
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR PASTORAL TEAMS!



In February, 1999, a major new direction, supported by all diocesan councils, was taken regarding the future of our parish communities. The direction taken was that parish pastoral responsibility would no longer rest on one person alone but on a team of persons duly mandated by the bishop. Following consultation with the parishes, teams were appointed on June 15, 1999, to take effect August 15, 1999.

GENEROSITY AND NEW VIGOUR

While it is still too early to evaluate such a decision, we can still see that this new direction has been taken seriously and that it is supportive not only of Christ's mission among us but that it also brings new vigour to the task of evangelisation. The teams are asked to evaluate how "team life and work" are being experienced day-to-day; this is not only a mutual readjustment of different ways of doing things, but it is often a veritable rediscovery of the parish's mission, to give Christ the means he needs today to speak to our people, to help them, listen to them, and give them hope. The tasks which the pastor used to do alone are now shared by the team members.

A PRIVILEGED PLACE

The parish is the privileged place where the faithful have the possibility of experiencing the Church; this is Pope John Paul's deep conviction: *"Today in America as elsewhere in the world the parish is facing certain difficulties in fulfilling its mission. The parish needs to be constantly renewed on the basis of the principle that the parish must continue to be above all a Eucharistic community. This principle implies that parishes are called to be welcoming and fraternal, places of Christian initiation, of education in and celebration of the faith, open to the full range of charisms, services and ministries, organized in a communal and responsible way, capable of utilizing existing movements of the apostolate, attentive to the cultural diversity of the people, open to pastoral projects which go beyond the individual parish, and alert to the world in which they live."* [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, N°. 41]

TOO HIGH AN IDEAL

This short quote from Pope John Paul II on the parish is very powerful. Is it too high an ideal? I do not believe so. It is certain that the Pope, in his exhortation to the Churches of the Americas, does not minimise the challenges we must pick up together as baptised, confirmed, and ordained Christians. But in looking at the challenges he gives our parishes, we can state that at the heart of each of our Christian communities it is possible for us to experience in a concrete way what the Church of Christ is, thanks to the bonds of charity, welcome, and goodness we find there, to the celebrations which enliven us, to home- and parish-based religious education which is picking up momentum, and to the common projects which bring us together.

GETTING AT THE ESSENTIAL

Christ shows himself in a privileged manner in each of our Christian communities. It is there that Christians gather in the house of God as in their own home. Hence the usefulness and necessity, even, of a parish size

which fosters true human interaction, and which strongly promotes communion with one another. Within this human context it will be easier to gather together to listen to the Word of God, to reflect in this light on the many human problems, and to come up with realistic choices inspired by love of God.

A HOPE


A renewed parish will be able to continue raising high hopes. With the faithful it will be able to form a community, offer support to family life, overcome anonymity, welcome people and help them adjust to their surroundings and society. Such a parish will be able to promote a more personal evangelisation and even develop positive relationships with the other social, educational, and community agents.

DEMANDS FROM PASTORS

This type of parish will demand from those in charge that they be pastors who promote a deep experience of the living Christ, a missionary spirit, and a loving heart; this type of renewed parish will demand that they be pastors affirming of the spiritual life, and evangelisers who encourage participation. If the renewed parish needs the collaboration of lay people, it needs first of all facilitators of pastoral activity, pastors who can work with others and in teams. Pope John Paul commented: *"Parishes in America should be distinguished by their missionary spirit, which leads them to reach out to those who are far away."* [Ibid]

PARISH ANNUAL MEETINGS

The annual parish meetings taking place at this time of the year allow members of the community to evaluate their activities, especially regarding the main mission uniting them. These meetings are important information meetings on all that is being done and experienced in the community; they are occasions for listening and entering into dialogue with the parish pastoral team members, the parish pastoral council, and the different committees, so as to be knowledgeable of the work done and the projects adopted. These meetings are open to suggestions for the well-being of all the parishioners. These suggestions and other comments are passed on to those involved, for looking into and implementing, if necessary. May the parish pastoral teams find strength, courage, encouragement and solidarity from and with their brothers and sisters, and may they enthusiastically and boldly continue Christ's work! Have a good week!



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