

PASTORAL COUNCILS

ROLE AND FUNCTION

Ok, so that survey was pretty good! Thank y'all for participating, the whole purpose of it was to see, generally, where everyone was at. So whether you're doing great and answered "always" for every question, or maybe you recognize that your council has room for growth, we want refocus everyone on what the role and function of a pastoral council should be. This isn't a time to finger point or to tell anyone they're doing a bad job as a council, this is an opportunity, regardless of where we're at, to grow together to where we should be.

Besides the home where we grew up, the parish is where we learn to live as disciples of the Lord in a network of relationships that include our family and friends, our pastor, and deacons and religious education teacher and others. We also learn about and experience communion with the universal Catholic Church through our parish. The parish is the community which makes real and present the mystery of the Church in a visible, immediate and everyday form. It is where we get to see the body of Christ in a tangible way. Every parish across the world is meant to do this.

But y'all know that running a parish is a lot of work, right, and your pastor is responsible for guiding and overseeing all of that, but he doesn't do all that work alone. He CAN'T do it all alone, that would be impossible. He has parish staff, volunteers, and different groups carrying out ministries of all kinds, and he has the finance and pastoral councils to share in the pastor's ministry of leadership. Pastors want and need the help of their parishioners. This past summer we did a survey of our priests and one of the main findings was that 40% said they were too busy to pray as much as they would like or to meet the ministry needs of their people.

That's not healthy, we can't function as a Church in a sustainable way like that.

Experience has shown that the parish councils, both the finance and pastoral council, are important to the healthy functioning of a parish. By healthy functioning, we mean the effectiveness of the parish in carrying out the mission of the Church and providing for the spiritual growth and well-being of ALL those souls in your parish territory. That includes the material growth and well-being of the parish, being responsible for the use and stewardship of the parish resources. Our councils' role is to not only help set the vision for the parish, but to help discern the best way to accomplish that vision.

HIERARCHY

The gift of the Holy Spirit, which is one and the same in all who have been baptized, is manifested in many forms.



So, a pastoral council is composed of members of the parish who form one body with the pastor. You're probably thinking, well "duh", but I was talking to a pastor last year whose chairman, the CHAIRMAN, wasn't attending mass or involved in any ministries outside of the council. For all intents and purposes, the pastor had a chairman who wasn't an actual member of the church! Its hard to consult your pastor about a community if you're not actually part of that community, right? Since the pastor presides over the council, and since it is the PASTOR's council, the council shouldn't meet or function without him unless the pastor has permitted that for a particular reason. The whole reason the council exists is to consult the pastor and assist him in pastoral planning so the parish can carry out its mission, whether that's short-term planning (like 3-6 months) or long-term planning (3-5 years).

When your pastor consults you, he is sharing responsibility for the parish. He's giving you a share in his ministry of leadership. What is the basis for this sharing? Anybody? Pastors? It is our baptism. By our baptism we are incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church, and made sharers in her mission and received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And it is this understanding of baptism that makes it obvious that God's truth, which provides the guidance for the Church, comes not only through the clergy and hierarchy (which is how we used to think about things), but also through the people. In order for the Church to have the fullness of God's light and guidance, the people must be consulted, the people must share in the responsibility.

Out of the documents of Vatican II, a completely new ministry of the People of God was born – a special ministry of people and pastor together reflecting on the parish's ministerial activity, and on the basis of that shared reflection, discussing and discerning together what needs to be developed and planned in the parish to carry out its mission and all that God is calling the parish to accomplish. That is the ministry that you have been called into. That's the ministry that you said yes to, whether you realized it or not. This is the ministry that is specifically and particularly the ministry of the parish pastoral council.

CO-RESPONSIBILITY

Spiritual Growth, Physical Growth, &
Apostolic Activity

They must no longer be viewed as "collaborators" of the clergy but truly recognized as "co-responsible", for the Church's being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity.

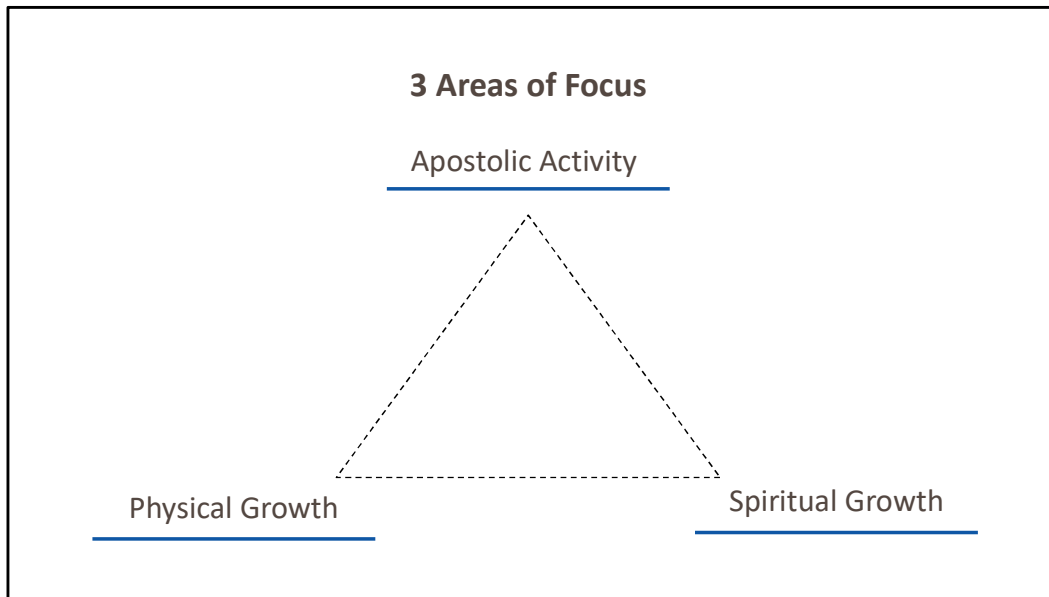
-Pope Benedict XVI



I love this quote from Pope Benedict XVI, he wrote a whole document on the Co-Responsibility of the Laity that I would encourage you to check out. He said this, "They must no longer be viewed as "collaborators" of the clergy but truly recognized as "co-responsible", for the Church's being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity." This shared responsibility, this co-responsibility, of the clergy and laity for the mission of the Church requires a change in mind-set.

This is beautiful, right? And if some of y'all are thinking, "well what has the church been doing about it since Benedict?", well, you've been living it! The Synod on Synodality, this process we've been walking through the last couple years with all these listening sessions, is intimately intertwined with this concept of co-responsibility. Synodality is all about how do we all walk together (priests-laity, old-young, rich-poor, Spanish-English speaking, etc.), how do we all walk together and listen to one another along the way to where the Holy Spirit is calling us to be. How do we, as Church, invite others on this Way? How do we invite everyone into this journey?

Father, which souls are you responsible for in your parish boundaries? Allow time to answer. All of them. Not just the parishioners. Not just the Catholics. Not just the Christians, but all the souls. Everyone. Your pastor is spiritually responsible for everyone in your parish boundaries, and you, by nature of your baptism and role on the pastoral council, are co-responsible for every soul in your boundary.



You, as a pastoral council, are called to care for them by focusing your efforts on 3 main areas: the spiritual growth, the physical growth, and the apostolic activity of your community.

Spiritual growth and well-being: you are responsible for planning pastoral activity that leads to people growing in the faith, whether that's through ministries, faith formation, retreats, Lenten/advent missions, bible studies, men's/women's groups, marriage formation, discerning the best mass times, collaborating on confirmation celebrations and reconciliation services.

Physical growth and well-being: Understanding what's needed to carry out the mission of the church and to provide the support for those needs. material assets, responsible use monies, what you do with the money, the projects that you choose to carry out, caring for the physical assets that help you carry out your ministry. Maybe you realize that you have a bunch of youth at your parish but don't have a space for them to meet, or maybe you have a lot of elderly, but your facilities make it hard for them to maneuver around. Or maybe you realize that the first place someone goes to find out about your church is Google, but you don't have a website.

Apostolic Activity: This is the point of the other two. Our physical and spiritual growth should lead to greater apostolic activity in our parish. They should lead to more opportunities of us putting our faith in action! So, all those ways that the parish reaches out to its parishioners and non-parishioners to evangelize and care for the actual physical and spiritual needs of the people in their territory (food pantry, communion to the homebound, etc.). Most parishes have money available for people who are in immediate need for those that are about to have their water shut off or go to the grocery store, participating in ecumenical activity or setting up an ecumenical alliance with other denominations in the area, holding prayer services after the tragedy involved everyone in the community, participating in service projects for the greater community.

These are the 3 areas you are primarily responsible for.

NATURE

Consultative

Councils must not act independently of the pastor



You do that by consulting your pastor.

I want to make this very clear: while you share in your pastor's responsibility, he is the one who is ultimately responsible for the decision at the parish-level. He gives the final say-so, he gives the final approval and signs off on everything.

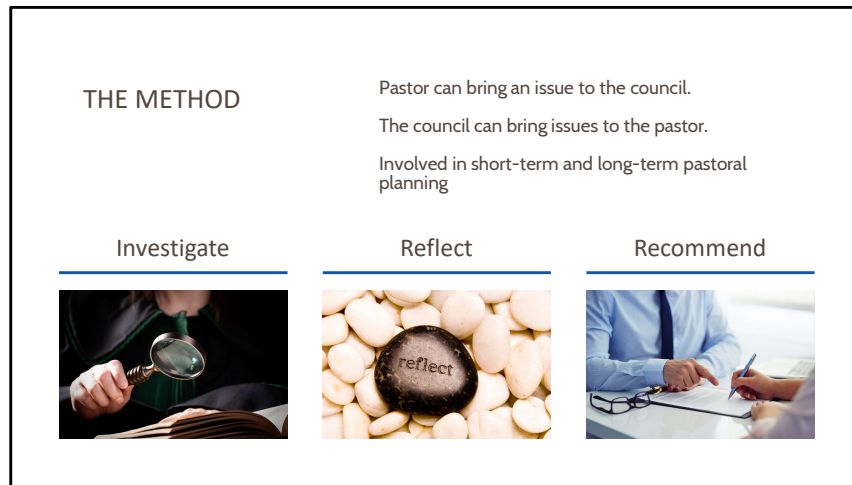
This isn't to minimize your role as a council, but to clarify it: you consult him. You give him advice on the areas we just talked about, on the mission and vision of the parish, the short-term and long-term plan. Your pastor can't be everywhere, with everyone, can't tend to everything. It's impossible. That's why you're necessary. You're able to listen, to "read the signs of the times", to be among the people in such a way that you truly know what's going on in your community (not just in your parish), the needs and issues, so that you can consult him on the direction of your community.

The essential work of a pastoral council is to participate with the pastor and pastoral leaders in thinking about and praying about these issues and needs, and planning for a way to address them as a community.

