

An Introduction to: Building a Bridge to the Future--The Pastoral Planning Process

With this insert, we begin the communication and implementation of Bishop Caggiano's - and the Diocesan Synod's - directives to every parish. The directives are to engage in a process that would result in a well-researched, orderly plan for the future. This first communication gives a general overview of the process. Subsequent communications will get into the specific plans identified for our parish especially identified in the Disciple Maker Index Survey.



During 2016, all of the 82 parishes in the Diocese of Bridgeport participated in developing a unique two-year Pastoral Plan. This process was undertaken as a result of the Fourth Synod of 2014. As you may recall, the Synod was a year-long process with the express purpose of strengthening and reinvigorating our parishes with a common Catholic purpose and vision.

An Office of Strategic and Pastoral Planning, or OSPP, was created in January of 2015 to provide direction, guidance, information and support to the parishes in this process. According to the OSPP, the Pastoral Plan is driven--practically and prayerfully--by identifying "who" the parish is as a community, what missions and goals the parish wishes to pursue, the way to achieve the chosen missions and goals, and a serious evaluation of the resources of the parish.

Each parish, including Holy Spirit, identified a Task Force to be led by the Pastor. Along with Msgr. Royal, the Task Force consists of Deacon Jennings, Stephanie LaPointe, Eileen Garry, Carol Pinard, Joseph SanFilipo. The Task Force was charged with a five-step planning process:

1. Collect parish data, including finances, facilities, demographic, sacraments and Pastoral.
2. Evaluate the data.
3. Identify strengths and challenges, and identify parish priorities for a two-year period.
4. Create a two-year Pastoral Plan to address the parish's challenges as well as the Synod's challenges. The Synod Global Challenges are listed below.
5. Evaluate the Pastoral Plan throughout the two-year period, at least on an annual basis.

The Synod Global Challenges were approved on March 21, 2015. These five challenges include Liturgy and Worship, Family Life, Evangelization, Leadership and Catechesis and Education. The challenges provide the framework for each parish's Pastoral Plan. Specifically, each parish was required to select two of the Synod Global Challenges to incorporate into the Pastoral Plan. A third challenge was also indicated, but reflected more practical challenges specific to each parish, such as financial or church physical plant and facilities.

In addition to the Task Force planning process, 29 of the 82 parishes were selected to participate in the Disciple Maker Index survey offered through the Catholic Leadership Institute of Philadelphia. Holy Spirit was fortunate to be chosen to participate in the DMI survey and a tremendous number of parishioners completed the survey both online or in a paper format. The observations and information provided by the results of the Holy Spirit DMI Survey were extremely helpful in guiding the Task Force in the planning process.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Introduction to **Building a Bridge to the Future--The Pastoral Planning Process**. Next week, please return to read an in-depth presentation about the Disciple Maker Index survey.

An In-Depth Presentation on the Disciple Maker Index

We continue to communicate to parishioners the process and resulting information pertaining to Bishop Caggiano's, and the Diocesan Synod's, charge that parishes assess their strengths and challenges, and then using this data, to propose a two year pastoral plan. This second installment explains the Disciple Maker Index Survey and its valuable part in the process.

Earlier this year, the Diocese of Bridgeport requested 29 of its 82 parishes to participate in the Disciple Maker Index survey, offered by the Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI). CLI provides Pastoral leadership formation, consulting services to help parishes grow and flourish, and assistance in developing the Catholic leaders of tomorrow. Here in the Diocese of Bridgeport, their DMI survey gave participating parishes, including Holy Spirit, a wealth of data --that is, information--as Pastoral Plans were drawn up this year.

In the 21st century, for almost every industry, whether a large corporation, nonprofit, or even a sports team, data drives the measurement of performance and the planning of future success. While the Catholic Church is not primarily an institution, nevertheless, such information can help serve and retain parishioners along with the local community. Data can also aid parishes in their important efforts to evangelize.

A high participation or response rate to the DMI survey is essential to its success. Our parishioners answered this call enthusiastically. Although the DMI Survey was only available for approximately 3 weeks, 296 parishioners completed the survey. The vast majority (260) did so online.

While the DMI took just 10-15 minutes to complete, it provided an enormous amount of data. Any individual item, for example, "My parish helps me grow spiritually as a Catholic", can be cross referenced by age, gender, length of time as a parishioner, and more. CLI recognized that breaking down this data can be a large task and provided a two night training session that Msgr. Royal and members of the Task Force attended.

The training was informative and truly helped the Task Force understand how to read the DMI results properly. Holy Spirit parishioners who completed the DMI will recall that items on the survey were answered as follows: strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree and strongly disagree. The questions were posed this way for a specific reason--to derive the Net Promoter Score. The Net Promoter Score is used worldwide by organizations to measure customer--here, parishioner--satisfaction. While "satisfaction" is not the only measure of the Gospel being proclaimed and lived in a parish, it provides helpful information. In order to derive the Net Promoter Score, the "strongly agree" score is reduced by the scores of "neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree". A positive result is a strength in the results, and a negative score indicates an opportunity for growth.

