

***Diocese of Brooklyn - Office of Pastoral Planning***  
***Vines and Branches: News for Pastoral Planners... and those making the plan a reality***  
***Newsletter – Winter/Spring 2008***

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

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**A message from the Director...**

I have been humbled and edified by the parish pastoral plans that have come in from every corner of the Diocese in the past few months. They are full of dreams, hopes and aspirations for an even more vibrant church of the future. These plans represent a great outpouring of energy by both the clergy and laity working together to discern the future of the church. This is a great work that has been accomplished, not just the written plans submitted to the Bishop, but the development of new relationships, new leaders and a space where all the faithful can share their thoughts and desires for the future of their faith community.

The all-important task before us all is to make these dreams come true. Accomplishing these worthwhile goals will require full, active and conscious participation in each parish. This next step is perhaps the most difficult to achieve. Bringing the dreams of the parish to reality is possible, but it requires the participation of the entire community. The promise of the Kingdom given to us by Christ is not accomplished by a few serving the many, but by the many serving one another, each in their own way and according to the gifts given to each one. Animating the gifts of the community, calling people to act on behalf of their own dreams is the true work now before all of us.

We can do much to accomplish this goal. In this newsletter we discuss some of the tactics and strategies for implementing the plan and continue the development of leadership in the parish, but there is a limit to our efforts. In the end, the implementation of a parish plan requires faith in the Spirit among us. It is this Spirit, moving in the hearts of people, that calls each of us to service on behalf of mission. As we all seek to make our plans real, to ask people to become involved, to strategize the right steps, it is important that councils and parish leaders remain rooted in prayer. Consistent prayer provides the recognition that all does not rest on our shoulders alone, that the Spirit of God moves in the hearts of people calling them to the work of the Gospel. The call of leadership is to provide a place at the table, a place to serve, an opportunity for people to recognize their giftedness and share those gifts with others. As we continue our journey together, may the Holy Spirit continue to move among us and give us strength for the next step.

- Robert Choiniere

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**Parish Plans: The Diocesan Response**

All along this planning journey, diocesan offices have been asking themselves, “How are we going to respond to the pastoral plans?” Offices want to help ensure your plan’s success any way they can, but they are already working hard and the natural inclination to establish new programs run counter to the

guiding principle that parishes determine for themselves how best to meet their goals. A challenge, indeed!

As you can imagine, reading and making connections between hundreds of plans is yet another challenge. As soon as your parish plan arrived at the doorstep of the Pastoral Planning Office, it was entered into a specially designed “Access” database. This database will allow us to run reports that give us spreadsheets by which we can more easily identify key goals within parishes and regions of parishes. This will help us in pinpointing common areas of need.

However, there is another very important element to consider. In Bishop DiMarzio’s latest pastoral letter, he points to five key priorities that must guide the New Evangelization. (see sidebar for more information). Diocesan offices exist to help the Bishop carry out His mission in the diocese as well as to provide support and resources to parishes in their needs. These are not disconnected at all, but are interwoven into one large fabric of living out our Catholic mission as the people of God.

Thus, diocesan offices serve as a bridge. They must find ways to address the five priorities while also identifying those issues in the parish plans in which diocesan assistance and resources can support parish efforts. Diocesan offices, particularly those within the Vicariate for Evangelization and Pastoral Life have been meeting regularly over the past year to do just this. We’ll keep you informed as we venture forward together in this exciting time! May God bless all of our efforts in the parishes and in the diocese.

- Ellen Rhatigan

### **The Five Diocesan Priorities:**

1. Ongoing support & formation of priests.
2. Ongoing support & revitalization of schools and programs of faith formation.
3. Competent and faithful Church leadership
4. Ongoing effective support of Catholic families.
5. Outreach, ministry, and service for youth.

For the full pastoral letter, “Do Not Be Afraid,” go to **[www.DiocesefofBrooklyn.org](http://www.DiocesefofBrooklyn.org)**

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### **From the Pastoral Institute**

Many parishes have focused on lay leadership as one of their goals or objectives. The three-year Lay Leadership Formation for Ministry Program offers potential candidates the opportunity for spiritual formation, theological education, pastoral skills development, and a supervised ministry practicum. Participants include those already engaged in ministry, members of Parish Pastoral Councils, and other volunteer ministers.

