

Diocese of Bridgeport Parish Pastoral Plan “Building a Bridge to the Future”

Part One: Introductory Information

Parish:

St. John - Darien

Pastor:

Father Frank Hoffmann

Date:

September 28, 2016

Parish Task Force Members:

Leadership Position:

- 1) Father Frank Hoffmann
- 2) Mike Barston
- 3) George Benitez
- 4) Jean Benitez
- 5) Marilyn Dolcetti
- 6) Bill Frazier
- 7) Bill Rooney
- 8) Peter Roux
- 9) Anne van Geldern

Pastor

Parish Trustee

Signature of the Pastor: _____

Pastoral Challenge #1: Worksheets for Parish Goals and Action Steps

A. Pastoral Challenge to be addressed:

1. Family Life

B. Rationale for Choosing this Priority Area:

We have identified a need to strengthen families within our Parish community and to integrate Parish life and family life more thoroughly.

Statement of the First Goal to be achieved:

To integrate family life and Parish life as fully as possible by adapting and introducing new Parish activities, including recognitions in the form of focused homilies and prayer intentions during Sunday liturgies, to the events and needs of family life. In that regard, our two Pastoral challenges-family life and liturgy and worship-are related in mutually reinforcing ways.

1) Action Step# 1 to achieve the Goal:

Our Parish will send out a personal invitation to all families for whom we have email or physical addresses noting that St. John's has undertaken two primary goals as part of the implementation of the Diocesan Synod: Family Ministry and Liturgical Participation. We will explain that St. John's seeks to engage all members of each family at each stage of their lives, to support each member's spiritual journey, and to invite the participation of all families in our Parish community. We will also attempt to "meet people where they are" and to draw them into our Parish family.

Summary Information for Action Step #1:

- Timeline for completion : late November 2016
- Responsible person/Task Force: Family Life Committee
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None

2) Action Step #2 to achieve Goal:

In parallel, we will form a Family Life Committee to address the interests and needs of families within our Parish and community. We will promote Parish activities that

reflect the “cadence” of family life so that a member’s participation in the Parish is entwined with their own family development. The faith community within the Parish should be an extension of the faith community within Parishioners’ families, with the Parish’s recognizing, applauding, and sympathizing with life’s developments within the family.

For example, we will consider addressing during the homilies and prayer intentions of Sunday liturgies, on a regularly scheduled basis throughout the liturgical year, the mileposts of family members as they proceed through school and adult life: the beginning of the school year (a “convocation” Mass), wedding anniversaries, All Souls Day Remembrance, graduation (a “commencement” Mass), and the like. We may also honor Catholic family life during a designated liturgy by elaborating on the full meaning of conjugal love and the importance of the marital union to durable and cohesive families.

Summary Information for Action Step #2:

- Timeline for completion : early November 2016 and ongoing
- Responsible person/Task Force: February
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None

Pastoral Challenge #2: Worksheets for Parish Goals and Action Steps

A. Pastoral Challenge to be addressed:

2. Liturgy and Worship

B. Rationale for Choosing this Priority Area:

We identified a need to renew participation in, and the love of, the sacred liturgy and the communal worship of God by our immediate and extended Parish.

- a. We wish to renew in our Parishioners who attend Mass regularly and communicate to those who do not that the Mass is a sacred act that offers a unique opportunity to serve our primary purpose in life: to glorify God.*
- b. We believe that the very acts of participating in the sacred liturgy of the Mass and in Parish worship are among the most effective responses to the secular trend in our society that is sapping participation in so many Parishes. If we can attract a significant*

percentage of Catholics simply to attend Mass, to embrace the divine reality by their actions, and to pray in a community of faith, we believe we can contribute meaningfully to stemming the strong tide of secularism.

- c. *Conscious participation in the Mass and other liturgical events can provide a profound catechesis about the fundamental propositions of both the faith and moral teachings of Catholicism.*

C. Statement of the Second Goal to be achieved:

Further to our rationale for choosing Liturgy and Worship as a Pastoral challenge, we wish to achieve the goal of renewing in our Parishioners an appreciation of the Mass as (i) the sacred and proper worship of God, (ii) the fulfillment of our primary purpose, which is to glorify God, and (iii) the source and summit of our Christian life. In doing so, we hope to communicate to our Parishioners that attendance at, and active participation in, the Mass renews and deepens our relationship with God. Participating in the Eucharist allows us “to touch eternity” and restore a spiritual strength that may have been weakened by the demands and distractions of our daily lives. Our quantifiable goal or aspiration is to increase Mass attendance by 5 percent against the most recent baseline.

