

Led By the Spirit:
A Pastoral Plan
for the Diocese of Trenton



Pre-Planning Inventory

"The parish is for most Catholics the single most important part of the church. This is where for them the mission of Christ continues. This is where they publicly express their faith, joining with others to give proof of their communion with God and with one another..." - #1

"So many hues would be needed to paint an accurate picture of the parish, so many shapes and dimensions to sculpt it. It is affected by everything around it - by the local area in which it is rooted, by all the ways people differ from one another, their race and nationality; their age, sex and education; their attitudes and experiences. The parish is affected by these traits and it reflects them. Not only is the parish, therefore, a mystery of faith, but even at the level of human understanding any parish eludes neat explanation." - #2

"Whatever the form, a parish seeks to become ever more fully a people of God, sharing the mission of Christ and developing the structure necessary for supporting its community life and carrying out its mission." (**#8)

In preparation for planning, it is important to take the time to honestly describe the parish as it is experienced at this moment in time. The statement of the U.S. Bishop's Committee on the Parish entitled *The Parish: A People, A Mission, A Structure* provides a useful framework for this exercise. Try to respond to the questions without judging the present situation as good or bad; just describe what is. It is worthwhile to take the time necessary to search out the information you need to answer the questions accurately; and having a number of different perspectives is very valuable.

**** The Parish: A People, A Mission, A Structure** – Statement of the U.S. Bishop's Committee on the Parish; full text available from *Origins*, Vol. 10, Issue 41, March 26, 1981



The People of Your Parish

"The parish is first a people... simply stated it a people, a people called together by God. It is a people empowered by the Spirit to make increasingly true and obvious their response to God through Christ. The parish tries to take shape in this context of faith and prayer, always with openness to the Spirit." - **#11

What is the history and purpose of the parish?

What do you know about the current demographics of the parish?

Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Household Size, Homebound & Institutionalized,
Marital Status, Educational Status, Language groups, Economic Status

Are there many long-time parishioners? Multiple generations?

Are there many that are new to the area? From where have they come?

Are there people with disabilities that are active in your parish?

Who is not present in your parish worship and community life activities?

How would you describe the parish culture?

What are its treasured customs and practices?

How do new things get started?

Who are seen as leaders in the community?

How do people find out what's happening?

What is important to the people of the community?

What would you say is the charism or special gift of your parish?

Where is the parish site (location)? Where are the people you serve?

By the Numbers

How many persons are attending Sunday Mass in your parish?

How many baptisms, confirmations, marriages, funerals last year?

How are these numbers increasing or decreasing over time?



Your Parish Mission

*"The parish exists not for itself, but for the mission of Christ. And so people are called forth to minister to one another in the parish community, as well as to those around them where they live and work." - **#20*

Review your Parish Mission Statement

Is it consistent with the mission of Christ as that mission is expressed by the universal Church and the Church of Trenton?

Is it short enough to be memorized?

Is it well-known by the members of the Parish?

Is it motivating?

Who is responsible for this mission?

How do those responsible live out this mission?

What percentage of parishioners are active in parish ministries?

What percentage of parishioners serve the larger community in some way?

Do the parishioners financially support the ministry of the parish?

What is the ordinary weekly collection?

What is the average gift?

Are these numbers decreasing or increasing over time?

How much of the energy and resources of the parish are focused on ministering to parishioners?

How much of the energy and resources of the parish are focused on helping parishioners minister to those beyond the membership of the parish?



Structures that Support Growth and Development

*“The growth and development of a parish’s community and mission must be ensured and that requires appropriate structures. Some of these structures can be presumed. There are those involving the sacramental life of the parish, for instance, and those concerned with the relationship between the parish and the bishop. There are also others on the diocesan level which are designed to assist the ministry of the parish and to foster collaboration among parishes.” - **#28*

What leadership structures does your parish have to support ministry?

Is there evident collaboration between the clergy, religious, and laity in your parish?

Are there appropriate structures which allow for participation in the decision-making process (investigate, consider, propose)?

Is there a Parish Pastoral Council that has been formed to work with the Pastor to envision and plan for the parish to live out its mission?

Are there small groups of various kinds in which parishioners can meet, study & discuss, and serve in the ministries of the parish?

*“The foremost leader of the parish remains the pastor...This leadership is greatly enhanced when it continually develops the skills and structures that invite open dialogue, shared decision making and effective action. As a result the goal of leadership is not simply to provide service for the people of the parish, but to enable them to minister to one another, to become part of a people and to extend their Christian commitment to everything they do.” - **#32*

How does your Pastor invite participation?

What is your current practice of planning?

Who is involved?

Is it serving you well? How is it not meeting your needs?

How would you describe the relationship between your parish and other neighboring parishes? Give examples.

How would you describe the relationship between your parish and the diocese?
Give examples.