The quality of the program has been affirmed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops who granted it initial accreditation in 2006. More than 400 persons have successfully completed the program.

**Two information sessions will be held in Queens and in Brooklyn on April 2nd and April 10th respectively.** Sessions are in both English and Spanish and registration forms are available from your pastor (from First Class) or by calling the Pastoral Institute at (718) 229-8001 x350.

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### **From One Pastor's Desk**

*The PPC at Our Lady of Mercy in Forest Hills has been implementing their plan since the Spring of 2007. One of their greatest accomplishments thus far is a monthly bulletin complete with calendar of events, information about the parish, and articles on parishioners, parish activities, and other items of local and timely interest. What caught our eye recently is an article by their pastor, Msgr. McGuirl, that highlights the workshop for Pastors at our National Forum. Below is a small piece of Msgr. McGuirl's reflection on the experience.*

“...Since the Second Vatican Council, which concluded in 1965, there has been a renewed appreciation of the role of the “populum Dei” (people of God), meaning all members of the Church, not simply the clergy. In fact, the Council in its document entitled “Lumen Gentium” (Light of the People) emphasized that the laity are not simply an appendage of the Church but they are central to its existence. Also central to this renewed appreciation was the idea that the essential mission of the Church is evangelization, i.e. the spreading of the Good News: God loves us and calls us to share His life in Christ. Every aspect of the Church exists for this purpose. Our church and school buildings and financial resources only exist to serve that greater good.

...The presenter for the pastors' group at the January 18 workshop was Mary Anne Gubish, D.Min. Dr. Gubish has spent many years in church ministry positions including the Director of Pastoral Life and Planning for the Diocese of Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Her topic was the “The Pastor as Presider”. She positioned the “pastor as presider” at both the altar and the Parish Pastoral Council.

Her thesis is that the pastor, because he has the ultimate care of the parish, presides at the Parish Pastoral Council in a way “strikingly similar to his presiding at Liturgy.” Fundamentally pastors are to teach, preach, celebrate the Sacraments and orchestrate the various ministries of a particular parish. They need not do or be expected to do everything themselves. In that context, the laity are not meant to be passive recipients of parish services, but their many gifts and talents are also meant to be placed at the service of the Gospel.”

“The reduced numbers of priests should not mean “less priests = less ministry” – rather, in an odd way, the vocation crisis may mean that there is greater opportunity for lay men and women to develop and use their gifts and talents. This does not mean that ordained ministry is unimportant. The priest offers the Eucharist and leads us in that prayer which is the center of our faith. The Catholic who fails to participate in the Eucharist fails to recognize that this is the family meal of the Church, in which the Lord Jesus is present in His word and under the appearances of bread and wine in order to nourish us on our journey toward Him.

In our homes, we are most fully family at meals. Instinctually, we acknowledge that food is necessary for life and we share food with those who share our lives. Likewise we share the Eucharistic feast with those who share our Christian lives and with the Lord Jesus, who sustains our lives into eternity

In the family, someone prepares the meal, someone cooks, someone serves, someone takes leadership in conversation, and someone cleans the table. In the Church family there are also many roles: the priest who

presides, lectors, servers, ushers, choir members, sacristans, and extraordinary Eucharistic ministers. Just so, a good family is hospitable, and welcomes others to the table and the successful parish family does the same. Our Church and all its members must be a sign of welcome to those yearning for the peace of Christ and knowledge of God. Our greetings before Mass or at the sign of peace should be heartfelt and seen as an extension of Christ's welcome to all.

We have been in Parish Pastoral Planning for over a year and many people, especially the members of our Council, have worked very hard. Most of these brothers and sisters are working during the day and not a few are raising families but they recognize how important the Church family is an extension of Christ's love in the world. Thus several programs were proposed in order to continue the New Evangelization that both the late Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI as well as our own Bishop, Nicholas DiMarzio, have emphasized ... (description of pastoral plan follows)

... The above initiatives and those in the future will require the involvement of additional like-minded parishioners, who recognize that they have an intimate and important role to play in the extension of the Church's mission, the mission of Christ in our world! All of us are agents of the New Evangelization!"

