

ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK



PARISH PRINCIPLES

Task Force on Parishes
April 8, 2003

PARISH PRINCIPLES

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PARISH PRINCIPLES

Spiritual Life

The Christian faithful are those who have been incorporated in Christ through baptism and, thus, constituted as the people of God. As sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic and royal office in their own manner, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church. The Christian is called to fulfill the mission in the world, according to each one's state in life. (Canon 204)

Basic to the mission is the spiritual foundation of each Christian. The individual Christian finds oneself in a parish community where that person is nourished, supported, and formed. These elements are found in worship, evangelization, stewardship, baptismal call and call to holiness.

Worship:

1. Liturgy is a priority in parish life and responds to the riches of the culture and heritage of the parish.

Indicators:

- Preaching speaks to the life of the parishioners
- Eucharist is celebrated with prayerfulness and dignity
- Parish diversity is available to present good liturgy
- Various forms of devotional prayer are fostered.

2. Sacramental celebrations reflect the cultural heritage of the people assembled.

Indicators:

- RCIA is the formation experience for those adults seeking the Sacraments of Initiation
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is encouraged with adequate times available
- Marriage preparation is sufficient
- Anointing of the Sick is celebrated communally and when requested
- Funerals are celebrated with compassion and understanding
- Archdiocesan Policies on sacraments of initiation are followed.

Parish Principles – Spiritual Life (continued)

Worship: (continued)

3. Structures for preparing and caring for the liturgy are in place and operating.

Indicators:

- People are asked to participate and are trained in a variety of liturgical ministries
- There is a liturgy coordinator and/or parish liturgy committee
- All liturgical ministers communicate regularly.

4. Music is recognized as essential in liturgy and there is financial support.

Indicators:

- Parish music ministers enable the assembly in its sung prayer
- There are worthy instruments able to support assembly's singing
- There is a competent director of liturgical music
- Choice of music reflects diverse culture and spiritual traditions in the parish.

Evangelization:

5. Evangelization is recognized as an essential aspect of the life and mission of the parish.

Indicators:

- Parish leadership and membership is formed in a vision of evangelization
- The parish encourages racial and ethnic harmony
- Newcomers are welcomed
- Efforts are made to reach out to the alienated, inactive and the unchurched.

Stewardship:

6. Parishioners give of their time, talent and treasure to support the Church's mission.

Indicators:

- There is ongoing stewardship education occurring
- Obstacles to promoting stewardship are faced and dealt with openly.

Parish Principles – Spiritual Life (continued)

Baptismal Call:

7. Children, youth and adults are made aware of the various options for professional Church ministry.

Indicators:

- Vocational education is an integral part of religious education and parochial school curriculum
- Vocations Office is welcomed to share information
- Parishioners are celebrated in their vocational response in marriage, single life, celibate life.

Call to Holiness:

8. The parish supports and nurtures the spiritual life of the parish community.

Indicators:

- There are opportunities for individuals and families to join others for prayerful support
- Programs for personal spiritual formation are provided on a parish and/or inter-parish basis
- Diverse spiritual traditions present within a parish are appreciated and fostered
- There is an outreach to learn the spiritual needs of the parish.

Education and Formational Life

Programs of life-long education and catechetical formation, including sacramental preparation and Catholic schools shall be available through cooperative efforts between and among parishes, if not provided on a stand alone basis. It is essential that the parish have the ability to foster a sense of vocation, of eagerness to live out the basic baptismal commitment to service whatever one's state in life. A parish does this through education and catechetical formation.

Parish Principles – Education and Formational Life (continued)

Education and Formation:

9. The parish implements a comprehensive plan for the religious formation and education of the entire faith community.

Indicators:

- A comprehensive well-integrated catechetical plan exists which provides opportunities for all parishioners to encounter the Gospel message
- Adequate funds, resources, staff and space are allocated to implement the catechetical plan
- Catechetical programs are evaluated on a regular basis
- Assistance is provided to parents in understanding their role as ministers to their children in the formation of Christian values.

Parochial School:

10. An essential ministry is to nurture the faith of families through parochial schools; either in a parish, co-sponsored or a neighboring school.