We have this model at basically all levels of the church. Pope has college of cardinals, synod of bishops, he calls special synods together from time to time (with youth, married couples, etc.). At the diocesan level, Archbishop has the presbyteral council made up of priests from every geographical region of the diocese, the college of consultors, the archdiocesan finance council and the APC.

One specific example is mentioned in our ASF Norms 2.4 - Special Collections. The pastor is to consult his councils before schedule a special collection for an outside ministry, like when your pastor takes up a collection for like Catholic Worker House or Doctor's without Borders.

To do this well, to be able to consult and offer your pastor sound advice, there's a process that we recommend going through.



This is how you should function. Whether it is the pastor bringing an issue to the council that he wants your guidance on, the council bringing an issue to the pastor, or whether you're doing short- or long-term planning, these are the 3 steps you should follow.

Dialogue, reflection, prayer and discernment are at the center, at the heart of this process.

Investigate: is researching and educating the council on the issues and needs. This can look differently depending on the situation but requires relying on the gifts you have within your council and parish, relying on trusted resources (from the diocese, Vatican, etc.), or setting up an ad-hoc committee or tasking an individual to carry out this work and bring the findings back to the council. For example, if your council is discerning how to grow the faith formation program, you would be wise to ask the director of faith formation and catechists for input and their perspective.

Reflect: once you have gathered all the information necessary, you should individually and as a council spend time in prayer and reflection on what you have learned and discerning the best path forward on the particular issue. The council should engage in a synodal dialogue with one another, together reflecting and responding to what has been learned. This requires courage in both speaking and listening, and on each member approaching the issue with humility. This isn't about criticizing or finger-pointing, but about discerning God's will for the community.

Recommend: This dialogue should aim at reaching a consensus, which can be hard work. There's greater value in the recommendation after you've educated yourself on the issue, reflected together, had a dialogue, reached a consensus, and with one voice make this recommendation. How powerful would that be? I mean what I typically see, and maybe your council is different, but typically what I see is that an issue gets posed to the council and then everyone just goes around giving their opinion on the issue and ultimately father just makes a decision. Instead of praying together and discerning together and saying, "Father, this is what we think is best and this is why." Sometimes, there's a dissenting opinion, and that's ok, but that should also be presented to the pastor so he has a full picture on the situation and is able to make the best decision possible. But the point here is that it shouldn't just be everyone's individual opinion, this is the council coming to a consensus together and recommending it to your pastor.

Again, when the issue is specialized, you should include the people responsible for that area in this process.

A reminder, your role is strictly consultative. You're only providing a recommendation to the pastor, not making the decisions. He gets to make the decision, and yes, he can choose to not follow your recommendation. If that happens though, the pastor should provide a reason for why he's deciding against the recommendation.

Examples: The pastoral council may discern that the parish should focus on getting youth more involved in the liturgy and recommend to Father that they add an additional mass on the weekend's to be the "children's" liturgy. Good idea, right? Well, Father says no because they already have 4 masses on the weekend that are, at best, half capacity and he's the only priest so doing 5 would be too much.

Another example: Pastoral council discerns together that the parish should be focused on improving the youth ministry. Well, the pastor knows the parish has just invested a lot of money in their youth ministry over the years, while at the same time there is a growing need to minister to the growing Spanish-speaking community. So the pastor can tell his council no, because there's a greater need in the parish somewhere else.

In both cases, the pastor provides a reason why, and it offers the opportunity for him and the council to discuss both the situations. The pastor may have information the council hasn't considered, and vice-versa. At the end of the day though, the pastor has the final say on all matters.

Everything make sense so far? By your baptismal call and your role on the pastoral council, your share in your pastor's responsibility of the parish and all the souls in your boundaries, you are co-responsible. And you bear that responsibility by consulting your pastor and providing guidance on short and long-term planning in 3 main area: the physical growth, spiritual growth, and apostolic activity. And to be able to do that well, to give good, solid guidance, the process you're called to follow is to investigate the issue, reflect on it individually and as a council, and then make a recommendation with one voice.

Meeting Tips

DOs

- Be Organized
- Pray Together
- Have an Open, Honest Conversation
- Focus on Pastoral Planning
- Have Staggered Terms
- Communicate to the Parish

DON'Ts

- Be Inconsistent
- Forget about the Staff or Other Parish Leaders
- Make it a Gripe Session
- Start Implementing
- Have too Many Members
- Have a Council of Ministries

Ok, so let's get really practical with how you should function. Everyone should have a copy of the Pastoral Council Guidelines on your table, I'm just going to be highlighting a couple things in it.

DO: Be Organized

Its important to be organized for your meetings. First things first, make sure you set your meeting schedule for the year, that way everyone call block it off in their calendars and make plans to attend. That's an easy one, but we do have some parishes that meet on a "feel like it" basis, and when you do that then people only show up when they 'feel like it". Then, the pastor and Chairman should get together to set the agenda beforehand, and then this should get communicated to the rest of the council at least 3 days in advance. At the same time, if council members have any issues they would like to add to the agenda, they should get that to the chairman with enough time. We provide a sample agenda in the guidelines that you can follow.

Communicating the agenda is one thing, but communicating the expectations for the meeting should also happen. What things should council members be investigating before the meeting? What things do they need to be aware of for you to have a fruitful conversation? What are you trying to accomplish so people can come prepared?

DON'T: Be Inconsistent

This is one of the worst things you could do. Maybe your meetings get cancelled or rescheduled all the time, the agenda looks different each time, members attendance is inconsistent. The list goes on, but each of those things communicate that the pastoral council and the work you do isn't a priority, when it should be!

DO: Pray Together

Now, this is the most important thing you should do! Bsp. Mike recommends spending at least 50% of your time together in prayer. Which might seem like a lot, and when he told Lori that, she thought he was joking, but he was being serious! And this is totally doable, because you can make your entire meeting a time of prayer and reflection. Think about it, right? What you're doing as a council is discerning where the Holy Spirit is guiding your community. That discernment process IS a prayer, IF we invite the Holy Spirit into it. So, don't just start and end in a prayer, but make the whole meeting a prayer together. Take a day to go on retreat together, that's recommended in our guidelines.

DON'T: Forget about the Staff and Other Parish Leaders

Just like you share in your pastor's ministry of leadership, so do those folks, right? And we already talked about getting them involved in the conversation when you're discerning areas that are related

to their positions, but those are the people who are really the ones implementing the pastoral plan and vision that you help set. And the truth is, they could very well have a better insight into certain areas of your parish life, so if you should be consulting with anyone, if you should be regular conversations with anyone, it needs to be them. You need to have a good relationship with them, because we all have the same mission.

Your parishes have a good amount of staff that handle both administrative functions and are in charge of specific ministries like faith formation and youth ministry, or they oversee multiple ministries. It is completely appropriate, and highly recommended, that you invite them to council meetings when you know you'll be discussing an area related what they are in charge of. Or, if you're trying to analyze your whole parish, to have a meeting with all of them to listen to what they have to say. Example.

DO: Have an Open, Honest Conversation

As a council member, it takes courage to bring up some things that may be controversial. At the last Archdiocesan Pastoral council meeting, a member was hesitant, but eventually asked Archbishop for some guidance on the Mission of Divine Mercy. We could see it was difficult for him to do, but he was praised for bringing it up. The Archbishop responded well to the inquiry, other members had the same question, and everyone was able to get on the same page about the situation.

As a pastor it's hard to open up yourself to that kind of transparency and it takes humility to be able to share or have difficult conversations, but if we are really trying to do what's best for our parish, then we need to have these conversations.

DON'T: Make it a gripe session

This isn't an opportunity for everyone to voice our complaints about the parish or the people in it right? This isn't about us pushing our own agenda because of what we personally would like to see at the parish. This is about figuring out what best as a whole for our parish to thrive. So, if we need to cut a mass time, then lets talk about. If we need to start a new ministry, lets talk about it. If our liturgical ministries aren't where we would like them to be, then let's talk about it. This isn't about me, this isn't about you. This is about our parish.

DO: Focus on Pastoral Planning

And we are going to practice this in a little bit, but your council should be thinking about who are we called to serve in our community, not just in our pews, but the greater community. What the vision for our Church, what do we want our community to be like in 10, 15, 20 years. How do we analyze and evaluate our parish and our ministries? What goals and priorities do we need to focus on for the short and long term? That's what you should be thinking about, those are the type of conversations you should be having.

DON'T: Start Implementing

Finally, and this has been stated before, but the role of the council is to be strictly consultative. Pastoral councils are not the implementation body, so you shouldn't be planning out the parish festival or the next parish dinner. Because some parishes are short on volunteers, the pastor may ask some council members to take on implementation roles, but these are distinct from their role on the pastoral council

and shouldn't happen during council meetings.

DO: Have Staggered Terms

Ideally your council will be reflective of your community, and part of that means having fresh faces around the table. I've talked to some councils where they've had some members there for like 20-30 years, and while they are great individuals, there's something too empowering and inviting other people around the table and really calling them into different leadership positions.

DON'T: Have too Many Members

Our guidelines recommend 6-12 members. We know some smaller parishes have a hard time even getting to 6, and that's ok. What we've found, and even 12 people is pushing it, is that when a group gets too large, its really hard to have fruitful conversation and for everyone to contribute in a meaningful way. Everyone here seems to be ok, but when a council gets too big, its just not productive.

Also, it can be tempting to have married couples on the council together, but we would really advise against it. In the same way that having a large council can make it hard to have a fruitful conversation, having married couples on the council together essentially gives more voice/votes to the same point of view.

DO: Communicate to the Parish

Whether you publish your meeting minutes or just provide key updates to your parishioners, you should be communicating the decisions and status of things to your larger community at your pastor's discretion. This not only informs your community about what's going on, but also helps them feel included in the process and gives them an opportunity to come to you with any insights, concerns, etc. You're here to represent the community, its hard to do that if the community doesn't know what's going on.

DON'T: Be a Council of Ministries

Finally, the pastoral council shouldn't become a council of ministries where there is a representative from every ministry and all you do is provide updates. It would be better for council members to listen to the different ministry leaders prior to the meetings and bring any concerns or needs to the council. A separate ministry leaders meeting could happen at another point, maybe twice a year, and help coordinate the ministries and bring everyone together to voice concerns, but for that to happen at the pastoral council meetings takes away from the purpose of the pastoral council.

MEMBERS

Pastor, Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, General Members



Reflects and
Represents the Parish
Community



Discerning Values
needed for Parish
Leadership



Not Based On: status,
job, position

Ok, so that's practical on what to do at meetings, lets get practical on who should be around the table.

Reflects and represents the parish community:

Represents in the sense that you are present on behalf of the greater community, which means you should know your greater community. You should know what they're dealing with, what they're going through. This is the ongoing investigating and listening that the council should ALWAYS be participating in. If you don't have a youth on your council, you should be listening to their needs, understanding their concerns, and trying to figure out what they're dealing with so you can represent them better. Same for if you have a multicultural community and one of the cultures doesn't sit around the table. We need to know our community and listen to them so that we can better represent them.