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### **Resources for PPC Members**

Have you tried the discussion forum on our website?

**The best resource you have is each other** – use the threads to boast successes, vent frustrations, and share ideas with the almost 3,000 PPC members in Brooklyn and Queens.

Give it a try: **<http://pastoralplanning.diobrook.org/forum>**

Discussion topics include "Success of Pastoral Councils," "Hospitality Ministry", "Implementation Ideas", "Parish Bulletin PPC Corner", and "Publicity". This is YOUR forum for each other! You can add to the discussions listed or start your own!

Give it a try today!

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**The following are just some of the Diocesan Contacts who can offer support and resources in your planning.**

### **As of March 2008:**

**Diaconate Office:** Deacon Jorge Gonzalez – (718) 229-8001 x 575  
Deacon Michael Vicinaza, x578

**Office of Faith Formation:** (718) 229-8001  
Dr. Phil Franco, Director, Faith Formation, x 580  
Adolescent Faith Formation- Marilyn Santos x 584

Adult Faith Formation- Richard Pipchinski x582  
Catholic School Curriculum, Nancy Azzaro – x587  
Marriage Ministry, Ana Puente- x543  
RCIA – Sr. Alice Michael - x583  
Respect Life Education, Robin Lynn x585

**Liturgical Commission**, Director- Rev. Frank Tumino x 610  
Rev. Vito Buonanno x611  
Music Ministry - Charles Mallia, x614  
**Pastoral Institute**, Sr. Angela Gannon, Director, x 350  
Associate Director: Jerry Tortorella

**Pastoral Planning**  
Director- Bob Choiniere x737  
Associate Director- Ellen Rhatigan, x739

**Safe Environment** (“Virtus”, “Child Lures”...)  
Director- Sr. Pat Hudson - 281- 9672

**Sts. Peter and Paul Spirituality Center**,  
Associate Director (Queens)- Deacon Rich Gilligan, x312  
Associate Director (Bklyn)- Carlos Garcia (718) 624-5670

**Office of Stewardship and Development:**  
Director: Thomas Flood (718) 965-7300 x1608  
Marion Albaugh - x1604

**Office of Vocations:**  
Rev. Kevin Sweeney 718-399-5900 x5505

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### **The PPC’s Role in Implementation**

**The following is quoted from our Implementation Video- have you seen it?**

“Think about a coach and how a coach relates to the players and the game itself. First, the coach provides support, but does not play the game. The coach cheers and provides needed equipment. Coaches provide advice to the players. Coaches also bring the needs of the team members to management when necessary. They connect novice players with experienced players to act as mentors and finally, they keep everyone focused on the goal.

When you think of your role in the Implementation of the plan, think of yourself as a coach or even a cheerleader, present and supporting in any way you can, but not playing the game.” When you think of your role in the Implementation of the plan, think of yourself as a coach or even a cheerleader, present and supporting in any way you can, but not playing the game.”

A copy of the DVD was sent to each parish. Call us for more information if you did not receive one!

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**Implementation can be difficult– we can help!**  
**Do you need an Implementation gathering?**

The Office of Pastoral Planning can facilitate a gathering of Implementers from all over a cluster. The purpose of this gathering would simply be to gather together parish pastoral council members and lead implementers from parishes in the cluster to share strategies and troubleshoot issues that arise as plans are implemented.

These meetings will be fairly informal and held in a local parish within the cluster. The duration of the meeting would be no more than 1 ½ hours. A member of the Pastoral Planning Office would be there to guide the conversation and offer advice, but the true purpose would be for lay leaders to share ideas with one another.

PPC members or Implementers - talk to your pastor who can bring it up to the cluster and contact the PPO. (See back page for meetings scheduled so far...)

