



Pastoral Council Update



Issue 6
Summer 2017

Great Resources for Pastoral Councils

Many of you Chairs are familiar with the 'Pastoral Council' page on the DOR website, <http://www.dor.org/index.cfm/pastoral-services/pastoral-councils/>. It holds the Pastoral Council Prayers, the *Update* newsletters and DOR guidelines for various concerns. What you may not know is that there are also all kinds of valuable resources on the 'Pastoral Resources and Planning' page at <http://oprp.dor.org/> that can be a huge help to parishes. These include three different ministry/skills assessment tools, maps, and information that provide training and material for mission-oriented planning at multiple levels.

SERVICE

Parishes that live their mission of Service, embody the model of Christ by actively providing for the needs of those who dwell in their boundaries and developing community relationships that are life giving and transformative. Vibrant parishes should collaborate with other Catholics, Christians, people of faith, and people of good will to reach out to those in need, in order that they know they are loved by God. They do so in a way that invites others to participate and take on leadership roles within the community.

	Don't know	How Well Provided				Check the 2-3 that are the most important
		Not At All	Very Well			
The mission of the parish is evident in all we do	Don't know	1	2	3	4	5
The parish is active in the community	Don't know	1	2	3	4	5
Outreach/programs are offered for people with specific needs, (divorced, separated, single parents, seniors, etc.)	Don't know	1	2	3	4	5
The parish promotes respect for human life	Don't know	1	2	3	4	5
Parishioners are encouraged to work for social justice	Don't know	1	2	3	4	5
The parish offers outreach to the poor, afflicted, lonely and refugees	Don't know	1	2	3	4	5
The parish cooperates with Catholic Charities and others in the community to meet local needs (food pantry, blood drives, etc.)	Don't know	1	2	3	4	5
The parish fosters outreach and care through common activity with neighboring parishes	Don't know	1	2	3	4	5
A relationship is nurtured with local leaders of other major world religions (Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism)	Don't know	1	2	3	4	5

Before you go to the next page, please circle the 2-3 that need the most improvement

Community Needs Assessment. Every few years it is helpful to administer the *Community Needs Assessment*, a survey given to community leaders, public officials, and business professionals, etc. The summary details the key needs and challenges of the local community. This enables the parish to identify gaps and potential new ministry opportunities, ensuring that the Catholic outreach is relevant and effective.

Spiritual Gifts Assessment. Often used as part of a stewardship program, this is a fun (and free!) tool that encourages parishioners to explore their spiritual gifts and talents in a way that connects them back to specific ministries within the Church. This 10-15-minute assessment is taken online resulting in a report that can be used, with the help of a pastor or parish staff, to discern how a parishioner can best exercise their gifts in the parish. Try it for yourselves! ([click here](#)).



Diocese of Rochester

Parish Ministry Assessment.

This tool enables the pastoral council to evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of current ministries. It helps identify which ministries are vital, which have outlived their original purpose and which need to be added to meet changing demographics and needs. You will find a sample survey that you can tailor to your particular parish setting. There is an outline for a suggested process and the best part is that the DOR can create a Survey Monkey if you want an online version.

Interactive maps of the different deaneries, with names of parishes, hospital, jails, prisons and schools

Demographics and reports for each deanery . Find out the profile of those who lives in your deanery. What is the medium age? What is the likely faith receptivity? What are the biggest challenges?

Please contact Shannon Loughlin, Ph.D. at Shannon.loughlin@dor.org with questions or to discuss ways to use this material in your parish.

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Parish Events around the Diocese

Dan Marchellus, Chair of the **St. Agnes/St. Paul/St. Rose** pastoral council sent out a letter to the cluster parishioners outlining two initiatives. The first was to establish a study group to read *Rebuilt* and explore how to get people to come back into the Church. The second focused more on leadership and why people would want to follow those on a faith journey. This group will be guided by material from Simon Sinek's book, *Why* and his TED talk, "How Leaders Inspire Action" that can be seen at: <https://goo.gl/BpkDla>. These initiatives are to help "grow the congregation in purpose and numbers... and to build an environment that will be a strong magnet for current, past and future parishioners."

Kelley Peron from **Blessed Trinity/St. Patrick's** in Owego reports that last year the primary focus of the combined parishes was to increase the Spirituality of parishioners. The following are a few of the activities they initiated:

- Unlocked the Churches to allow for morning to evening visits daily at all four of the parishes
- Encouraged parishioners to spend "One Minute of Face Time Daily with the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament"
- Increased reverence for the Eucharist with Quiet Time before and after Mass. The challenge here is to bridge the dichotomy of those who wish to meditate/pray/worship in church and those who are secluded during the week and it's the only time they see their friends.
- Multiple Bible studies offered throughout the year
- Sunday Night Joy – Christian Faith and Fellowship. A monthly covered dish dinner and uplifting faith program – new topics each month.

To celebrate a spirit of community and evangelization, the Parish Pastoral Council at **St. Paul's, Webster**, sponsored a 'Bring a Friend to Church' weekend in May. 13 people brought others. We had hoped for more, but still feel the event was a success. We are currently celebrating our parish's 50th Anniversary. Bishop Matano celebrated Mass with us on Pentecost and we had a social afterwards with cake. The Bishop was very engaging and it was a wonderful event.

Fostering a Welcoming Community

The *National Catholic Reporter* recently highlighted a parish near Toledo, St. John XXIII, that has recently grown to over 4,000 worshippers, the median age of which is 35. (July 6, 2017). The pastor, Fr. Herb Weber, explains that part of the growth is due to the expansion of that area, but a key factor, he believes, is the dynamic and welcoming spirit of the parish. "It's not just people from the area. There are people coming back to the church and others who had one foot in and one foot out," Fr. Weber told NCR. The parish goal is to personally welcome every person who comes through the doors. or looks at their website. One of the first things you see on St. John XXIII's homepage is: "First time visitor? We'd love to meet you this weekend".

We hear again and again about the importance of fostering a culture of welcome in our parishes. Just for fun, I looked at several of the DOR's parish website homepages and noticed the first words that jumped out.

"All are welcome. All are part of the fabric that makes us Church."

"News from Rome..."

"Welcome, good people!"

"Donate Here."

"All are welcome, especially YOU!"

"Mass and Confession"

"We invite people to visit and warmly welcome those who desire to share in our community life. "

"The Year of the Eucharist".

"This Week's Bulletin"

"About Us"

"All are welcome to our parish! We are so pleased that you chose to celebrate with us this weekend. We warmly invite you to active participation in our liturgical celebration."

Fr. Jim Lawlor of Our Lady of Lourdes/St. Anne parishes in Rochester likes to say, "You never know how much courage it takes for some people to walk through those doors. We need to be there to welcome them with openness and a great sense of hospitality. "

What are the first words your visitors see and hear?

Pastoral Council Prayers

Opening and Closing prayers for the pastoral councils are sent via emails to the Chairs quarterly, but they can also be accessed on the DOR website at: <http://www.dor.org/index.cfm/pastoral-services/pastoral-councils/> or *Pastoral Services to Pastoral Councils to Resources*.