Values needed for parish leadership

We're going to have an activity right after this, but we should be discerning the values of the types of individuals that we want around the table. Do we want people who are prayerful, who have servant hearts, who humble? What type of people do we not want around the table? People who are rude, or selfish, or constantly criticizing but not offering anything constructive?

Not Based On: status, job, position

Not going to ask people just because of the status that they hold (oh they've been at the parish for 30 years) or their jobs (well they're an accountant or a teacher or a lawyer) or their position (well she's in charge of the Guadalupanas or ACTS or Knights of Columbus). We aren't going to invite people around the table because of these things, but on the type of person that they are and the type of person we need around the table. Who is going to help you pray and reflect and discern better for the sake of your parish.

QUESTIONS?

Before we get into our activity in trying to discern the right person to invite around the table, does anyone have any questions? I'd like to invite Lori up to help answer things.

There is a topic that I want to address right off the bat though:

The difference between the finance council and the pastoral council. The main difference here is in the focus and the areas that they consult the pastor. The pastoral council consults the pastor on pastoral matters, (which are: spiritual, physical, and apostolic activity), while the finance council consults the pastor on financial and administrative matters. Both are strictly advisory. However, they can and should be in regular communication with one another. The key here though, and this is something that we will get into in the next session, is that everything should be oriented towards the pastoral vision and the pastoral plan.

So say for example that part of the parish's pastoral vision is to improve their faith formation.

Ex. 1) Well the pastoral council could discern that what would really help would be to have additional meeting space. So the pastor should then go to the finance council and ask for their consultation on what the best way to accomplish that, and maybe they come and say: 1) we have money to build a new building, or 2) we don't have money for a new building, but we can renovate the building we have to add space, or 3) we don't have any money so we need to think creatively about we can accomplish this.

Ex 2) Well having this vision increased the responsibilities for the Director of Religious Education at the parish, who went to the pastor to request either a raise or hiring an assistant. Because this is an administrative matter, he takes it to the finance council, who recommends hiring an assistant based on the budget available.

Or it could be vice-versa. The finance council can come to the pastoral council and say that finances are low, we are going to need to cut some staff and our budget. Because the pastoral vision is focused on faith formation, guess who's safe: the DRE. Guess who's not: the facility manager. So now a pastoral need has arisen that needs to be discerned by the pastoral council: how are we going to keep our facilities clean without a facilities manager?

At the same time, this now gives the pastoral council greater context for their discernment in their pastoral planning. They are going to be more prudent in their recommendations that they know are going to need money to be accomplished. Conversely, maybe the finance council comes and tells the pastoral council, hey, we got a boatload of money, y'all go crazy and dream as big as you want because the parish can cover it.

The two need to be in communication with each other on a regular basis. At a minimum, the finance council should probably give the pastoral council an annual update just for them to know where the parish budget is at.

Conversation in the Spirit

Where is our community at now?



I want to talk to you about how your discussions are going to work today. We are calling it Conversation in the Spirit and is the process we use for synodal conversations.

If you struggle in your meetings as a council, I'd invite you to adopt this as a model for how you run your meetings.

We will have a total of 4 discussions today. We are going to be introducing a lot of concepts that may seem challenging and we are going to ask you some questions to get you thinking about your parish in a different way. I want you to first set the intention that you will welcome this information and let it challenge your way of thinking. I want you to be here with an open heart and an open mind and let the holy spirit move you where it will. Can we all agree to receive the information as being helpful? I need a verbal yes or hands raised so we can move forward.

Ok. Thank you! I promise it will be fruitful!

We are going to have several exercises today, but we are going to use the same process for each of them.

As we go through the exercises, please don't jump ahead in the process. Please stay on the task you will be given and pay attention.

Now, as we talk about different challenges in our parishes, we may be inspired and have some ideas that come up. When you get an idea or want to discuss something that is said, but it is not what we are working on, I want you to write it down on a sticky note. That way, the idea is not forgotten in the moment. If you don't get to the sticky note, save it for after the workshop or discuss it at your next follow-up meeting. Can we all agree to do that? Ok great!

I want to bring something else to your attention, something we all have noticed, but maybe haven't named. According to the Myers-Briggs Company, a global provider of people development solutions for individuals and organizations, 56.8% of people around the world prefer introversion. This did this through a global sample. Who knows if they are an introvert or an extrovert? And if you don't know, let's do a quick exercise.

By a show of hands, how many of you like to process or talk through your thoughts and ideas out loud? Ok, hands down. You may be or are most likely an extrovert. You get your energy from socialization and collaboration. Now how many of you like to, no, NEED silence to process or reflect on ideas FIRST, before

sharing it? Ok hands down. You may be an introvert. You may receive your energy from alone time or in social settings with smaller groups of people.

Now, there's a range between the two. There are people who have a degree of extroversion and introversion. How many of you prefer to stay silent, wait for conversation to start and then get more ideas after others have presented their ideas? Is there anyone who would identify as not wanting to share at all or you need to be invited to share?

Ok, now those who process out loud, raise your hands again, and look at your council members. We are all wired differently and no way is wrong, in fact, each of us brings a different gift and value to the group. I want you to tell each other, "your input is important. I want to hear your input. I promise to listen to your input." *have them repeat it*

Why did I have you do that? Well, many times the more vocal members, the extroverts, may unknowingly drown out the voices of the introverts. Some extroverts might say, then just speak louder. That's not how it works. Introverts easily shut down and feel their input isn't valuable. And it's worse if the less vocal members may have experienced being cut off mid-sentence or shut down, whether as a child or in other relationships.

I tell you all this for you to be consciously aware of the people you have on your council, including the pastor. Who are your talkers and who are your quiet people? Think of how your council meetings have gone in the past. Has everyone had an equal opportunity to share?

So when we get started and provide a minute or two for silent reflection, those of you who process out loud, I want you to be mindful and pray 3 Hail Marys if the silence is painful for you. Offer it for a fruitful conversation. This is how we respect one another, by allowing each member to be who God made them.

Are there any questions on what I just shared?

Great so today's conversation flow will go like this:

A question will be asked. We will give everyone a couple minutes to silently and individually reflect and write down your thoughts on your sticky notes. We put sticky notes and pens in the middle of your table. My extroverts are praying silently in their heads while they wait to share. You will then place the sticky note on the appropriate spot on your giant paper. Then, we will go around the table twice: the first time to briefly share what we wrote, and then the second time to respond to what we heard others say. While each member is sharing what they wrote, only that person is talking. The second time, we will go around and respond to what we heard. Is there anything else that needs to be added? Maybe you have a clarifying question about what someone wrote. Ask at that time, when it is your turn. After everyone has shared, we will open it up for further dialogue. We will do that for each question.

[Reflect, 2 times around the table, open discussion.]

Please designate someone as a facilitator and a scribe to record final thoughts on another paper we have given you. The scribe should have handwriting that is clear and easy to read. The facilitator has the authority to get everyone back on track if the conversation goes in

another direction or to respectfully remind a speaker if they are dominating the talk time to allow everyone to give input. This is synodality; listening to one another. We are modeling a way to conduct your council discussions in the slight chance they've been hijacked in the past.

Please take 1 minute to designate someone as the facilitator and scribe for your small group discussion now. Raise your hand when your group has done so.

Are there any questions? Ok lets get started with our values exercise!

Values Exercise

1. Reflecting on the current council members, what are two or three values they exemplify that contribute to their effectiveness as council members?
2. Reflect on what two or three additional values does your council need to enhance its effectiveness?
3. Discern the top 2 or 3 values that you believe are most important for your pastoral council members to have.

The purpose of this values exercise is to provide practical suggestions for identifying ideal candidates for your pastoral council. While the archdiocesan guidelines emphasize the representation of the parish community, we acknowledge that sometimes it's challenging or not possible to have every demographic, geographic, and ideological aspect within a single council. Pastors are encouraged to make sure there is diversity within the council when possible.

Given the council's purpose of reflection, investigation, and recommendation, you need members who are capable of studying, inquiring, discerning, meditating, compromising, and accepting the insights of others. With these responsibilities in mind, you should ask yourselves: who should serve on your council?

For this exercise, you will need the following materials: some sticky notes, something to write with, and the large paper with a "C" or "Core" on it. I'm so grateful for the pastors who are with their councils today. You are also participating in the exercises.

First Question: Reflecting on the current council members, what are 2 or 3 values that you see your members exemplify that contribute to their effectiveness as council members? If you are new to the council, think about yourself. What 2 or 3 values do you bring to the council? A value is a person's principles or standards of behavior or judgement of what is important in life or to the council. Some examples are prayerful, welcoming, willing to collaborate, etc.

Reiterate the process: Each of you should have a few sticky notes to write down your thoughts. You'll first reflect silently for 2 minutes, write one value per sticky note, my extroverts are praying, you'll put your sticky notes on the Core Values side of the large paper. When you hear the timer, you'll go around once to share what you've written, then again to respond to what you've heard or ask a clarifying question and then have open discussion.

Ex. Willing to collaborate, welcoming, prayerful, etc. We also have the cards on your table with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit if you need more examples.

Next Question: looking at what you've identified, **reflect on what two or three additional values or skills**

does your council need to enhance its effectiveness?

Reiterate the process: silently reflect, 2 times around the table, open discussion
One value per sticky note. Place your sticky notes on the A side or ASPIRATIONAL
VALUES side of the giant paper.

Ex. Bilingual, heart of service, willing to step up when needed, etc.

Looking at both sides, as a group narrow the list down to two or three values in total.

What are the top 2 or 3 values that are needed on your council for your parish?

Moving forward, these top 2 or 3 values would be how your council would like to operate. If a member leaves, these 2-3 values are what you'll look for in new members. At the same time, you should hold current council members accountable to the values you've discerned together. For example, if one of your values is to be collaborative and someone on your council doesn't want to work together, that's the time to remind them what you stand for.

Purpose Why do we exist?	To make disciples of all nations
Values How do we behave?	Prayer Warriors All are Welcome Team Players
Our Community Who do we serve?	
Envisioned Future Where are we being called?	

Now, as we go throughout the day, we have a fictional parish (St. Boniface-not the one in Hobson) we will be using as an example throughout all our activities. Every table should have a "Parish Script" worksheet. This is what your designated scribe is going to use to summarize the key points from each of the activities today, so that instead of bringing you pastor a bunch of sticky notes, you can just show him this piece of paper. Now, the first question is already filled in for you because it is why we exist as a church. In the space where it says values, please write down the 2 or 3 values you decided on as a council.

For St. Boniface our fictional parish, their values and the type of members they want around the table are people that are:

Prayer Warriors: they want people who are dedicated to prayer and truly demonstrate a reliance on the Lord in everything they do. They don't just show up to mass on Sundays, but actually have a personal prayer-life at home.

All are Welcome: they want people who exude hospitality, people who aren't going to judge other members for being around the table, aren't going to judge people for showing up to mass in shorts or a short skirt, people who are able to welcome anyone through the doors and recognize that it is an opportunity to bring them closer to the Lord.