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### **Implementation in Action**

Parishes all over the diocese are bringing their PPC and their Implementers together for a big kick-off! We asked PPC member Rita Sweeney to share her experience of one such Implementation gathering at St. Rose of Lima in Rockaway Beach...

“Approximately 40 people participated in the Implementation Gathering at Saint Rose of Lima, Rockaway Beach on Saturday morning, February 9. This included a cross-section from our major language groups at the parish -- English, Polish, and Spanish. Some of the attendees had been involved since before the Pastoral Plan was submitted in November, while others were there for the first time. Following the suggested format for such a gathering was very helpful. After the prayer time and explanations of what we are doing and what we hope to achieve, the people broke into the three goal areas of Evangelization, Stewardship, and Worship, and set their plans in motion.

As we have come to find out, it can be a bit overwhelming to work on something like the Pastoral Planning Process. Our experience over the past two years has been a bit start, stop, start again in each of the steps. Our one-to-one conversations did not "take off" as we would have liked. But almost 200 people participated in our Parish Assembly in March 2007.

At this point in the process, however, we found that setting aside just this brief time for the Implementation Gathering definitely focused everyone involved. By the end of the morning, each goal group, and their respective objective groups, could articulate specific steps they would be taking. So we move ahead with great hope for our parish family. One thing we would add is that most of the people who are involved were invited on a personal basis. We have tried signups in the church, and printing the Parish Pastoral Plan with a tear-off to respond. But what seems to work best, at least here at Saint Rose of Lima, is a personal invitation to a specific person to work on a specific goal or objective.”

Let us know about your Parish Implementation gathering - or go to our discussion forum at <http://pastoralplanning.diobrook.org> to share your experiences with other PPC members!

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## **PPC Council Term Limits**

In my humble opinion, Catholic culture is infused with the premise that volunteering for something, anything, volunteers you for life, or at least the next 27 years. It seems you're hooked— whether you like it or not. Once a parishioner commits to an often nebulous volunteer role, they fall into one of two groups; those that are comfortable with their position within the parish, feeling needed, valued and willing to stay despite the work, and those who do the work slowly over time becoming bitter at how enmeshed they've become that they cannot step away due to guilt or a million other reasons. I have met many volunteers on both sides and have held both positions at different times in my life.

According to the PPC Guidelines, membership rotates every 3 years (3-5 for new councils). Term limits ensure that 1/3 of the council turns over each year. Lately, we have been faced with questions on the flexibility of this guideline. While the guiding principle of good planning lends itself to adaptability to parish realities, the sidebar offers some of the intentions of council rotation.

### Flexibility and Adaptability

After reading the sidebar, it is hopefully clear that council rotation is meant to benefit all, the PPC, the members and the entire parish.

That being said, those who know pastoral planning will remember there are always nuances and caveats to guidelines. For most parishes, implementation is in full swing and some members may need to be replaced due to attrition. Quite simply, life happens. Creating and maintaining a sustainable body may very well override the rotation guideline, at least for the first year or so of planning. Remember, we are creating a whole new way of being church! It will take years for the rhythm of the planning cycle to become firmly implanted within a parish. Guidelines will then make much more sense.

Right now, we encourage councils to have a discussion on the need to discern new members as well as the energy level and motivation of members who have been there for some time. Focusing on the principles that underlie the guidelines on member rotation rather than the guidelines themselves will help parishes determine the best path for their council at this time.

Here are some possible questions to spark discussion:

1. How well are we functioning with the number of PPC members that we have?
2. Do we need to discern additional members?
3. Do you consider the PPC a stable, sustainable body at this time? Why or why not?
4. How are we individually feeling about serving additional time on the PPC?