1) Action Step# 1 to achieve Second Goal:

We will seek to communicate to our Parish our collective effort to emphasize the sacredness of our weekly and daily liturgies and, more generally, in our Parish worship activities. We will continue, and consider enhancing, our already significant offering of devotions, especially during the major liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter), and introducing periodic Eucharistic adoration.

We will attempt to support family prayer at home by providing suggestions, resources, and programs, particularly during the major liturgical seasons, that will enable families to bring their faith and prayer into their home life during the week. By doing this, we seek to encourage faith and prayer in all parts of life, not just at church on Sunday. We will work to introduce ways and opportunities for prayer that can be used even if only two family members are present.

Summary Information for Action Step #1:

- Timeline for completion: February 2017 and ongoing

- Responsible person/Task Force: Liturgy Outreach
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None

2) Action Step #2 to achieve Second Goal:

We will form a Liturgy Outreach, which will suggest strategies for reaching Parishioners who are not regularly attending Mass. The Outreach will use intercessory prayer and perhaps some of the strategies noted below to reignite the faith of our Parishioners.

Recommended activities may include:

- a) An assessment of Mass attendance during periods of the year, either by direct counting or through an analysis of weekly collections. During seasons of relatively higher attendance, the priest or a member of the Parish can use the ambo to extend a special invitation to those in attendance for regular participation in our Parish life.
- b) Special attention to inviting the many attendees on Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Easter, and Christmas to a more regular participation in our Parish community.
- c) Consider a family-invite program. Encourage family members to ask other members of their family or a friend who are not regular attendees to come to Mass on a given Sunday. Hold a coffee hour after mass and encourage those who may not be “regulars” to hear their concerns for not attending more frequently.

Summary Information for Action Step #2:

- Timeline for completion : January 2017 and Ongoing
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor/Pastoral Planning Task Force
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None

Temporalities and Administrative Challenge: Worksheets for Parish Goals and Action Steps

A. **Temporalities and Administrative Challenge to be addressed:**

1. **Community Life**

B. **Rationale for Choosing this Priority Area:**

In addition to the need to support families, liturgy, and worship within our Parish, we have identified the need to enhance the presence and strength of the Catholic “neighborhood” surrounding our Parish through both personal and technological means.

C. **Statement of the Third Goal:**

To support Community Life, we will increase our visibility among our Parishioners and those who may become our Parishioners through print, electronic and social media as well as work with the various organizations in Darien. We would like to increase our community presence through attendance at non-Parish activities to meet Parishioners outside of the church environs (sporting events).

1) Action Step# 1 to achieve Third Goal:

We will form a “newcomers” group to welcome new Parishioners of similar ages and family profiles into the Parish’s social and spiritual life. This might include hosting a cocktail reception at the Rectory for targeted young families to encourage more engagement in the Parish. In addition, we might arrange pot luck suppers among new and established Parishioners of all ages.

Summary Information for Action Step #1:

- Timeline for completion: April 2017
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor/Pastoral Planning Task Force
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): None

2) Action Step #2 to achieve Third Goal:

Create a print, electronic, and social media team.

Our Parish will deploy “One Parish” mobile app and make it available to every Catholic family in our Community. URL.

Proactive communication with various information sources such as the Darien Times, Darien News Review, and the Darien Patch as to Parish activities and, from time to time, news of Parish events would bring our Parish more into the mainstream of our larger community’s consciousness.

We may explore the possibility of collaborating with other Parishes to retain professional technology assistance in upgrading our website and related electronic engagement with Parishioners.

Summary Information for Action Step #2:

- Timeline for completion: February 2017 and Ongoing
- Responsible person/Task Force: Pastor/Pastoral Planning Task Force
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Consult Communications office as appropriate

3) Action Step #3 to achieve Third Goal:

The clergy of the Parish, especially the Pastor, will try to become more involved with, is visible in, the community at large, particularly in events at schools and other town-wide events.

Summary Information for Action Step #3:

- Timeline for completion: November 2016 and Ongoing
- Responsible person/Task Force: Parish Clergy
- Diocesan Office assisting (if any): Consult Communications office as appropriate
