does not end with this one turn, it is only a step which leads to an even wider horizon. Pastoral Planning and parish plans are never an end in themselves. They are a way of organizing ourselves for mission, a way of measuring our progress and charting our course, but this is only the beginning. In the end, we will find that the journey itself, the way we got there was the true experience of God-with-us.

In the meantime, as we take one step after the other, great consolation comes from knowing that we are not alone on this journey. The Spirit abides with us and we abide with each other. Also, there are others who have taken this same path before us who can guide us and help us avoid pitfalls along the way. For this reason, I am very excited to share with you our intention to host a National Pastoral Planning Forum in January which will bring together leaders from across the country who will gather in Brooklyn to share their journeys and the lessons learned. I hope to see you there as we join with other pilgrims along the way.

- Bob Choiniere

Reminder: Deadline to Submit Parish Plan

“Reporting Tool”

November 30th, 2007

Call us for last minute help!

Choosing New PPC Members? Choose Discernment

As PPC members rotate off a council, new members must be added in a manner that reflects the consultative processes you engender. Councils that work together most effectively commonly employ a process of discernment, decision making rooted in prayer.

By using **discernment**, we acknowledge that God is at work in our lives at all times, especially when making important decisions. Prayerful discernment helps people to free their minds from vested interests and distractions, focusing on the needs of the PPC at that particular time and place, and the gifts the Holy Spirit calls forth in ministry.

The many benefits of a formal discernment process include:

- ❖ Encourages participation of the entire faith community.
- ❖ Informs and educates the parish about pastoral planning and the role of the PPC.
- ❖ Focuses on the gifts of individuals and not their visibility or popularity.
- ❖ Uses prayer, faith-sharing and consensus-building consistent with Church Tradition.
- ❖ Elicits names of potential leaders within the parish.
- ❖ Affirms all candidates and minimize the sense of a winner/loser dynamic.
- ❖ Provides an open and transparent process.
- ❖ Those who are not selected are invited to share their gifts in other ways.

For a complete Discernment packet, go to our website <http://pastoralplanning.diobrook.org> or call us today at (718) 229-8001 x735, 736

Stewardship in 3D: Discovery, Discernment, Discipleship

Learn new insights and creative approaches to addressing stewardship in parish life! The Office of Stewardship and Development is sponsoring **Stewardship Day** in Douglaston on **Saturday, October 27th** in Douglaston 8:30am- 4:00pm. It includes Keynote presenter, Most Reverend Robert Morneau, the retired Auxiliary Bishop of Green Bay, WI, and workshops including special tracks for the Haitian Community, Pastors and Youth track. Contact the Office of Stewardship and Development for more information: (718) 965-7300 x1604, stewardship@rcdob.org

Thought for the day:

“The inchworm is a very interesting critter because it has 4 legs up front and 4 in the back. It moves by grabbing things up front and then bringing up the back legs to secure itself. If the front legs do not grab onto anything, the inchworm cannot move forward. It dies. If there are no sturdy legs in the back from which the front legs can move out, the insect can’t go forward. It dies. Both trust and solidarity- dialogue- at each end of the insect are needed for it to go forth and grow.

- Dominican Fr. Michel Cote

Those who look longingly to the past and those eager to forge ahead- All of us in the church need each other! *“The inchworm does not fly, nor can it jump in leaps and bounds. It just keeps moving bit by bit and, as it’s name indicates, inch by inch”*

“Mapping out Journeys” – by Ellen Rhatigan

When I was young, our family vacations were preceded by a time honored tradition through the mail- the AAA Travel guide book. My brother and I shared our mother’s love of maps and we would carefully rip it out of the book and pore over it, tracing our pending vacation. We usually strayed within several hours of Brooklyn, to an historical fort or perhaps a colonial village. (By the time I was 8, I could fuel a musket and churn butter with the best of them!) While Mom navigated with the map on her lap, she always left room for Dad to veer off into an antique store or museum when the mood struck or they felt we needed yet another Civil war canon demonstration. In between rounds of “are we there yet,” my brother and I would follow the route from the back on our own map, sometimes marking off places we liked or the times we made room to veer in another direction.