Team Players: they want people who are willing to work together with one another, willing to do the dirty work. There was a council meeting where they were forming an ad hoc committee to address a certain issue, and 1 lady volunteered to lead the group. When another lady from the council offered to help, the first lady said she didn't want her part of the committee because she didn't want to work with her. That is the opposite of being a team player.

If you haven't yet, write your values down in the space provided. Remember, these aren't just values that your council has currently, they should serve as a baseline for when you need new members. You look for parishioners that have these values and then invite them into the council, you don't nominate members and then hope they have the values you want. This is about building the culture of your council.

PARISH ANALYSIS

PASTORAL COUNCIL WORKSHOP 2024

Just to do a quick recap, the previous presentations were about why you exist as a council, WHAT your purpose is, and what you should be doing to provide your pastor with sound advice. There was a working session where you discussed the different values that your council is looking for in its members so that you know who to invite around the table. You were then introduced to (or reminded of) the Pastoral Vision of the Archdiocese, which not only explains WHY we do what we do, but also explains WHERE we are trying to go. Because we are all one local church, your pastoral vision for your parish should flow from the pastoral vision of the Archdiocese. You then had another working session on that, discussing what your community looks like, how it's called to live out the greater Archdiocesan Pastoral Vision, and what your parish could do (what would it look like) without any limitations. Essentially, you were trying to answer the questions, "Where are we trying to get to? Where are we going?"

So, if the previous sessions were about "why you exist", "what do we do", "who do you serve", and "where you are going", this next portion is going to be about "how do you get there?" Just like if you were lost at the mall or an amusement park (or anywhere in general) it's hard to figure out how to get somewhere if you don't understand where you're at now. There's a bunch of different strategies to be able to do this (you can do parish surveys, hold focus groups, conduct a SWOT analysis), but the strategy we are going to use is called the Four Actions Framework (Blue Ocean Team, n.a.), which is part Blue Ocean Strategy.

THE LOCAL COMPETITION

This is what we are facing in our diocese and our parish communities.

What other "competition" do we face at a local level?

170+ Other Catholic Parishes

are in our diocese. People "shop around for their parish."

Other Religious Organizations

that aren't Catholic, but are located in our communities

This was originally developed for businesses who were struggling with a lot of competition to help them think innovatively, be creative, and essentially create their own path in the market that they were in. It challenged them to think that "ok, there's 50 companies doing the same thing, what's going to set us apart?" What's great about this framework is that it is completely applicable to our parishes and your role as part of the pastoral council.

The truth is that our parishes are experiencing a ton of competition. Gone are the days of when the church was the center of everyone's lives. Gone are the days, especially for our urban parishes, where people just go to whichever church whose boundaries they live in. People "shop around" for where they want to go. Brothers and sisters, you've got 170 other Catholic churches you are competing with in our diocese. You've got countless more protestant or other faith denominations that you're competing with.

28% Identify as "Nones"
This group is the new religious majority in the US

6.5 People Leave the Church
For every 1 person that converts to the Faith

THE SOCIAL COMPETITION
These are the challenges that we face at a social level in our nation.
What other social challenges are there that keep people from wanting to be Catholic or even just religious?

That's not to mention the fact that we must compete with all of society and culture now! In January of 2024, Pew Research published that the "nones," those who don't identify as having any sort of religious affiliation, are now the single largest group in the US at 28% of the population (Smith et al., 2024). Catholics are in 3rd place at 23%. Evangelical Protestants are in 2nd at 24% (DeRose, 2024).

This is the competition we're facing, and the uglier truth is that we are losing faster than everyone else. For every 1 convert to the faith, we have 6.5 people leave. That "conversion ratio" is higher by far than anyone else. Protestants are the next biggest losers at 1.7 (Masci & Smith, 2018). So this next Easter, look at all the people that you are welcoming into the church, and then multiply it by 6.5. That's about how many people would have left (if your parish doesn't have anyone that you're welcoming into the Church at Easter, that's a whole other problem).

Additionally, the reality is that vocations to the priesthood are in decline as well, leading to more parishes either needing to be closed or clustered together. In our own diocese, we have many pastors that serve multiple parishes precisely because of this reason. How many of you have to share your pastor with another community, whether it's a mission, mother parish, or a completely separate parish?

So nationally, that's where our church is at. Have you been able to notice anything in your communities over the last few years?

The picture might look bleak, but there is hope! We wanted to share the top 4 results of a survey that was done in our Archdiocese after the pandemic to see what would bring people back to mass, what would get people back to church. We've already established that we're fighting an uphill battle. This survey showed that if we focused on these 4 things, we could really turn some of these trends around.

ARCHDIOCESAN SURVEY RESULTS

These are the top 4 results from a survey administered after the pandemic that looked at what would get people to come back to church.

The results are still relevant today.

Pastor
Wants to
Know You



Relevant
Homilies



Activities for
Young
Families



All Are
Welcomed



1) The Impression that the Pastor Wants to Know You

-The number 1 response was the impression that the pastor wants to know you. How approachable is he? Is he able to spend time with his parishioners as much as he wants to? This was the number 1 response, when the pastor is present to his people, they want to be at the church. From another survey we did on our priests, less than half of our pastors feel like they are able to do this as much as they'd like. Less than half!

So, what can we do to make our pastor more available to the people? What duties does he have that can either be eliminated or reduced by delegating them to someone else, like a deacon or staff member? Is he present before and after mass to greet parishioners? Does he stop in to greet different ministries while they meet? Does the parish staff call parishioners on behalf of your pastor to let them know you're praying for them and are glad they are part of your parish family? Are you present at important community events (like the local festivals, parades and school games) representing the parish and letting the community know you are here to support them?

What can you do to make people feel like the pastor wants to know them?

2) Relevant Homilies

-The second biggest response was the need to improve our homilies. This is 10-15 minutes that people are either checked-in or completely checked-out. Are we making the most of this time and providing our pastors with good feedback every week?

Fr. Matthew in Uvalde actually created a little committee to give the pastor feedback. They would pray together, read the reading for the weekend, and offer suggestions on what topics might be more meaningful for the community.

Another successful strategy is to preach using "homily series" where you continue to dive deeper into a central message over the course of a couple weeks.

How can we improve our homilies to make them more relevant to our community?

3) Activities for Young Families

-The third point was that we need to invest in our young families. Without them, our church won't have a future, right?

The Archdiocese is currently piloting a program at a couple of parishes in the city, and one of the requirements for the pilot parishes is that they need to offer child care during the sessions specifically for this reason. If we want young families to show up, we must make what we offer them actually accessible to them. Are there opportunities to improve your ministries for young families by offering childcare? Do you offer online resources or virtual meetings for them to attend so they can still stay plugged into the community even if they aren't able to be physically present? Do you provide resources for parents or their children for when the kids go off to college so that they can stay connected to their faith?

4) Knowing that All are Welcomed

-The last major point was feeling that all are welcomed. People want to be where they are wanted, where they aren't judged.

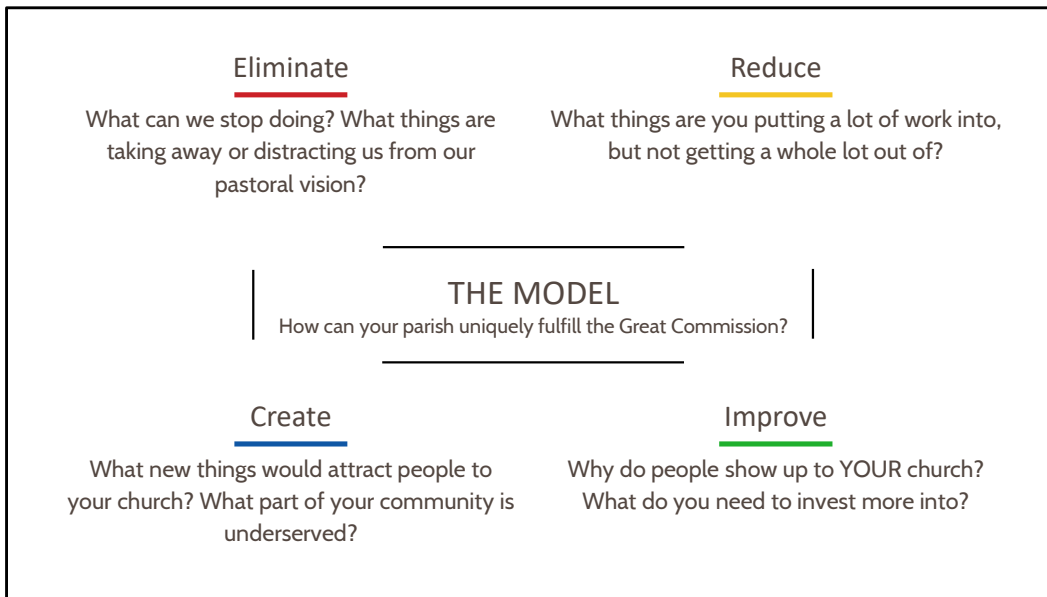
A church in Galveston-Houston, St. Paul the Apostle, has these really simple cards that they put in their pews that were geared towards families with little children. Basically, all they said was that the parish was happy to have you, not to worry if your children get a little rambunctious or start crying during mass (if your church ain't crying, its dying), and that you aren't pressured, but there's a cry room in the back if we feel like its needed. It isn't just about the card though, right? That's how their parish acted. Are we creating a culture of hospitality at our parish? Are your greeters greeting people BY NAME when they walk through the doors? Are we going out, walking the streets in our boundaries to invite people to our parish? Earlier we looked at who your parish serves. Who is showing up in the pews, and who in the outside community is missing from the pews? How are we welcoming those people? Are we actively collaborating with other denominations and inviting them to parish events? This is about being welcoming to everyone, not just Catholics, not just those Catholics who have fallen away.

Now we have this understanding of the competition and challenges that are facing our church today. We also know that if we were to focus on these four things, we would have a tangible impact on bringing people back to church.

All these things are about meeting people where they're at. If we want to have an effective pastoral planning process, we must start with where our community is at and then think about how we are going to get them to where we are called to be as a church. We had a large discussion during one of our workshops about homilies specifically, and one of the pastors was really struggling with the concept of having a potentially shorter homily because he believes, and rightly so, that that is one of the key moments to form his parishioners. His

homilies were like 20-30 minutes long (I won't tell you where he's assigned). But, if your parishioners aren't at a place where they have the attention span for a long homily like that (and many don't, that's just part of American culture, especially with our youth), even if your homily is good, then we aren't doing a good job meeting them where they're at and we are going to lose them. All we can do is start with where our people are.

This really isn't about competition though. This isn't about seeing how [parish x] can steal all the parishioners from [parish y]. The beautiful part of this is that we are all in this together. We all have the same mission, the Great Commission (Mat 28: 18-20), to go and make disciples of all nations. This is about discerning how your parish is uniquely called to accomplish that mission, how you are uniquely called to accomplish your pastoral vision. No 2 parishes are the same, no 2 communities are the same, so how we do that, how we get there, isn't going to be the same either. The exercise that we are about to walk through, the Four Actions Framework, is going to help us discern what we need to focus on. This is the investigate/reflective stages of pastoral planning.



