
PRIORITIES AFFECTING OUR DAILY LIVES



It is more than ever a good thing, because of our baptism, to participate in the mission given to the diocesan Church, the mission of proclaiming to all the world the love of God shown to us in His Son, Jesus. It is no longer a question of re-evangelising, but rather of a “new evangelisation, new in its zeal, its methods, and its expression.” We are all called to take part in this new evangelisation, in the months ahead. It is a demanding mission, but so exciting and stimulating; no effort must be spared to welcome within us and in our community, and to pass on to our brothers and sisters this wonderful love of God, a love which truly is from age to age, especially during this 2002-2003 pastoral year. Pope John Paul II’s pastoral letter at the close of the Jubilee year draws up a challenging programme: a call to holiness, to a life of prayer, of listening to and sharing the Word of God, dedicated to the celebration of the sacraments – especially the Holy Eucharist and Penance – and a spirituality of communion.

FAMILY- AND PARISH-BASED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

One excellent way of proclaiming the love of God the Father is certainly to step up the implementation of family- and parish-based religious education at all levels, including adults. There is such wonderful work already being done in our families and parishes, on behalf of our young baptised and confirmed brothers and sisters! Several youth were surprised to meet the Source of Life, the Living God! Who can evaluate the invaluable experiences of fathers and mothers and grandparents sharing together with their young offspring who want to meet the One who loves and cherishes them so! Through the love which surrounds them, they discover the very love of God the Father. Yes, in daily acts of service, forgiveness, truthfulness, and trust, they discover that God who is All-Love, is very close to them. The diocesan and parish religious education coordinators are planning a diversified programme of catechist formation according to the different levels. They will continue to support and affirm religious educators in their own milieus. Their hope is to give meaning and a love and desire for parish community-based celebration, by encouraging and creating times of celebration. This is a vast field open to religious educators, liturgy committees, and parish pastoral teams. They are brand new approaches we shall need to investigate, in order to propose the faith to all, young and old. It will be an empowerment, in life! The way of services rendered, of the word shared, the way of inner prayer and bread broken! Families, parishes, organisations and youth groups will always be more highly valued ways for proclaiming Jesus the Living One, the Risen One who walks by our side.

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

Laying the foundation for parish and diocesan Youth and Family Pastoral Ministry will be one of the beautiful challenges of our Church, in the months to come. Is it not one of our noblest tasks, to evangelise our families, especially our youth, by helping them discover the person of Jesus Christ? Can’t our families become or become again living and “contagious” communities where the love of Jesus abounds? True, the family- and parish-based religious education will greatly contribute to this, but by establishing a diocesan youth and family pastoral ministry committee, by trying to ensure a pastoral presence in our high schools, community colleges, and universities, are we not boldly aiming at a major thrust of the new evangelisation?

PASTORAL RESTRUCTURING

Carrying on the pastoral restructuring through our quality of life and work within the different parish pastoral teams, is one of the most effective ways of ensuring the success of our mission. The new evangelisation requires good Gospel workers. It is imperative that we immediately seek in our milieu the priests of tomorrow: without them, there can be no parish! We shall have to discover anew the indispensable role of the priest in proclaiming the Word and celebrating the sacraments within the unity of the community. It is now that we must also find other pastoral agents who contribute to the growth and development of the entire community's Christian life. It is right now that we must find baptised and confirmed persons who will one day become jointly responsible for the ministry in their parish, who will ensure the faith education, celebration of the sacraments and community prayer, the fellowship and the transformation of their milieu according to the Gospel, thus making sure that no one is left out of our gatherings and activities. We must therefore ensure right away that we have a sufficient number of qualified pastoral personnel: our vocation ministry office, in collaboration with each Christian community, will find a great deal of work cut out for them!

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We shall have to find appropriate ways of financing our priorities of religious education, family and youth ministry, and pastoral training programmes. There are already several parishes that have a difficult time making ends meet, especially during this period of enormous increase in insurance costs. We must every day be grateful to all those who on a weekly basis help with the upkeep of our religious buildings; it is important that we keep them beautiful, welcoming, and in excellent condition. Still, besides investing in wood and stone, we must think about our pastoral projects. A feasibility study is already in progress, regarding a financial campaign in the coming year, to come to the aid of our thirty-two parishes.

A CERTAINTY

"The mission of evangelisation which the Risen Lord gave to his Church, carries the certainty founded on his promise that he continues to live and act among us. 'Remember that I am with you always, even to the end of time.' This mysterious presence of Christ in his Church is for the Church a guarantee of success in carrying out her allotted task. This presence also makes possible our encounter with him as the Son sent by the Father, as the Lord of Life who gives us his Spirit. A renewed encounter with Jesus Christ will make all the members of the Church in America aware of the fact that they are called to continue the mission of the Redeemer on their soil" (John Paul II).

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