Perhaps because it was Summer, this memory came back to me when I received a call from a parish pastoral council member. I congratulated him on the parish’s completed plan and he responded, “Not that I don’t love your e-mails, but since we’re done planning, feel free to take us off the mailing list!” “DONE PLANNING!?!” I thought! “You’ve just mapped out your journey.” I sat back in my chair and prepared for a nice long conversation.

I can understand why he felt this way. This particular parish spent well over a year first forming a council, then consulting the community through the all too familiar “one to one” conversations, parish assembly and reflection groups. It was a great relief for them to sign the reporting tool and publish the plan to the parish. They were exhausted, and indeed, they deserved a break. But they were also excited. The parish had done quite well organizing activities and ministries over the years, but they had never thought to create a roadmap for the future. It seemed they had been traveling in circles to meet everyday needs with the resources at hand, forgetting that our mission as church propels us forward into a vision for the future. It’s been moving us to do that for 2000 years. They were slowly changing the whole thinking process of a parish whose culture thrived on the now, or ruminated on the “good ol’ days”. He forgot for a minute that the plan they worked so hard to create merely begins their journey.

Like the old weathered AAA map, the pastoral planning roadmap begins with your starting point, defining who you are as a parish through the Mission Statement, and your destination, your goals. Many routes can take you to your destination, requiring multiple objectives. Those objectives are reviewed often, since your path may have to be adjusted due to a traffic jam, a road block or a really good local diner. A parish with lots of energy may choose to take the highway, invigorating a parish in reaching a goal, or maybe the journey is long and winding, with time to pull over to admire the scenery. However you reach your goals, the important part is that you keep your eyes on the road with your mission on your lap.

A few weeks ago, I visited my brother. I smiled with a bit of reverie as he eagerly mapped out his own family’s vacation to Amish country, promising me they’d stop at some fort along the way. A few minutes later, we turned to find his youngest daughter on the floor with the map she pulled from the table. She was tracing the lines with her little fingers with intense concentration, mimicking my brother’s voice in perfect toddler gibberish. I laughed, thinking that planning never ends. We create the road map and pass it on the next generation, teaching them how to map out their own course with the tools on hand. Destinations will change as the Kingdom of God continually unfolds in our church, but parishes that make planning a part of their lives will always be moving forward, and mapping out the next journey.

As you finalize your plans...

*“Remember that ultimately, it is not about crafting the perfect plan. It’s not about how many “one to one” conversations we’ve had or following the process exactly how it’s written in the blue binder. It’s about relationality- “being” over “doing” ...
...declaring who we are as a parish! Everything we do speaks to this...*

*... how we welcome people,
...how we let people know that their views matter,
...how we draw people in to discipleship,
...how we reflect Christ on this earth!*

Our goals and our work flows from this...

Without intentional relationality, our plans become nothing more than words on paper.

With the power of the Holy Spirit, we will enliven our Church one relationship, two or three, at a time gathered in His name...”

(The author of the quote above wishes to remain anonymous in the hopes that each reader will think it comes from their own PPC...)

Items recently added to our website... <http://pastoralplanning.diobrook.org/>

- Discernment Guide (for choosing new members)
- Implementation Guide
- “Creative sparks” to assist in writing objectives
- Newsletter articles
- Discussion forum comments from YOU...
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One-to-One-ometer?

As of August 2007, parishes who reported “One to One” Conversations totaled **** 13, 293 **** conversations and counting...

Email us your counts today and watch our Church revitalize one person at a time!

New Cluster Created

Queens North #6 has split into two clusters. Effective this Fall, QN#6 now includes Our Lady Fatima, St. Bartholomew, Blessed Sacrament, and St. Joan of Arc. The new QN#10 includes St. Gabriel’s, Our Lady of Sorrows, St. Leo and St. Paul the Apostle.

Other Cluster Changes

Sacred Heart –Ss. Michael/Edward - from BW#4 to BE#7

All Saints – from BW#2 to BE#7

Ascension – from QN#5 to QN#3

St. Rose of Lima – from BE#2 to BW#7

Blessings to all in your new arrangement!