ERIC Model

-

Eliminate

-

The first thing that we're going to look at are all those things that we are doing as a church that we can ELIMINATE. What can we stop doing? What are those things taking away or distracting us from our pastoral vision? Maybe we need to eliminate some of Father's tasks so he can be more present to the community.

ex) Sacramental Preparation

In a podcast from an organization called the Amazing Parish (they provide consulting services for parishes around the nation), one of the parishes they are working with is an inner-city, downtown parish. They don't have a lot of parishioners that live around them and had recently decided to shift their pastoral vision to cater more towards tourists and those that work downtown because they had noticed that while their Sunday masses weren't necessarily full, their weekday masses were very well attended. Well, they had a member of their staff that wore 2 hats, one of which was to coordinate their confirmation program. Their confirmation program had 5 youth in it. Half of this lady's time, and she was full time, was supposed to be devoted to this ministry. Doesn't seem like a good use of time, right? The parish ultimately decided to eliminate their confirmation program and instead send the youth to another parish close by who had a thriving confirmation program so that that lady could focus her role on welcoming tourists and helping with the additional weekday masses that they added. This is a big one, they eliminated their confirmation program so that they could better align with the vision that they had set.

-

Reduce

-

The second area is to look at all those things that we need to continue doing, but that we don't need to invest so much time, money, and effort into. What things are you putting a lot of work into, but not getting a whole lot out of?

ex) ACTS Retreats-every year:

A lot of parishes hold retreats for their men, women, and youth every single year. And in some cases, the return mass looks like this: There's about 12 retreatants and like 30 team members. If that's you, is it necessary to have a retreat every year? We're not saying don't do them, but maybe you do it every other year instead. Save some money and save some of our volunteers from getting burned out. Or is there a way to coordinate as a deanery so that different parishes offer a retreat each year, but don't need to offer a retreat every year? Or is there another type of retreat that can be offer that will provide something differently spiritually for our community?

-

Improve

-

The 3rd area is to look at what things do we need to invest more in. Why do people show up to YOUR church?

ex) Liturgies and the sacraments:

One of the most basic reasons are for the sacraments, particularly mass on Sundays. A lot of parishes just kind of keep things going, to say the least. But if we aren't being critical of the music and investing the time and money in so that its top notch, if we aren't providing our pastor with constructive feedback on his homily so that it can be better for next week, if we are welcoming newcomers but not doing any sort of follow-up with them and don't know their names, then we are missing the point and not treating this as the source and summit of our faith. How can you improve your liturgies?

The same could be said about our weddings, funerals, and baptisms. These are moments where families come back to Church. If we aren't making these moments the best they can be, as grace-filled as possible, we are missing the point. St. Ann's in San Antonio automatically schedules and dedicates a follow-up mass whenever someone requests a funeral. That's a beautiful example of making these moments more grace-filled.

-

Create

-

The 4th area is to look at what isn't being offered, what needs aren't being met in the community that your parish needs to meet. What new things would attract people to your church? What part of your community is underserved?

ex) Fun Fridays

This year, we actually had a parish do this very well. La Vernia recently moved to a 4-day school week, Monday through Thursday. To help the kids stay out of trouble and give them a safe place to hangout and gather, St. Ann's decided to start what they're calling Fun Fridays. Here's a wonderful example of the parish recognizing an opportunity in their community, a

new gap that's been created, and are thinking innovatively about how they can uniquely fill that gap and serve their youth.

Summarize Model

So that's the model, its really easy. What do we need to eliminate that is distracting us from our pastoral vision? What can we reduce that isn't bearing fruit to justify the investment we are putting in? What can we improve that we know are the reasons people are showing up to our church? What can we uniquely create to satisfy those needs that aren't being met in our community? Eliminate. Reduce. Improve. Create.

Conversation in the Spirit

Where is our community at now?



Thank you, Daniel for leading us through that model. We're going to now do the same for your parishes. For this exercise, please don't jump ahead, please stay on the topic we are discussing. We are going to follow the same process we've been using. You will have a couple minutes to reflect individually and write down your thoughts on your sticky notes. Put those sticky notes in the section we are working on. If you have other ideas that pop up, write them down and save them for later. Then, please make sure everyone around the table has a chance to share what they wrote. We will then take time for everyone to respond to what they heard everyone else say, and then we will open it up for further dialogue. We will do that for each of the 4 points. The scribe will consolidate everyone's ideas on the additional sheet for the parish at the very end of this exercise.

Remember, we are talking about this from the point of analyzing where our parish is now so we can figure out how to get to where we need to go. Where is the Holy Spirit guiding us? The only way to do that is to have an open and honest conversation and to say things that need to be said. If we really need to eliminate the weekly bingo nights because it distracts us from our pastoral vision, then we need to not take it personally. If we say that our homilies can be improved, then pastors and deacons, let's please not take it personally and figure out how we can do better together so that we can move our parish forward. Let's get started.

For these next 4 areas, I'll provide examples using St. Boniface's parish community.

ELIMINATE

WHAT CAN WE STOP DOING? WHAT ARE THOSE
THINGS TAKING AWAY OR DISTRACTING US
FROM OUR PASTORAL VISION?

WHAT CAN WE STOP DOING? WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS TAKING AWAY OR DISTRACTING US FROM OUR PASTORAL VISION?

In our fictional parish, their vision is:

urban:

Have excellent communication among the staff and ministry leaders. However, right now there's some tension. Ministry leaders feel like staff are trying to put up obstacles for them when it comes to planning or scheduling things, and the staff feel like the ministry leaders are going deliberately out of their way to avoid the processes that have been put in place. They feel like they have the mentality where its better to ask for forgiveness rather than permission. So, this parish wants to eliminate the tension and politics between staff and ministry leaders.

What can your parish stop doing? What ministries or events aren't aligned with your vision, that if you stopped doing them would allow you to do something that is more in line with your vision? these might be good things, but we are trying to get to something better.

Are there maybe mindsets that need to be eliminated? Are there ministry cliques that seem exclusive and prevent others from getting involved? Is the council selling candles or raffle tickets or planning the parish festival? If people aren't welcoming at your parish, then that's something that needs to be eliminated. Is there drama between ministries or with the staff that needs to be eliminated? Are there excuses being made (not enough money, not enough space, etc.) that are keeping us from thinking solution oriented that need to be eliminated? Has complacency set in among our parish leadership, thinking that we are doing fine and there's no need for improvement?

Other ideas: paper bulletins (go virtual with social media and website), redundant administrative tasks (implement online systems), non-essential expenses (conduct thorough audit), time consuming manual

processes (way to automate?), barriers to attendance (offer virtual services)

REDUCE

WHAT THINGS ARE YOU PUTTING A LOT OF
WORK INTO, BUT NOT GETTING A WHOLE LOT
OUT OF?

WHAT THINGS ARE YOU PUTTING A LOT OF WORK INTO, BUT NOT GETTING A WHOLE LOT OUT OF?

In our fictional parish, their vision is:
urban:

Is to have harmony and collaboration among ministries and have ministries that offer something for everyone! The issue the parish is facing is that they have so many ministries that overlap. They've got 10 different prayer groups, multiple men's groups focused on fundraising and service, and multiple women's groups doing the same thing. Because so many ministries offer something similar, there's some tension and competition between the groups both for recruiting members and securing opportunities at the parish. So this parish wants to reduce the amount of ministry overlap.

More examples...

We talked about retreats earlier. What things are we spending a ton of money and effort on, but not seeing the fruit? What things can we reduce doing in one area that will allow us to better align with our vision in another?

Other ideas: the amount of announcements before the final blessing, energy consumption (optimize lighting and heating systems), waste (promoting recycling initiatives), cost of parish events (partnering with local businesses), volunteer burnout (creating rotating schedule for tasks and empowering new leaders), communication costs (go to low-cost or free platforms for newsletters and announcements)

IMPROVE

WHY DO PEOPLE SHOW UP TO YOUR CHURCH?
WHAT DO YOU NEED TO INVEST MORE INTO?

WHY DO PEOPLE SHOW UP TO YOUR CHURCH? WHAT DO YOU NEED TO INVEST MORE INTO?

In our fictional parish, their vision is:

urban: to improve relationship between English and Spanish speaking communities. There's an awareness of the many factors influencing communication barriers between communities and they want to address the primary reason for the division.

Other examples:

We talked about improving our homilies and liturgies earlier. What other areas do we need to invest more into?

Other ideas: hospitality, community awareness (parish events catered to the greater community), volunteer engagement (recognizing and rewarding volunteers for their contributions), ministry participation (offering something different for our different groups)

CREATE

WHAT NEW THINGS WOULD ATTRACT PEOPLE
TO YOUR CHURCH? WHAT PART OF YOUR
COMMUNITY IS UNDERSERVED?

WHAT NEW THINGS WOULD ATTRACT PEOPLE TO YOUR CHURCH? WHAT PART OF YOUR COMMUNITY IS UNDERSERVED?

In our fictional parish, their vision is:

1) urban:

To create a welcoming ministry for the immigrant, migrant and homeless communities. The ministry currently offers resources, support, personal accompaniment to help them receive the assistance they need, but they don't welcome them into the life of the parish. They are merely transactional. They would like to change this where everyone is welcomed or invited into the parish community.

Or like it was mentioned before, they want to increase young family involvement in the church and they recognize that most of their ministries take place between 6:30-8:30pm. Well, they could create a child watch specifically during that time to allow parents and young adults to get involved in ministries they otherwise wouldn't be able to. Are there needs or gaps that you see in your community that your parish is uniquely equipped to fill?

Other ideas: sense of community (organize regular social events), educational programs (for different levels of faith), welcoming environment (training greeters and forming hospitality teams), outreach opportunities (partnering with local charities and organizing service projects, mentorship program (connecting experienced parishioners with newcomers)

Parish Four Actions Framework (Urban)

Eliminate	Reduce
Eliminate the tension and politics between staff and ministry leaders	The amount of ministry overlap
Create	Improve
A welcoming ministry for the marginalized communities	Relationships between the English and Spanish speaking communities

Ok, so now take some time if you haven't already to consolidate thoughts onto your parish's worksheet.

