

Message from the Bishop



November 2006

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

For the past few years, I've been working with my advisory councils and gathering input on pastoral matters in the diocese. Earlier this year, I asked all Catholics in the diocese to share their reflections on pastoral priorities. I've considered all input and am now pleased to promulgate as my first diocesan pastoral plan, **"Lead us to holiness."**

Within this document is a pastoral vision statement for the diocese. This statement springs forth from the works of the Diocesan Synod of 1995. It has been updated to inspire us in all our pastoral activity and associated goals. The Synod pastoral letter *Enthusiasm for the Faith* defined six pastoral areas. As many of our parishes have developed ministries around those pastoral areas, they have been included and expanded in this document.

Under each pastoral heading is a set of goals for the diocese and "Best Practices" for parishes. For parishes, I ask the pastor or administrator to dialogue with his pastoral council to determine the local needs and do what is possible and appropriate for the parish. Parish pastoral councils, under the leadership of their pastor, can refer to this statement as they engage in pastoral planning endeavors.

I ask every Catholic in the diocese to embrace this vision statement with renewed fervor so we can continue the work of the Lord, building up the kingdom of God, in our efforts to "renew the face of the earth" in the Diocese of Charleston.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Robert J. Baker
Bishop of Charleston

A Pastoral Vision for the Diocese of Charleston

The meaning of our whole Christian life, the meaning of our collective effort to be stewards of the Kingdom of God, comes down to a simple attempt to be faithful disciples of Jesus, whom we recognize as the Christ. As faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in the Diocese of Charleston, and as members of the Catholic Church in communion with the See of Rome, we commit ourselves to allowing the Lord to **lead us to holiness** of life by:

- being a Eucharistic people who seek a deeper relationship with God by prayerfully meditating on His Word and devoutly celebrating the Sacraments according to established norms;
- spreading the Gospel, by word and example, calling ourselves and others to conversion by explicit invitation and by the witness of our Christian lives, utilizing the time, talent, and treasure God has given us;
- passing on the Faith (that comes to us from Scripture and Tradition) transmitted via the Magisterium, to all of our members at every stage of life by our efforts at Christian Formation;
- offering humble service, as did Jesus, particularly mindful of the poor, the needy, and the marginalized, transforming even the very structures of society as we help to usher in the Reign of God, as ambassadors of justice, charity, and peace;
- promoting, supporting, and nurturing Christian community at every level, including ethnic communities in our midst, that we might share in the holy communion of love which is the Blessed Trinity itself;
- striving to be agents of reconciliation within our own Church community and with other ecclesial and faith communities.

For questions about this document or for assistance with parish pastoral planning, please call: Lisa Rawlins, Director of Planning for the Diocese of Charleston at (843) 853-2130, ext. 215

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Goals for the Diocese:

To insure implementation and compliance of the diocesan guidelines for parish liturgical practices, General Liturgical Norms from Church Documents and Liturgical Norms Specific to the Diocese of Charleston, based on the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and Redemptionis Sacramentum, and with a special concern also for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

To provide teaching to all Catholics on reverence for Holy Mass, the importance of prayer in our daily lives and the reasons why weekly Mass attendance is essential to our faith.

Best practices for Parishes:

- Teach and promote the call to holiness for all baptized and confirmed Catholics.
- Develop vibrant and reverent liturgies to bring the community into closer relationship with Christ and one another.
- Prepare and instruct the faithful to receive the Sacraments.
- Properly train all those in the parish who offer their service.
- Encourage spiritual growth through active participation at Mass, the practice of communal and private prayer, devotions, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.
- Create a renewed focus on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Sick.

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL MINISTRY

(includes: Social Justice)

Goals for the Diocese:

To draw people to holiness in Jesus Christ by imaging him through works of Charity.

To provide education in Catholic Social Teaching, and be resource persons to parishes for development of social ministry.

To address the health care needs of the poor.

Best practices for Parishes:

- Foster the work of Social Justice. Establish a Social Justice Committee.
- Promote and engage in social outreach and service activities such as soup kitchens, food pantries, clothes closets, etc.
- Identify in each parish, a parish social ministry contact person to act as a liaison with Catholic Charities.
- Assist in coordinating emergency relief efforts to support local, national and international needs and to foster disaster preparedness awareness in our diocese.

