



Companions On The Journey

At Sts. Peter and Paul Spirituality Center we hope to offer direct and specific assistance to the spiritual renewal needs of our parishes, clusters and agencies. As we move forward on the journey of pastoral planning and parish reconfiguration, it is essential that we renew within ourselves and our people a vibrant sense of our mission as parish and diocese to proclaim the gospel. We must deepen within our hearts the Presence of The Lord. In response to our call as baptized Catholics, the foundation of all our planning efforts must be “the spirituality of communion” - our recognition that we need the gifts of one another – of all our people – to fully and effectively proclaim the gospel.

Our late Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, writes about this “spirituality of communion” in his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Inuente*. He states:

The Spirituality of Communion indicates the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the TRINITY dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of our brothers and sisters around us.

[It] is “the ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as ‘those who are a part of me’” (and me a part of them).

[It] is “the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God... a gift for the brother and sister who has received it directly, but also as a ‘gift for me’” (and a gift for the Church).

[It] “knows how to ‘make room’ for our brothers and sisters bearing ‘each other’s burdens’ (Gal.6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations of...competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy” (as well as so many other negative and defensive reactions). [NMI #43]

This “spirituality of communion” is the basis through which relationships will be deepened, structures of participation will be created and dialogues will be enriched. The Holy Father tells us that it is in our uniqueness and our unity – our communion of soul and sacrament – our oneness in the Eucharist – that we must root our hopes and plans for our future and the future of our Church.

In light of these teachings, the Center has developed specific programs for parishes and clusters such as:

- 1) Days/Evenings of Reflection
- 2) Weekend Retreat Experiences
- 3) Parish Spiritual Assemblies and Weeks of Renewal and other spiritual



programs to develop an awareness and entrance into “the spirituality of communion” as the foundation for pastoral planning.

Various parishes as part of their Pastoral Planning efforts, and some already involved in parish reconfiguration, have asked the Sts. Peter and Paul Spirituality Center to conduct various presentations on the theme of The Spirituality of Communion.

Parish days and evenings of prayer were conducted for Pastoral Councils and leadership groups from Mary’s Nativity, Flushing, Our Lady of the Snows, Floral Park, St. Matthew/Our Lady of Charity, Brooklyn. In all of these spiritual experiences, presentations and discussions took place on the theme of Communion as a context for effective pastoral planning.

In addition to days and evenings of prayer, Friday to Sunday retreats were conducted at the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington for the leadership group of St. Mary Star of the Sea, Far Rockaway. Also St. Athanasius, Bensonhurst held their annual retreat at Huntington reflecting on the theme of Communion.

A week long mission took place at St. Thomas More-Saint Edmund, Breezy Point, consisting of presentations on A Christian Asceticism of Time, The Spirituality of Communion, and time for reflection, Reconciliation and Eucharist.

The staff of the Stewardship Office attended an overnight retreat at St. Ignatius Retreat House in Manhasset dealing with the topics of A Christian Asceticism of Time and The Spirituality of Communion. The retreat also stressed the relationship of Communion to the call to Stewardship.

These are examples of some of the activities that the Center has engaged in to give spiritual support to the process of Pastoral Planning. Many more are planned. If you, as pastor, together with your Pastoral Council feel that your parish community would benefit from one of these spiritual experiences please call Deacon Rich Gilligan at 718-229-8001 ext 312 or email to rgilligan@iccdob.org.

It is through the development of a sound spiritual foundation that our planning efforts can go forward reflecting the Lord’s presence and our faithfulness to His plan.

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- Msgr. Neil Mahoney

- Deacon Rich Gilligan