Again for our fictional parish, they wanted to:

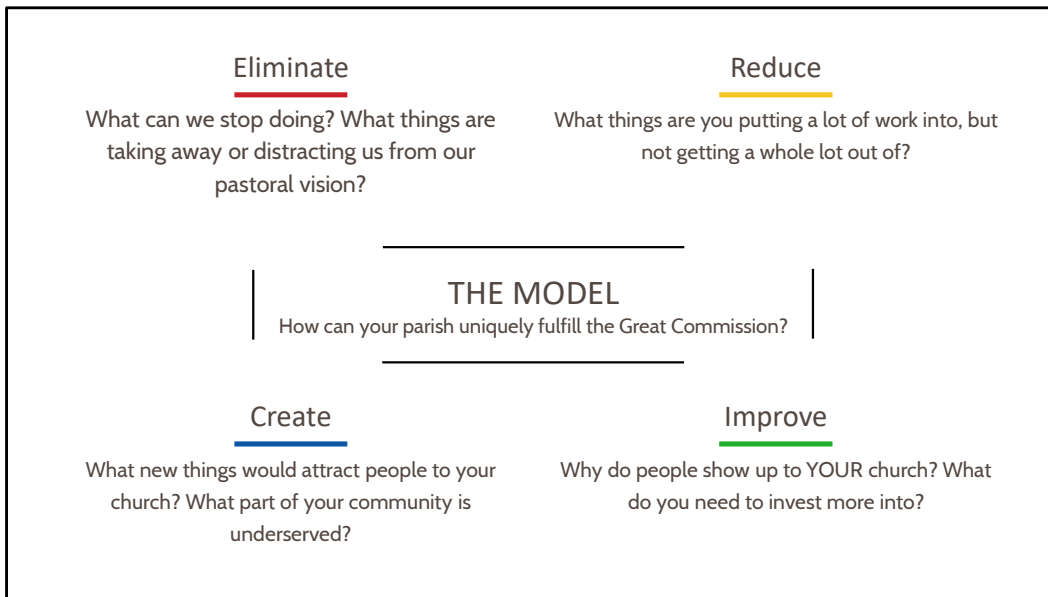
Urban:

Eliminate the tension and politics between staff and ministry leaders

Reduce the amount of ministry overlap

To improve relationship between English and Spanish speaking communities

To create a welcoming ministry for the marginalized communities



We walked through the exercise with you, but really the hope is that you would be able to replicate this effort at your parish and get more people involved in the conversation (the staff, ministry leaders, the whole community) so that you get a good picture of where your parish is at. You should be doing this on a regular basis, whether that's annually as you get new pastoral council members, every 3 years, but especially whenever you experience a major transition (like your pastor moving or after a pandemic, etc.).

Once you have your parish script filled out, we will take a short break. When we come back, now that we know where we are and where we are called to go, we will figure out how we are going to get there.

PASTORAL VISION

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO

Thank you everyone, let's get started with our next session. We are going to practice your role in assisting the pastor in the pastoral planning activity of your parish. To be able to do that, we need to have an established pastoral vision. Some of you may already have one, which is great. Can I get a show of hands if your parish already does have a pastoral vision? Mission statement? Priorities? Goals? Some yes, some no. That's ok! If you do already, hopefully our sessions affirm your vision. If you don't, this should be a great start.

The pastoral vision for your parish, just like the pastoral vision for our diocese and the global church, should not only paint the picture for where the Holy Spirit is calling us, but also explain why we do what we do. It should be the reasons behind all of the decisions we make.

History Lesson

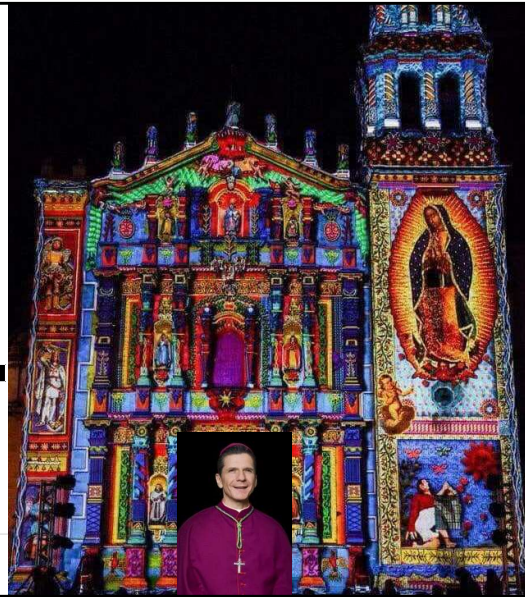
New Bishop, New Vision

Archbishop arrived; traveled around ArchSA, listening to the faithful

2013

2010

Archdiocesan Mission, Sacred Purpose, Vision, Goals and priorities are proclaimed



Like it was mentioned at the beginning of the day, your pastoral vision as a parish should flow from the pastoral vision of the Archdiocese, just like the vision of the Archdiocese should flow from the vision of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and the Vatican. So I'm going to give you a high overview of the last 14 years and how it has shaped and formed our pastoral vision for the diocese.

When Archbishop first arrived, instead of creating his own plan for what he wanted to do with the archdiocese, he conducted an investigation across all 19 counties. He visited every parish community, back then 176 parishes and missions, and held 25 listening sessions. He then gathered his leadership team and some experts together based on their gifts, strengths, and experiences to reflect on the findings. From those findings came what we have as part of our mutually shared vision: our sacred purpose, our pastoral priorities, and core values, which were proclaimed at Pentecost in 2013.

Our Sacred Purpose

“Seeking to live in sacramental communion with one another, the Archdiocese of San Antonio exists to make disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ to prepare for the promise of Eternal Life.”

PRIORITIES

The New
Evangelization

Catechesis &
Faith Formation

Youth &
Young Adults

This is our pastoral vision: The Archdiocese of San Antonio exists to make disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ to prepare for the promise of Eternal Life.

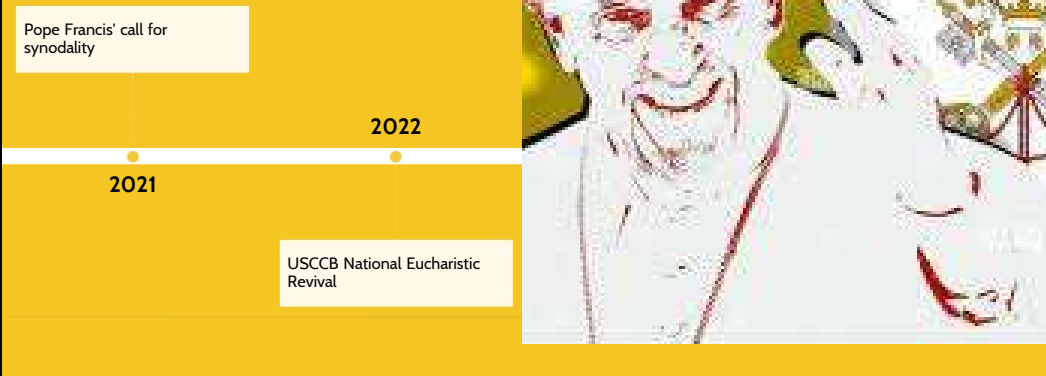
Everything that we do as a diocese, every celebration, every liturgy, every event, every decision has this purpose as a foundation. It also reminds us of the great commission Jesus gave us at the end of Matthew's gospel, which is how we should live out our daily lives. There were 3 specific areas in which we wanted to live out our sacred purpose. They were repeatedly evident in every deanery and were identified during the Archbishops investigation.

They were the New Evangelization, Catechesis and Faith Formation, and Youth and Young adults.

After its proclamation in 2013, over the next 8 years the diocese recommended that parishes do the same thing: look at their individual parish reality and create goals based on the 3 pastoral priorities which fell under these three areas. Anyone here remember that process or participate in it?

History Lesson

Worldwide & U.S. Invitation



Fast forward to 2021, Pope Francis called the entire church to engage in the synod on synodality. All were invited to listen to one another to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit and discern the next steps forward in journeying together. The Pope was investigating and reflecting on responses happening over the globe and asking that the rest of the church follow suit. Each parish in the diocese was asked to appoint a synodal representative or team to lead organized listening sessions and discuss two fundamental questions. Parishes were asked to submit their findings to the archdiocese, who submitted them to the Vatican, but also to reflect on to content collected during the conversations. The synod on synodality will conclude this October.

In 2022, the US Conference of Bishops called for a National Eucharistic Revival, a need to jumpstart our belief in the Jesus's presence in the Eucharist; a recommendation after reflecting on some very disturbing data.

Pew Research Center

Nearly 7 in 10 Catholics (69%) say they personally believe...the bread and wine used in communion “are *symbols* of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.”

Pew survey conducted Feb 4-19, 2019 among U.S. adults.

According to a survey conducted in Feb. 2019, 69% of Catholics don't believe in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. They believe it is a symbol. Only 28% of those Catholics believe the Church's teaching on transubstantiation. Transubstantiation--the term for when the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, while visibly remaining the same.

Moreover, more than 30% of Catholics have not returned to the pews post-pandemic and in the past decade, more than 40% of millennials now identify as “unaffiliated” with any religion, they have...none. Many young Catholics find the faith to be irrelevant to the meaning of their lives and challenges.

These are some disturbing facts that are the results of investigating. As a result, the US Conference of bishops called for a Eucharistic Revival.

Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/08/05/transubstantiation-eucharist-u-s-catholics/>



The National Eucharistic Revival was a 3-year plan designed to do 4 main things: reinvigorate our liturgies, form people, help them have an encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist, and then send them out to evangelize as missionary disciples. Across the archdiocese, parishes had teaching Masses, Advent Mission talks on the Eucharist, and when we had the Assembly last year, we asked parishes to host a Friday night event centered around the Eucharist.

Anyone want to share what your parish did this past year?

While the National Eucharistic Revival and the Synod on Synodality have an advertised end, our diocese plans to continue living in this spirit, as we have adopted this as our way of being. This isn't the last time you'll hear about these things. We talked earlier about how as a Pastoral Council, you are a synodal structure, a synodal body.

Now looking forward, we'll be celebrating our 150th anniversary as a diocese this year, next year is the Jubilee year for our Global church, and then the following year is the 125th anniversary of us being designated as an archdiocese. So you'll see things over the next couple of years in line with those as well.



Your Pastoral Vision

Hopefully you were able to hear how our local church is connected to the national church and global church, how the vision flows from the global church down to our local church, and how at multiple stages we've engaged in this process that we talked about earlier: investigate, reflect, and recommend.

Any questions so far? Now that you have this understanding of the Archdiocesan pastoral vision, let's start talking about your vision as a parish. In the same way that our sacred purpose as an archdiocese is to make missionary disciples, that is the same purpose that every single church, ever established, has. That's the great commission we've been given. That's the reason that on your parish script, your purpose is already filled in for you. We all have the same sacred purpose. We are all called to make missionary disciples. How each individual parish community is called to fulfill that great commission is unique. No two parishes are the same, no two communities are the same, and so how they fulfill the great commission isn't going to look the same either.

So today we aren't going to have time for you to really wordsmith your own vision statement. Instead, what we are going to do is build the framework for your pastoral vision. The first step in doing that is discerning who your parish is called to serve. Why would we identify who your parish serves? Because it bases our vision in the reality of our parish. Identifying WHO we are called to serve will allow us to better discern a vision and plan on HOW we are called to serve them. It allows us to dream better. Just like the Archbishop conducted 25 listening sessions to identify the areas of need in the diocese, your council will have an opportunity to reflect on and identify the people and the needs in your specific parish community. A parish vision gives better direction and a framework to make your parish goals and purpose become a reality. Proverbs 29:18 says without a vision the people perish, but happy is the one who follows instruction.