Indicators:

- Parents are encouraged to be involved in the Catholic school
- Pastors and pastoral staff of the parish are involved with the school
- Cooperative planning exists between school and parish staff for sacramental preparation
- If in a co-sponsored situation, the parish supports the school spiritually and in other appropriate ways.

Educational Leaders:

11. All catechists have appropriate preparation as well as practical experience.

Indicators:

- Parish Directors of Religious Education have appropriate education, ability and experience to provide catechist formation and effective administration of religious education programs
- All catechists are skilled and knowledgeable
- Catechists are intrinsic to the Gospel, active in parish life and faithful to the teaching of the Church
- Parish priests and permanent deacons are actively involved in ongoing formation.

Parish Principles – Education and Formational Life (continued)

Catechetical Programs:

12. The programs and materials used in religious education are consistent with Church teachings.

Indicators:

- The essential elements of the Christian message are faithfully presented
- Catechesis encourages service and works towards social justice
- Catechesis fosters ecumenism
- Catechetical programs imply models and methodologies which are sensitive to the abilities and the local cultural needs of participants
- There are active sacramental preparation programs

Life of Service

Members of the parish are called to become ministers through their reception of the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. The most significant place for that ministry to take place is in the everyday life of parishioners seeking to renew society with the spirit of the Gospel. The parish community must also acknowledge and promote ministry which is directed to, for and with the sick, the dying, the disabled, the afflicted, the lonely, the alienated, and the unborn. The parish must also promote family life, catechesis, education and action on behalf of justice for all.

Social Teaching Education:

13. The parish provides for the education and formation of its people in the social teachings and tradition of the Church.

Indicators:

- Religious education programs integrate social teaching at every level
- Racial and ethnic harmony is addressed as a priority
- An organized program of instruction in social teaching has been implemented discussing issues in light of Catholic Social Teaching

Parish Principles – Life of Service (continued)

Public Life:

14. The ministry of the parish reflects political and public dimensions of our faith, encouraging the faithful to work for justice in their own public lives.

Indicators:

- The call to be responsible citizens is acknowledged and highlighted
- There is a social justice committee in place
- The social justice committee has an agenda of social change.

Responding to Human Needs:

15. The parish focuses on the human needs of its own members and the needs all the poor and marginalized.

Indicators:

- Organizations are in place to provide service in response to human needs, e.g. food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, or in support of parishes or organizations which have these services
- There are programs which minister to the sick, bereaved and homebound
- Parishes reach out to the poor, the newcomer, the needy and the disabled
- Parish is aware of and makes use of local, national and international helping efforts
- Parish responds to needs of families in crisis.

Respect for Life:

16. Concern and respect for life is integrated into parochial life

Indicators:

- Educational opportunities concerning respect for life issues, from conception to natural death, are offered to the parish
- A consistent ethic of life is promoted and expressed for those who are most vulnerable in particular the unborn
- Christian family life is fostered in all its dimensions (traditional, single-parent, widowed and never married).
- Non-violent behavior, language and life choice is fostered in the family.

Parish Principles – Life of Service (continued)

Ecumenical and Interfaith:

17. The parish engages in education for Christian unity and in ecumenical activities.

Indicators:

- Parish leadership is represented in local ecumenical associations
- The parish conducts and participates in ecumenical services
- Parish leadership promotes understanding of other non-Christian religious groups, particularly those represented in the local community
- The specific interfaith concerns of spouses and families are met.

Parish Community Life

The parish has an awareness of its youth, young adult and adult members. There is an effort on the part of the parish to actively include all members of the parish in the various activities that make up the parish.

Youth Ministry:

18. There is a comprehensive pastoral ministry for youth.

Indicators:

- The parish alone or with other parishes has a qualified Youth Minister
- The parish provides for training and formation opportunities and materials for all those involved in youth ministry
- All adults who minister with youth are faithful Roman Catholics, witnesses of the Gospel and active in parish life.

Young Adult Ministry:

19. The parish community fosters pastoral ministry with young adults.

Indicators:

- An effort is maintained to engage young adults in all aspects of parish life
- Young adults are encouraged to engage in activities which enhance their faith life
- There is a program for young adults who are beginning their faith journey.