As you discern new members, don't forget our discernment guide and worship aid on our website: <http://pastoralplanning.diobrook.org> - the way you choose your members makes all the difference in a great PPC

## **Why Rotate PPC Membership??**

1. The most obvious reason is that PPC work is hard and people need a break. Implementing the parish plan should generate excitement, not the burden of more work. Sustaining that energy is difficult at best when the group doesn't ever change.
2. There's always a lot of work to be done! PPC members should have the opportunity to step down and serve in other roles within the parish. No one can be a visionary in a vacuum. Every so often it's important to step out and do the work too.
3. A group that works very well together often takes on a life of its own. It begins to exist for its own good, which is wonderful in a faith sharing community but potentially dangerous for a pastoral council who seeks to keep focus outward. Rotating membership ensure that the dynamics of the group lends itself to bonding and working well together, but not becoming enmeshed within itself.
4. Leadership Suffocation: The relational model we use for planning seeks to continually draw others into leadership within the community. Though it may be very difficult to do, long time leaders must intentionally make that space for others to step in. Else, a parish can choke by training new leaders and not providing opportunities for them to lead.

- Ellen Rhatigan

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## **Orientation for New PPC Members**

All PPC members who did not attend training in 2006-07 (the one with the big blue binder) are invited. Orientation is in two parts. You are encouraged to attend both parts at either site.

### **Topics include:**

#### **Session One: Introduction to Parish Pastoral Councils / A Model for Pastoral Planning**

Our Baptismal Call, Living the Mission/Creating the Vision, The Role of the Parish Pastoral Council, Collaborative Ministry and Consultation, Models of Consultation, Rationale and Methodology, The Pastoral Plan: Creating, Implementing, and Evaluating

#### **Session Two: Grounded in Faith & Sustained through Relationships**

Spirituality for Leadership, Prayer and Theological Reflection, Connecting Reflection to Relationship, Effective Meeting skills, Tools for Active Listening

**Queens Site:** Mary's Nativity, 46-02 Parson's Boulevard, Flushing, NY 11355

Session One: Saturday, May 3, 2008 - 9:00am– 3:00pm

Session Two: Friday, May 9, 2008 - 7:00pm– 9:00 pm

**Brooklyn Site:** Our Lady of Angels, 7320 Fourth Avenue, Brooklyn NY, 11209

Session One: Saturday, May 10, 2008 - 9:00am—3:00 pm

Session Two: Tuesday, May 20, 2008 - 7:00pm—9:00pm

There is no fee for these sessions, but you must register in advance: call Alida Pagan at (718) 229-8001 x736

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To prepare for the **Orientation**, this will help!

An 11 minute presentation what “vision” and “mission” mean for a Parish Pastoral Council can be found here: <http://elearning.rcdob.org/ppcintro>

It’s a slide presentation with a voice over, so turn your speakers on.

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### **Parish Plan Implementation - Who’s Who?**

With the first round of Parish Pastoral Plans submitted, most parishes are now beginning the all important stage of Implementation. To accomplish this, it is recommended that pastors and PPCs select Implementers for each objective in the plan. The primary role of the Implementers is to bring their assigned objective to life.

This job is never accomplished in isolation, but always seeks to pull together parishioners and parish leaders in collaboration to successfully implement the objectives. The goal of any pastoral plan is to get more people involved in the life of the parish and to develop closer relationships among parishioners. In other words, the way the plan is implemented is as important as what is accomplished.

As Implementers set off to accomplish the objectives of the plan some pitfall may appear that may not have been anticipated at first. Many of the obstacles that appear in the living out of a parish plan can be avoided through clarification – especially concerns about relationships. Who does what? What is my relationship to you? There are many people, all of good will, giving of themselves within any parish. Navigating these ministerial relationships well may avoid unnecessary pitfalls in the future.

With this in mind, here is a review of some of the members of any parish and a bit about their relationship to Implementers:

Parish Pastoral Council Members – The PPC is the primary consultative body to the pastor and those responsible for crafting the parish pastoral plan with the pastor. In the Implementation, they are also the liaisons between the pastor and the Implementers. The PPC monitors the progress of the entire plan- all of the goals and all of the objectives. Each Implementer is connected to a PPC member for support, coaching and advice, but most importantly, the PPC member relates back to the pastor the progress of the implementation, both the successes and the challenges. The PPC member is the go-to person if the Implementer gets into a bind and doesn’t know how to get out or go forward.