Again, some of you already have a vision, which is great! This exercise we are about to do should help evaluate if your parish vision is still relevant or if it needs to be tweaked.

PARISH VISIONING EXERCISE

Thoughts to
consider:

Who is around and outside your parish?

What is the greater mission of the church?

How do you plan to accomplish that mission?

Again, I'm going to invite Ademola up to lead us through this exercise.

We are going to use the same process we used last time. I'll give you 2 mins for individual reflection, we will go around the table and allow everyone a chance to share, we will go around again and give everyone a chance to respond, and then we will open it up for further discussion. We will do this for each question.

As we go through this exercise, I want you to keep a few key points in mind as you focus on your parish community.

As a pastoral council, the pastor may want to consult you to investigate a specific request he has. Your experience with other community members, specific ministry groups, your involvement both in and outside the parish, will help you to prayerfully reflect on how best to provide a recommendation to him. As you focus on the questions we will walk thru, I want you to consider the following questions.

read the 3 questions

PARISH VISIONING EXERCISE

Who does your parish serve?

Young families? Elderly couples? Migrants?
Retired adults? Seasonal visitors?



First question: Who does your parish serve?

Your first temptation may be to put "everyone." And what that is assumed, it's not a good answer! I really want you to describe your definition of everyone. How well do you know your community?? These questions are to help you specifically categorize "who" your parish serves. How would you categorize them? What do you know about them? Use these questions as a means to identify your own parish community.

What are some of the professions in your parish community?

Are they business owners, school teachers, college students? Are they parents? Elderly or empty nesters?

What are some of the specialized ministry groups in your parish?

How would you describe the cultural make-up of your parish?

Who are some of the social groups that stand out in the community?

What are some of the businesses surrounding your parish? Is there a school? A prison? A hospital? Are you in a neighborhood or near an apartment complex? Does your parish community live within the parish boundaries?

Remember that your parish is also responsible for ALL the soul's that fall within the parish boundary. Think about who they are.

Now let's take some time to individually reflect and write your notes. Put them on the "Who" side of your large paper. When the time is up, talk about who your parish serves. Remember to include everyone in the discussion and then ask yourselves, is EVERYONE represented?

When you have everyone represented, put those sticky notes on your butcher paper on the correct side. Moving forward, when your parish creates programs or makes decisions, you have an accurate reflection of who will be impacted.

PARISH VISIONING EXERCISE

If your parish were able to do everything possible, with no limitation on time, energy or resources, what would it look like?

If we had everything we needed, who could we be? What could we do?



This question is a little more meaty but should also allow you to dream a little bit.

Keeping in mind the people you just identified, here's the second question: If your parish were able to do everything possible, with no limitation on time, energy or resources, what would it look like?

Let's check out St. Boniface...for examples of what they would like to do with who they've identified:

Please note that your vision should reflect the reality of who your parish serves and what is a feasible and realistic. Now it's your turn.

If your parish were able to do everything possible, with no limitation on time, energy or resources, what would it look like?

Purpose Why do we exist?	To make disciples of all nations
Values How do we behave?	Prayer Warriors All are Welcome Team Players
Our Community Who do we serve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Farmers, oilfield workers o Polish & Hispanic families w/3+ kids o Growing Spanish speaking population o Various Christian denominations o Mid-size commuter population o New subdivisions for incoming families o Youth and YAs often leave for higher edu or work opportunities o Athletics, FFA, and rodeo enthusiasts o Large senior population
Envisioned Future Where are we being called?	

Ok, now if you haven't yet, take time to fill out your ministry script. You should be able to make direct correlations between your vision statements and your community statements.

Purpose	To make disciples of all nations	
Why do we exist?	<hr/>	
Values	Prayer Warriors	
How do we behave?	All are Welcome	
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<hr/>		
Our Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Farmers, oilfield workers o Polish & Hispanic families w/3+ kids o Growing Spanish speaking population o Various Christian denominations o Mid-size commuter population 	
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<hr/>		
Envisioned Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Vibrant youth ministry o Youth are excited about the faith, invite friends to Mass, and continue lifelong discipleship after leaving home o Intergenerational ministry mentorship o Parish diversity is embraced and celebrated among generations and cultures 	
Where are we being called?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Existing parish ministries are integrated and thriving in the community o Faith extends beyond the parish o Online RCIA classes for farmers & oilfield workers o Vibrant evangelization ministry o Different faiths collab & comm regularly to address larger community issues 	
<hr/>		

Ok, now if you haven't yet, take time to fill out your ministry script. You should be able to make direct correlations between your vision statements and your community statements.

Here is who St. Boniface serves and what they could do.

NEXT STEPS

Thank you all for participating in this brief exercise to start the visioning process. The goal for this session was to get clear on who your parish serves and the possibilities of what you could do if you had unlimited resources, time, etc. Sometimes we need a little help looking past the daily challenges and making room for the Holy Spirit to move.

The next step would be for you all to prayerfully reflect on where this information is calling you to move, grow or act. Finish the vision statement. Create a brief mission statement. What could your vision be based on who is in your community and who attends your parish? How will your parish specifically be missionary disciples and glorify Christ by your lives?

We have a minute or two left; does anyone want to share one major takeaway?

GOAL SETTING

Pastoral Council Workshop
2024

Alright, last session of the day. I want to thank you again for committing to being here on a Saturday with your church family.

What we are going to do now is land the plane. We started up here [*motion*] talking about our vision this morning, we just analyzed our parish, and now we are going to set a goal based off our analysis. Tying this into the process we talked about this morning, we've done some investigation and reflection, and now we are moving into the recommendation part of the process.

Like everything we've done today, we are walking you through the process, but the intention is that you take this back home as a council and you spend additional time praying and reflecting and getting the right people involved in the conversation that need to be included. If we are truly inviting God into this process (which we should be), then we should spend time in prayer and reflection. If we are going to spend 100% of our meeting in a spirit of prayer like we talked about this morning, then we need to be asking ourselves, "Is this God's plan for our parish? Where is God calling us to?"

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

and against mediocrity

“So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.” - Rev 3:16



Reflecting on the Olympics lately, I love just being able to watch greatness happen. Katie Ledecky and Simone Biles were absolutely incredible. What blows my mind is how incredible they are and by how much they've been able to dominate in their respective sports. Both of them, without doubt, are the best all time in their sports.

And the thing about this is that they've been great for a long time. They've dominated the last 2 Olympics, and Katie has already confirmed she wants to swim at the next one. It would have been really easy for them to start to grow complacent after they won their first gold medal. A lot of athletes do, which is why repeating as a champion is so hard to do. They are not just striving for excellence, they are sustaining excellence. Part of the reason for that is that they continue to set new goals for themselves. They don't allow complacency or mediocrity set it.

I'm sure y'all are used to setting person goals, whether that's paying off the house, or losing weight, or getting the kids through school.

We need to have this same sort of mentality with our parishes. A lot of the parishes are excellent. In fact, all of us should have been able to identify something you were excellent in during the exercise we just did. We also identified some areas we are not so excellent in. So for those areas we are falling short in, what goals can we set to become excellent in those areas? For the areas we are already doing good in, how can we sustain excellence in that area?

We need to get into the habit of goal setting, that's part of the essential elements of good pastoral planning. As a team, we are going to break down how to create one singular focus, one goal, from your last two exercises. But in the natural progression of life and in the goals that we set, we know there will be obstacles along the way.

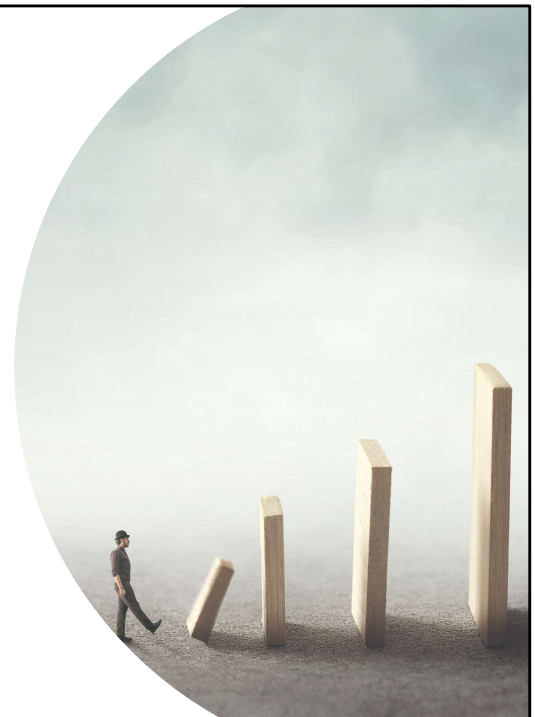
Remember that obstacles could be opportunities to re-strategize; they don't always mean you should give up on the original goal. If that happens, focus on the goal and not the obstacles and if the plan doesn't work, change the plan, not the goal. Anyone here a former marine? Their motto: improvise, adapt, overcome.

POCO A POCO



If everything's
important
then...

research
suggests that 70-
90% of strategic
plans never see
implementation



Speaking of obstacles, research suggests that 70-90% of strategic plans never see implementation—often ending up as forgotten documents gathering dust on a shelf. We are committed to helping you succeed so we'll begin with a focused approach. Instead of creating extensive 3–5-year plans, we'll use what's called the Thematic Goal or rallying cry—a qualitative focus shared by the entire leadership team and the organization, applicable for a defined period of time. This was a concept developed by Patrick Lencioni, who's Catholic and consults not only billion-dollar organizations, but also parishes and dioceses. This approach allows us to answer the crucial question: For the next 3-6 months, what is the one thing that is most important for our parish to do?

Y'all have heard this saying before, if everything is important then nothing is. So in a sense, the concept of having multiple "priorities" doesn't make sense. Not everything can be the most important. What we end up doing is dividing our time, attention, efforts, resources into multiple things, and instead of becoming excellent at one thing, we become mediocre at a lot of things. We are susceptible to this at the diocesan level too, probably even more so.

