

## **A VISION FOR TOMORROW'S PARISHES AND SCHOOLS DIOCESE OF LANSING**

How will we ensure that the sacramental, pastoral, and leadership needs of our 97 communities are being/will be met adequately? Sixteen centuries ago, St John Chrysostom wrote the following: *"You cannot pray at home as at church, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of priests."* [Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2179]

Nourished and sent forth by the Eucharist with priestly leadership, the Body of Christ serves others in a wide variety of ministries and services: teaching, healing, evangelizing, building up neighborhoods, serving the poor, advocating the refugee and immigrant, assisting the elderly, youth, those with disabilities, the deaf and the hard of hearing. Faithful and prudent stewardship of the spiritual gifts, human resources, financial assets and parish buildings demand that we evaluate and prayerfully discern how we function as the Body of Christ.

Education and formation in the Faith should be a primary activity of every parish. Whether this formation comes through a Catholic school or a traditional religious education program each parish is called to invest its time, talent and treasure in these activities. Quality formation programs bring vitality and leadership to the entire parish. These programs also insure that the Church will have adult members who are capable of making life decisions based on the teachings and traditions of the Church. Those parishes that have a Catholic school should ensure that their school is affordable, accessible and available to all. Religious Education programs should encompass all parishioners regardless of age and should be held at times that will allow for the maximum attendance of its participants. The mission of both a Catholic school and religious education program should be to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

These descriptors describe the goals for which we strive: parishes that joyfully celebrate and faithfully serve the mystery of Jesus Christ.

### **SECTION I**

The celebration of the Eucharist, the central focus within each parish, is complemented by a sacramental and prayer life that brings faith alive in each person.

#### *Indicators/Descriptors:*

- Eucharistic liturgies are prayerful, reverent, and relevant to the people in their everyday lives; people feel welcome, music is inviting, led well and of excellent quality.
- Lay ministers are active and prepared participants in the liturgical, sacramental, and prayer life of the parish.

- People in the parish are formed through the celebration of the Eucharist and Sacraments.
- Various forms of prayer and devotions are well planned, offered and encouraged throughout the liturgical seasons.
- The work of evangelization is intentional and is present in all parish ministries.
- The parish as an active catechumenal ministry that initiates and/or receives adults and children into the Catholic Church.
- Active participation in the sacramental life of the parish lends itself to active participation in parish and community life.

## SECTION II

The parish is engaged in the work of Christ through effective catechesis, religious formation, personal conversion and service.

### *Indicators/Descriptors:*

- Catholic religious formation is provided for all parishioners – from the very young to older adults.
- The parish provides a quality Religious Education program for students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools; it is either sponsored by the parish or in collaboration with neighboring parishes.
- The parish provides opportunities to serve the parish community and the larger community through active ministries and community life: parish social needs and concerns; outreach to the poor, immigrants and refugees; services to the elderly, those suffering from illness and injustice, persons with disabilities, and the deaf and hard of hearing.
- The needs of those in nursing homes, homebound and hospitals are being met by an individual parish or in collaboration with neighboring parishes.
- The parish supports all vocations (priest, deacons, religious life, lay ministers, married persons, single persons) through awareness and formation.

Catholic schools supported by parishes meet enrollment expectations, operate with full classes, balanced budgets, and provide a quality education.

## SECTION III

The parish community has collaborated in developing a clear vision of what it wants the parish to become, has taken ownership of that vision and has developed a corresponding clear mission and a pastoral plan to carry out that vision.

*Indicators/Descriptors:*

- The parish has an active Parish Council that, under the leadership of the pastor/pastoral coordinator, serves as a keeper of the parish vision and the developer of the parish pastoral plan. (Canon 536)
- Stewardship is a way of life and an integral part of parish spirituality.
- The work of the parish is supported by parishioners' active participation through stewardship of their time, talent and treasure.

The parish can support a balanced budget and provide adequate resources for quality ministry.

*Indicators/Descriptors:*

- The parish has an active Finance Council to assist the pastor in managing parish finances. (Canon 537)
- Parish operates on a balanced budget. Income keeps pace with the increases in operating costs of the parish for the next 5 years.
- The parish can afford to hire professional lay staff.
- The parish is not depleting reserves or capital investments to maintain its operations.
- Cash reserves are adequate to support parish operations for a minimum of six months.

Facilities are maintained and sufficient for worship, ministry and parish life.

*Indicators/Descriptors:*

- Facilities support quality ministry.
- Persons with disabilities, deaf, hard of hearing and the elderly can access key services provided by the parish.
- The parish has a permanent church building with enough seating capacity. Church is aesthetically appealing and liturgically appropriate.
- Facilities are without major structural weaknesses that would limit their long-term use or put the health or safety of occupants at risk.
- Major repairs required in the next five years have been identified and a funding plan exists to ensure they are completed.