National Pastoral Planning Forum - January 18-20, 2008- “Living the Vision”

Plans are in... Implementation had begun... Now it's time to Live the Vision!

This coming Martin Luther King weekend, Brooklyn will be visited by a multi-disciplinary team of the church's most informed and best equipped Pastoral Planners and Diocesan leaders in the country! They represent the national Conference of Pastoral Planning and Council Development (CPPCD), and they are coming to provide a series of workshops in pastoral planning as well as ministering in a reconfigured parish.

Each of the three days will focus on a unique group of leaders and involve a variety of theological formation opportunities as well as skill based workshops in group process, consultation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

Friday: Pastors and Parish Staff
Saturday: Parish Pastoral Council Members
Sunday: Members of reconfigured parishes

Registration brochures will be available in October on our website:
<http://pastoralplanning.diobrook.org>

* Sponsored by a generous grant from the diocesan “Alive in Hope” foundation.

Implementation Guide – Available NOW!!!

Once your plan is completed, your parish enters the crucial phase of **implementation**. Pastoral Plans are only helpful if they help us move towards action on behalf of mission, and even the most carefully written plan finds itself completely dependent upon the success of its execution.

The Office of Pastoral Planning has developed an Implementation Guide to assist the Parish Pastoral Council in this all-important step, from planning to action.

This guide is meant to assist councils in the transition from planning to action, to take on a role of empowerment by calling forth gifts and mentoring new leaders.

In it, you will find clarification on the role of the council and their relationship to those who will implement the plan as well as sample agendas, planning calendar, evaluation tools and information on the discernment of new council members.

This guide is available on our website, or by calling the Pastoral Planning Office. It will soon be accompanied by an **Implementation Video**. Please feel free to call the office with any questions or considerations.

**Sample prayer to open your first PPC meeting of the year:
(For this prayer, you will need a package of mustard seeds)**

Seeds of New Life:

Call to Prayer:

Be still within and without. Center yourself in the God of Life who is always within and around us.

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God, may our deepest yearnings always remain in harmony with Your will for us. Nourish us with the power of your love that we might overcome our fears and come to know the fullness of life. Amen.

Reading: Mark 4:30-32

Seed Ritual:

Pass the dish of mustard seeds from one person to the next. Take one seed and place it in the palm of your hand. As you hold the small seed, reflect on the gospel we just heard. Consider the ways in which this parable reflects your own life and ministry. When you are ready, and if you feel comfortable, briefly share....

What seeds you have planted in your life and/or ministry?

What seeds do you hope to plant as a PPC member?

How do you hope those seeds will bear fruit?

Closing Prayer: Loving God, Nourish the seed of hope that lies dormant within us.
We eagerly await the fullness of life that only your Spirit can give.
Come, Holy Spirit, and fill the hearts of your faithful. Amen.

You may find this and other prayers to help open meetings and nourish faith sharing under the "Prayer Resources" section of our website.

Vicar General, Vicar for Evangelization & Pastoral Life
Most Rev. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano

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Upcoming Dates for Pastoral Planning Events

PPC Workshops on Reflection Groups and Writing the Parish plan:

Queens: Wednesday, September 12th – ICC (Douglaston) 7:00pm- 9:00pm

Brooklyn: Monday, September 24th – Holy Name (Park Slope) 7:00pm- 9:00pm

Queens: Thursday, November 8th - ICC (Douglaston) 7:00pm- 9:00pm

PPC Facilitator / Chairperson Meeting -with Bishop Caggiano

Brooklyn- - St. Patrick's (Bay Ridge)– Tuesday, October 9th - 7:30 – 9:00pm

Queens- St. Nicholas of Tolentine (Jamaica)- Wed. October 10th – 7:30 – 9:00pm

Advent Evenings of Reflection- 7:30 pm

Queens: -Our Lady of Mercy (Forest Hills) – December 4th -with Bishop Catanello

Brooklyn- Immaculate Heart of Mary (Park Slope) – December 6th -with Bishop Sansaricq

“Living the Vision” – National Pastoral Planning Forum

January 18-20, 2008