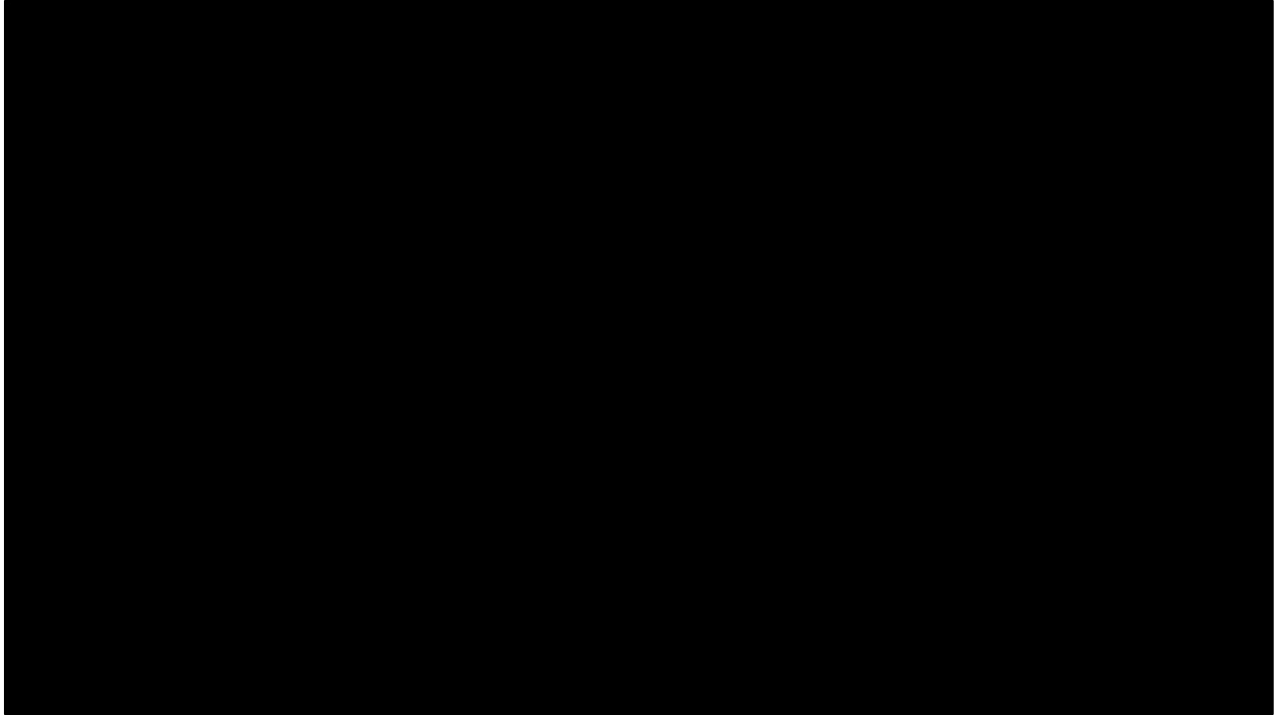
We've been talking about the Paris Olympics, so pardon my French, but this is something I learned growing up: "its easy to half-ass a lot of things, lets whole-ass a whole thing."

So the thematic goal: for the next 3-6 months, what is the one thing that is most important for our parish to do? We are just trying to figure out what is the right next step the Holy Spirit is calling us to take? That's all we are discerning: what is the right next step. If we can continue to do that, step-by step, poco-a-poco, little by little, we will get to where we are ultimately called to be. Really, that's how God walks with us

anyways right? Y'all remember the Israelites in the desert? They had the vision of where

they were heading, the promised land, but they didn't have the 3-5 year or 40 year plan to get there. What they had was a cloud by day and a pillar of flame by night. God walking with them step-by-step every day. He does the same with us.

I don't know about you, but I like to set big goals. I like to dream big. In my marriage, I'm the dreamer and my wife is the realist. Sometimes I get stuck along the way because I'll set a goal that's definitely possible, but then get discouraged by how long its going to take, or how many steps are involved. I've learned I need to start small. Sometimes the smallest step towards a big goal is as easy as making a phone call. It's action, and action creates momentum. Poco a poco. Please don't underestimate the power of starting small; it has the potential to ignite significant change.



Video

In 2001, a physicist from San Francisco's Exploratorium replicated a [Lorne Whitehead's] groundbreaking experiment from 1983. Has anyone here ever played with dominos? (raise hand and look for participation) Whitehead had discovered that a falling domino doesn't just topple one thing but has the potential to topple objects much larger than itself. Astonishingly, a domino can bring down another domino that's 50% larger. In this video, we'll witness the remarkable progression: starting with a mere 5 mm domino and by the 29th domino, the cascade could knock over a structure as colossal as the Empire State Building.

Thematic Goal What is most important right now?				
Create a welcoming ministry for marginalized communities				
O b j e c t i v e s	Create a search committee to identify ministry leaders	Pray, discern and select ministry leaders from collected submissions	Analyze needs of the marginalized community/research what keeps them away	Brainstorm the unique ways parish is called to meet those needs & eliminate potential barriers
	Paula	All members	Ministry leaders	Ministry leaders
Responsibilities Who must do what?				

How's that for a visual?

Gary Keller, author of *The One Thing* says, getting extraordinary results and achieving excellence is all about creating a domino effect in your life. Toppling dominoes is pretty straightforward. It's something many of us did when we were younger and maybe some of you did with your children. You line them up in a pattern, tip over the first one, and watch the rest fall. Life is more complicated, though. Life doesn't neatly line everything up for us. Life doesn't tell you, *"This is your smallest domino, start here."* This is why being a synodal church is so important: we need to be able to listen to each other and discern together, *"What step is the Holy Spirit calling us to take together?"*

Let's go over the script that we've been working on. We are going to be filling out the last portion where it says Thematic Goal.

During the visioning session, St. Boniface identified their community as low to wealthy income families, English and Spanish speaking families, Many have high school degrees and higher education degrees and certifications, there is a mid-sized homeless population, 10+ ministry groups, many young families, singles, elderly, divorced, young adults, and college students, migrants and immigrants.

During their parish analysis, they identified a lot of areas that the parish could take actionable steps. They discerned that their most important thing right now, the next step the Holy Spirit is calling them to, their thematic goal, is to create a welcoming ministry for marginalized communities.

A desired outcome of this goal would be for their parish to be seen as a place of hope and belonging by any and all visitors. Here's why they chose this as their goal. The parish is located near a major highway and they often receive a mix of homeless, migrants and immigrants looking for support. Many of their ministries have members who volunteer with Catholic Charities' refugee resettlement program, have started to provide support via their St. Vincent de Paul ministry, but many parishioners have commented that they want to do a lot more for this specific group of people and help them feel like members of the church. After some investigation and reflection on what parishioners have been saying and the volume of support they provide, their pastoral council discerned together with that pastor, that they focus on this goal for the next 3-6 months.

Here's how we would identify the objectives on your paper:

Where it says **thematic goal**, they wrote "create a welcoming ministry for marginalized communities".

After selecting this goal, they moved into breaking up this goal into smaller **objectives**. On the side of the form, you see the word "objectives" vertically. Remember when Daniel said to start small? These are going to be the smaller dominoes needed to accomplish our thematic goal.

- The first thing to domino is to create a search committee to identify ministry leaders.
 - As I mentioned before, the council knows they have parishioners who want to do more for their targeted audience, but they need a way to identify all of them. This is the investigative action of the council and the first step.
- Our second domino is: to pray, discern, and select ministry leaders from the search committee submissions.
 - This is the reflective and recommendation actions of a council. They will review the submissions from the search committee and provide recommendations to the pastor on who should head this specialized ministry.
- The next domino is: to prayerfully analyze the needs of the marginalized community and research what keeps them away from the parish.
- And finally: Brainstorm the unique ways the parish is called to meet those needs and eliminate potential barriers.

As you can see, there are more steps that will come after this and that's ok! These are the first steps to take towards their thematic goal.

The final step in this script is assigning responsibilities. The person assigned will be responsible for that objective. Preferably this would not be "the pastor." The pastor should only own, what only the pastor can do. On our example, for the first objective, Paula has volunteered to help as she works with committees in her day job. For the second we assigned all members, because this is a function of a pastoral council, to reflect and recommend leaders to the pastor from the submissions. For the third objective, the leaders

of this new ministry will be tasked to analyze the needs of this community. They have experience working with this group of people and can use that expertise to complete that objective. For the last objective we put ministry leaders again because that will be part of their responsibilities.

There will be more steps after that, but for the purposes of this exercise, we are walking you thru the first few steps of how to set a goal. As a reminder, the pastoral council is not an implementation body but rather a consultative body. The pastoral council investigates, reflects, and recommends to the pastor. The pastor makes the final decision based on the council's recommendation. We are assigning members to an objective because we need to make sure we can hold someone accountable for the objective. Now in the case of smaller parishes where the council members may be on other committees, it's important to have separate meetings for pastoral council purposes and meetings for action committee purposes. Your council should not be in charge of fundraising or planning the parish festival. If you don't have all your members here today, this would be a good exercise for you to present at your next council meeting. The members here can brainstorm who would be assigned to a specific objective.

Some may be thinking wait, hold them accountable? Yes, volunteers can be held accountable. If a person says that they can help, if they make that commitment, then we can expect them to keep their word. As we talked about, we are all co-responsible for the mission of the church. Not just the pastor, not just the staff. And if we are all co-responsible, then we can (and should) all be held accountable.

Now it is your turn. I'm going to give you 15 minutes to fill out this portion.

Based on what you have identified during this workshop, choose an overarching goal for the next 3-6 months. Write out your smallest steps to work towards that goal and then assign responsibilities. We'll walk around and offer support while you work. Another thing to remember, lets make sure we have the right people around the table when we're coming up with our goals and objectives. If you're doing something for youth ministry, then lets invite the youth minister into the conversation. Same with our liturgical ministries or faith formation or any other area. Its ok to brainstorm for now, but lets involve those people in this process as soon as we can.



WHAT'S NEXT

- Involving the parish in the process
- Overcommunication
- Setting new goals

So how did you do? Does anyone want to share their goal?

I've said this a bunch today, but I'm going to keep repeating it. We walked you through this process today, but it is important for us to make sure we involve the parish in the process. People are more likely to buy into your parish vision, or whatever decision is being made, if they've had a chance to participate and weigh in on the issue.

The other thing is, they can't buy into the vision or the decision if they don't know what it is. So like we talked about this morning, overcommunication is key. That is the pastor's responsibility. That's part of your responsibility as a council. Your pastoral vision does no good staying in your pastor's head or around these tables. The vision is for the whole parish community, so we need to constantly be sharing it with them and reminding them. Otherwise they'll forget or think we're not taking it seriously. So communicate it at staff meetings, ministry meetings, from the pulpit, in the bulletin, on social media. Research shows it takes seven exposures for a message to resonate. The more we speak about it, the more we own it, the more we are held accountable to it.

As you begin to make progress with your thematic goal, you'll soon encounter the need to address the next challenge/issue that comes up. I promise you something is going to come up, there will still be fires to fight. It's easy to get distracted, especially when we're doing something the Lord is calling us to. The devil is the lord of distractions. So stay focused, see your thematic goal through to the end, and then start the process over again. Listen to your community, get the right people around the table, discern and reflect together, and then set a new goal.

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Ok, we are at the end of our day. I hope it was fruitful. I also hope that you can see how what we walked through today is very foundational and can apply to your staff, ministry leaders, everyone. So, my team's contact information is on the screen, we are more than happy to come out and provide training to the rest of your council, staff, or ministry leaders, or your council meetings and follow-up on how things are going with your pastoral planning. Feel free to reach out to us.

Also, if everyone can flip the survey link card over, you'll see another link for an evaluation. Please be brutally honest with us, we want to continue improving these for the future.

Finally, lets close in prayer.