STEWARDSHIP

Goals for the Diocese:

To provide Stewardship Education through parish talks and the development of written materials.

Best Practices for Parishes:

- *Develop a Children's Stewardship Program utilizing the USCCB program for teenagers and stewardship.*
- *Establish a program of ongoing Stewardship Formation.*
- *Conduct an annual Ministry Fair to encourage parishioners to learn about opportunities to offer their gifts of time and talent to the parish.*
- *Foster a sense of the spiritual basis for sacrificial giving not just to "pay the bills" helping people to acknowledge their gratitude for all God has given and done for them. Promote Sacrificial Giving. Implement these programs in our schools and religious education programs.*
- *Utilize Rick Sarkisian's program "Life Work: Finding Your Purpose in Life" to nurture an understanding and appreciation of one's gifts and talents.*
- *Prepare an annual report for parishioners to show parish achievements and accountability.*

EVANGELIZATION

Goals for the Diocese:

To offer a biannual conference to celebrate our Eucharistic faith. Offer retreats and other Days of Prayer on a diocesan-wide basis.

To promote the establishment of small communities of faith within the parish, especially in larger parishes where fostering a sense of belonging to a family helps to insure all feel called to participate in the Mystical Body of Christ.

To explore ways and develop best practices for reaching out to the unchurched, the disenfranchised, and the marginalized and offer them a spiritual home.

Best practices for Parishes:

- *Priest are encouraged, especially through their homilies, to teach Catholics how to live the Gospel message and be faithful to the Magisterium.*
- *Encourage small communities of faith, such as those formed during Disciples in Mission, Cursillo, and Charismatic Renewal.*
- *Offer parish missions, retreats and days of recollection.*
- *Prominently advertise the RCIA for those who seek to be prepared for Baptism, Confirmation, or for full participation in the Church.*
- *Develop ways to reach out to non-attending registered parishioners.*
- *Establish a Legion of Mary group for reconciling Catholics to the Faith.*
- *Be sensitive to different cultural groups in our parishes.*

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

(includes: Catholic Schools, Religious Education Programs for all ages, Campus Ministry, Youth and Young Adults, Vocations, Priestly Formation, Priests' Continuing Education, Mentoring of Priests, especially those ordained five years or less)

Goals for the Diocese:

To provide resources to parishes on Adult Education and Catechesis.

To direct greater resources to Campus Ministry programs and services.

To create education programs for children with special needs.

Best practices for Parishes:

- *Help parents to fulfill their role as the primary teachers of the faith for their children.*
- *Offer ongoing catechesis and faith formation for all ages (children, youth, adults).*
- *Establish Young Adult (18-25) programs to keep this age group engaged in their faith.*
- *Encourage vocations to the ordained ministries and consecrated life.*
- *Develop greater support and involvement of parishioners for their parish school, if the parish has a school.*
- *Establish programs for children with developmental disabilities such as a day program for education, sacramental preparation, and religious education. Create a network and resources for parents.*

BUILDING COMMUNITY

(now includes: Ethnic Ministries, Ecumenism, Communications)

Goals for the Diocese:

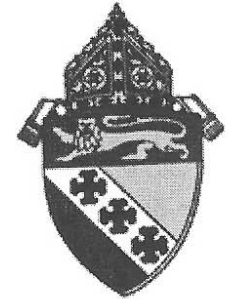
To further Multicultural awareness and program development, including ministering to the Hispanic community.

To identify areas in the diocese where new faith communities need to be established due to growth in the population.

Best practices for Parishes:

- *Establish an ethnic ministries committee to welcome and serve all who come to worship and participate in the life of the parish.*
- *Create a Welcoming Committee for newcomers. Have Greeters at all Masses to welcome the faithful.*
- *Invite and encourage parishioners to offer their gifts and participate more fully in the life of the parish. Provide training opportunities where appropriate. Create visibility for various ministries.*
- *Create Ecumenical and interreligious connections.*
- *Expand means of communication with parishioners (newsletter, parish web site, e-mail notification and enhanced bulletin information).*
- *Establish an annual cycle of Pastoral Planning with the Parish Pastoral Council.*
- *Create a calendar of parish activities, that provides opportunities for everyone of all ages, to participate and share in the communal aspect of their faith family.*

“Lead us to holiness”



A Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of Charleston

November 2006

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