Parish Staff Members – Parish Staff members address the day-to-day activity of the parish and sit on the parish pastoral council by virtue of their office. Parish staff members are also resource persons to Implementers and many times may be Implementers themselves. Parish staff members may be the greatest allies of Implementers. As empowering leaders, professional staff members are called upon to involve others in the life and work of the parish. They are called not to do for, but to do with. At the same time, Implementers should be sure to keep staff members informed of their activities so that duplication and conflict does not occur.

Parish Committees – Most parishes have existing committees and the involvement of committees in the development of the parish pastoral plans has not been uniform. From an Implementer's point of view, there are two types of committees.

- Those whose ministry directly corresponds to the objective.
- Those whose ministry is completely unconnected to the objective.

For those committees in the first group, it is important to involve them in the implementation. They have a vested interest and entire committee could work on an objective. The Implementer may even be a member of the committee. Reaching out to these committees for support and assistance may be a good first step for any Implementer.

For the second group, the implementer with their own team or with the PPC liaison could look at all the committees in the parish and brainstorm ways in which they might become involved in some way. Committees are organized groups of people in the parish and can be called upon to assist in a variety of ways, if they would like. If you don't ask, you will never know.

Pastor – The pastor is the local shepherd of the flock, the overseer of the community. He is called to care for all members of the community and to encourage and foster action on behalf of the mission of Christ. He is the primary decision-maker and the PPC is consultative to him. The Parish Pastoral Council members that liaison with the Implementers are asked to provide reports on the progress of each objective at the Parish Pastoral Council meetings. In this way, the pastor is able to learn of the progress of each facet of the plan and take steps, as much as is possible, to assist in implementation.

The pastor is asked to look at the big picture and orchestrate the work of the entire parish. The check-ins at the Parish Pastoral Council meetings assist him in that work. This is not to say that Implementers should have no direct relationship with the pastor. The pastor is always a person of support, advice and guidance, but each pastor is unique in the way he pastors. Hopefully, the relationship between the Implementer and the PPC members assist the pastor in becoming informed of the situation, but he may choose to intervene with his direct assistance if necessary.

As the work of implementation continues, it is important to keep in mind that there is an overarching goal to every parish pastoral plan – the engagement of the gifts and talents of parishioners and the building up of the Body of Christ, the parish community. The success of any pastoral plan can be measured not by what is ultimately accomplished but whether or not sustainable relationships of service and fellowship are created and the gifts of parishioners are put at the service of Christ and His mission on Earth.

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## **Thoughts on Clusters**

The 32 clusters of our diocese are not only regional groupings of parishes in a given neighborhood, they also represent a real and tangible experience of our Catholic communion. The strength of this unity in diversity can be traced back to ancient times when individual Christian communities welcomed one another and worked together to spread the faith to the known world. These communities also banded together for support and protection within cultures that were hostile to the emerging church, such as the Roman Empire.

The connection of Catholic faith communities to one another is not only for the purpose of “organizational development.” There is a deeper, theological, Christ-focused aim at this local fellowship. The Body of Christ, incarnate in the People of God and His Church, is a tapestry of diversity that is bound together in a common baptism. We have all died with Christ and we all now belong to him.

St. Paul encourages us to remain together in this Body, though at times such fellowship can be challenging:

*But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body.*

*The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you."*

*But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another.*

*If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.*

As members of this Body, we come together to celebrate our savior and transform the world, or just our neighborhood, into a representation of the Kingdom of God which he professed. We do this first and foremost by being a true representation of the Body of Christ – without division, suffering together, honoring one another, working together for a more just world.

The clusters are a gift, left to us by Christ who calls us to this union of purpose and gives us fellow disciples to support our own journey towards God. The coming together that is the cluster is also an ever-present sign of the Spirit of God, given to guide the Church and all her members towards perfection.

Cultivating a spirit of collaboration, negotiating our differences, laying aside turf and asking the life-giving question “What can we do better together to promote our shared beliefs?” is the call of Gospel which can unleash the potential of our shared communion.

As the clusters begin to share parish plans, seek to include greater participation in the cluster and create plans for the future, may the words of Christ guide our efforts “Father, I pray that they might all be one as you and I are one.”

- Robert Choiniere