Parish Principles – Parish Community Life (continued)

Women's/Men's Groups:

20. Effective ministry to the women and men of the parish is present.

Indicators:

- Membership in parish organizations includes people of all representative ages and neighborhoods within a parish
- Meetings include prayer, information, education, entertainment and social fellowship
- The activities of the women's and men's clubs respond to the concerns of the individual, the family, the parish, the community and the archdiocese.

Family Life:

21. There is a comprehensive pastoral outreach to the families who are part of the parish community.

Indicators:

- The parish helps make the connection between the parish community and the church of the home
- Parish programs, policies, ministries and services take family needs into account by providing before and after school care, Rainbows for All God's Children, etc.
- An advocate for family life is present to parish staff.

Administrative Life

The parish community shall ensure proper and just fiscal administration, business, personnel and property management in response to the parish community's commitment of time, talent and treasure.

It is important that the Finance Council, the Pastor and Pastoral Staff and the Parish Pastoral Council maintain a collaborative relationship. These areas of leadership must take responsibility for being creative in responding to the needs of parishioners.

Parish Principles – Administrative Life (continued)

Finance Council:

22. There is a Finance Council in place that consults with the Pastor on major financial decisions, budget development and major maintenance schedule.

Indicators:

- The Finance Council is in place and consults with the Pastor
- There is a finance plan of action in place
- There is a study in place that analyzes the costs associated with the operating parish facilities and find such operations cost efficient
- Parish priorities are reflected in financial decisions
- The focus of the Financial Council reflects an interest in both managing costs and developing revenue.

Pastoral Council Leadership:

23. Pastoral leadership encourages the fullest possible collaboration of clergy, religious and laity in their common mission.

Indicators:

- The Parish Pastoral Council is in place which allows participation of parishioners and staff in the planning and decision-making processes
- The Council reflects the social and ethnic mix of the parish
- Council members are encouraged to receive training and formation as parish leaders
- The Parish Pastoral Council evaluates and responds to the needs of the parish.

Financial Stability:

24. The parish is able to support its ministerial outreach and maintain the parish facilities.

Indicators:

- The parish offers just and fair wages to its employees
- The parish is able to pay its debts within a reasonable time
- All Archdiocesan financial obligations are met
- The parish is not overly dependent on special fundraising activities
- The parish ensures proper fiscal administration, business management and maintenance.

Parish Principles –

Pastoral Life Ministry

There can be no ministry without ministers. Clergy and religious have traditionally ministered to others. Today, we acknowledge that all baptized persons, in addition to the primary call to evangelize and transform the world, are also called to serve within the Church. Some are called to official ministries.

It is important that the Finance Council, the Pastor and Pastoral Staff and the Parish Pastoral Council maintain a collaborative relationship. These areas of leadership must take responsibility for being creative in responding to the needs of parishioners.

Ministerial Plan:

25. A ministerial plan is in place which ensures there are competent people prepared to meet the ministerial needs of the parish.

Indicators:

- There is a parish plan or a cooperative plan with other parishes to meet the ministerial needs of the parish(es)
- There is a knowledge of the ever changing needs of all those to whom the parish is called to minister.

Families Per Priest:

26. A parish should have no more than 1200 registered families per priest and no less than 400.

Indicators:

- How do parishes measure up to this principle?

Professional Pastoral Staff:

27. Each parish professional ministerial staff person is fully qualified and approved by the appropriate Archdiocesan Office. Such staff are: Director of Religious Education; School Principal and Teachers; Liturgy Coordinator; Church Musician; Youth Minister.

Parish Principles – Pastoral Life Ministry (continued)

Professional Pastoral Staff (continued)

Indicators:

- Pastoral Staff are recommended by and/or processed by appropriate Archdiocesan Office
- Pastoral Staff are encouraged to participate in Archdiocesan, regional and national formation
- Credentials are examined as part of interview
- All references are followed through on to ensure proper background
- There is in place adequate support staff to work with Professional Pastoral Staff.

Parish Staff:

28. Parish staff meets regularly to pray together, share their experiences and develop administrative decisions and direction.

Indicators:

- Parish staff meet at least once a month
- Prayer is an integral part of each meeting
- An agenda is provided before each meeting
- Decisions are made that enable the implementation of a direction to move forward
- Opportunities are provided for relaxation and socializing with the staff
- Summary notes are shared after each meeting to keep a record of decisions made.

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Parish Principles

Archdiocese of Newark / Task Force on Parishes

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