Readers may notice that the score "agree" is not used in calculating the Net Promoter Score. This was most interesting in the training sessions. Clearly, "strongly agree" respondents are likely to actively influence others. The meaning is clear: respondents who feel strongly about their parish are most likely to promote it and actively invite others to join.

CLI chose three areas for Task Forces around the Diocese to consider carefully. These areas were 1) how the parish helps the parishioners on their Catholic journey, 2) does the parishioner recommend the parish, and 3) does the parish help spiritual growth. At Holy Spirit, areas of great strength were numbers 2 and 3, and number 1 was an opportunity for growth. As the reader will see in next week's bulletin, these results directly affect our Parish Pastoral Plan.

The Holy Spirit Task Force was very fortunate to have Eileen Garry amongst its members. Her business experience and depth of knowledge in the area of data is very strong. Eileen spent a great deal of time going through the enormous amount of data and surgically pulling out the results that would paint the clearest picture of our Parish and DMI results, including the three measures listed above. The Task Force is very grateful for Eileen's above and beyond efforts.

Overall, the results were positive for Holy Spirit. For example, in the area of "recommend parish", our Net Promoter Score was a very strong 91. There is always room to serve Christ and each other even more effectively. The DMI survey gave the Holy Spirit Task Force a powerful tool to drive our planning and efforts to write the Pastoral Plan.

Thank you for taking the time to read this In-Depth presentation on the **Disciple Maker Index** survey. Next week, please return to read about the final Holy Spirit Pastoral Plan, recently approved by Bishop Caggiano.

Building a Bridge to Our Future: The Church of the Holy Spirit Pastoral Plan: In September, the Holy Spirit Task Force submitted the final draft of the Parish Pastoral Plan to Bishop Caggiano. The process included: 1) An examination of the "Parish Snapshot". This allowed the Task Force to examine trends in areas such as registered parishioners or students in Religious Education. 2) The completion of the "Parish Self-Assessment & Planning Questionnaire", identifying parish strengths and weaknesses. 3) A review of the data received from the DMI Survey. 4) Task Force meetings to organize this information and prayerfully identify the three challenges to incorporate into the Pastoral Plan.

Two of these challenges were required to be chosen from the Synod Challenges. The Task Force selected Liturgy & Worship, and Family Life. These were chosen as a result of the DMI survey. Specifically at Holy Spirit, the data showed there was opportunity for growth and improvement in these areas. The third challenge is Buildings and Facilities. While Holy Spirit is a vibrant parish community, our physical plant is aging and inadequate for all of our increasing activities and ministries. Next was to develop specific action steps in order to execute these three challenges and bring them into practice. The action steps are the essence of the Pastoral Plan and its two-year initiative. Please note that each action step is supported by either data or evidence.

Liturgy & Worship

1. The formation of a Welcoming Committee to ensure that new families feel to be valued members of the Holy Spirit community immediately upon joining the parish.
2. The incorporation of the students in Religious Education into liturgies. This includes participation in Mass as well as hospitality. We look to engage and empower our youth--the future of our parish.
3. The introduction of Faith Witness into the Holy Spirit Community. Holy Spirit will invite parishioners and other speakers to share their inspirational stories of faith via testimony at Mass, when appropriate, as well as social media channels such as the Holy Spirit e-Newsletter and Facebook.

Family Life

1. The creation of an early childhood group that will allow parents the opportunity to deepen their faith and build relationships with fellow parents. The children will begin to develop friendships and learn through fun faith-based crafts or activities.
2. The development of more social activities for our parishioners of all ages in order to encourage a deepening relationship between all members of Holy Spirit.
3. Further development of charitable opportunities for parishioners. The establishment of SOUL Ministry has already begun this step.

Buildings and Facilities

1. The establishment of a Building and Grounds committee. This committee will develop a plan to identify short and long-term goals for our physical plant. Safety, efficiency, space, cost and accessibility issues will be considered. This will empower parishioners in a partnership with Holy Spirit to plan for the future.
2. To establish a formal initiative between the Parish Council, the Finance Committee and the new Buildings and Grounds Committee. The combined competencies of these three groups will provide the technical know-how and financial guidance to inform and plan for the maintenance and enhancement of our physical plant in a timely and fiscally responsible manner.

The Pastoral Plan for Holy Spirit was approved by the Bishop a few weeks after submission. The work, however, is just beginning. The next two years will be dynamic ones for Holy Spirit as the new Pastoral Plan is put into action. Our success depends on a collaborative effort between the clergy and all parishioners. Our goal is to strengthen Holy Spirit, our parishioners, and our faith in Christ. We ask everyone to pray for the Church of the Holy Spirit as we undertake this journey together.