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Jesuit Conference
of Canada and the United States

Proposed Way of Proceeding for Parish Planning

After the May 2015 presentation to the Jesuit Conference and conversation with the Conference's Pastoral Committee (PPI), the Pastoral Assistants acted on the mandate to consult with provincial assistants and pastors. The assistants sought a way of engaging parishes in self-studies that would make use of the Models and Lenses identified in the Strategic Planning for Parishes.

Pastors suggested that the assistants promote a Parish Examen conducted by the staffs, councils, and ministry leaders of each parish. The process would begin an invitation to prayer over the Parish followed by a communal Examen. The second step would be to review identified consolations and discern the path the Parish leadership feels called to take. Moving from the "who will be served" to the "how we will serve" will address both the lenses and the models of Parish ministry.

Later stages will include peer review between paired Parishes utilizing the elements of vitality. A final step in this way of proceeding would be the articulation of the Parish's mission, forming the basis of a sustaining agreement between Parish and province.

Phase 1. Who is served? The Lenses

Pastoral Assistants would employ a Parish Examen to help councils and staffs reflect on the Parish and discern priorities for the future. This communal exercise would expand to explicitly address who the Parish currently serves and who the Parish leadership feels called to serve.

- a) Ask the leadership to attend liturgies and reflect on the faces in the congregation. Engage in the same exercise with the activities of the Parish. Who attends? Which part of the greater community is absent? What disheartens? What uplifts? Identify and record consolations and desolations.
- b) Pray through the bulletin, the website, and other social media with the same questions in mind.
- c) Bring staff and leaders together in an atmosphere of prayer to share their consolations and desolations. Can this community prioritize, especially, their consolations? Do they experience an invitation to greater service of some element(s) of the larger community?

Phase 2. Identify or renew structure (models) to help take the next steps

Phase 1 could involve more than one meeting. When ready, though, the leadership moves from the "who" is served to the "how" of service. Which model best serves those to whom the leadership feels called to minister?

- a) Parish leaders review parish models and examples of these models. This could involve visits, phone or video calls, and/or correspondence with parishioners at parishes that embrace a particular model. What disheartens? What uplifts? Capture these movements in writing.
- b) The leadership again gathers to reflect on their consolations and desolations. In light of their call to serve, can they discern the model, or hybrid, that calls to them?
- c) Can the leaders move from discernment of the big movements to concrete goals and a timeline? The goals need to address both the “who” and the “how” discerned.

Phase 3. Peer Review: Vitality – Fruitfulness of Mission

The pastors consulted so far favor peer review of paired parishes that share similarities. Pairing parishes according to whom they serve (shared lenses) and how they serve (shared models) could enrich their planning and help them to address assumptions and blind spots. Peer review aids the pastoral assistants in having greater experience and expertise brought to each Parish.

Phase 4. Toward a statement of Mission and Sponsoring agreement

Conversation with Province on outcomes/movements toward sustaining agreements.

Questions for Communal Awareness Examen

Lenses: who is or might be served

- Outreach to those 18-35: The Church in the U.S. finds a low percentage of young adults actively participating in the sacraments and life of the Church.
 - o Does the Parish have one or more Masses that attract a congregation of 18-35 year olds?
 - o Is the music and preaching for this liturgy different from the other liturgies and geared to this generation?
 - o Does the Parish have a committee of young adults to guide programming and activities?
 - o Does the Parish offer social events, adult formation opportunities, and spiritual programs for this generation?
 - o Are there opportunities for this generation to engage in social action?
- Materially Poor: Parishes ministering to the economically poor strive to hear the voices of populations mired in poverty. Parish ministers work with the community to respect its members, support social and educational programs sought by its members, and celebrate its accomplishments.
 - o What percentage of parishioners lives below the poverty line?
 - o What programs of the Parish help to meet the needs of the materially poor?
 - o How are the materially poor able to help direct the programs of the Parish to meet their needs?
 - o What percentage of the Parish’s budget is directed to the care of the poor?
 - o Does the Parish have partners in raising funds, lobbying on behalf of parishioner needs, or providing direct services?
- Diverse Cultures: As the Catholic culture of the U.S. shifts from European to Latin American, the approach to parish ministry needs to change as well. In the Millennial Generation, Hispanics have already become the largest segment of Catholics. Besides language, there are many cultural and ethnic groups that compose church communities. How can the Society help build cultural bridges across the

populations making up the local church? How does liturgy, music, environment, language, and programming communicate a welcome to these populations?

- o What are the elements of diversity present in the Parish? How do parishioners describe themselves?
 - o In which languages are liturgies offered?
 - o Have parishioners experienced discrimination or barriers to public services?
 - o Are there liturgical celebrations that reflect the diversity of the Parish?
 - o Do the diverse elements of the Parish have a voice in planning programs for the Parish?
 - o What training does the Parish staff have in cultural sensitivity and in languages?
- Jesuit Alumni: The Society has a huge pool of alumni with whom we have little contact after graduation. Alumni express a hunger for continued affiliation with the Society post-graduation. Alumni have begun organizing themselves into “Loyola Clubs” across the Assistancy. Parishes provide an ideal setting for continued relationships between the Society and Jesuit alumni.
 - o What programs does the Parish offer to gather alumni of Jesuit schools?
 - o Which schools or organizations use Parish space for alumni programs?
 - o With which alumni offices does the Parish have relationships?
 - o Does the Parish collaborate with other Jesuit apostolates in support of local or regional alumni events?
 - o Does the Parish schedule homilists or speakers from Jesuit schools to build relationships?
 - o Does the Parish host speakers, book signings, retreats, etc. to gather alumni of specific schools?
- Ecumenical and Interreligious Partners: The Assistancy Strategic Discernment has made ecumenical and interreligious dialogue a priority. Parishes with this charism engage in collaborative efforts to educate, to stand in solidarity, to pray, and to serve across faiths.
 - o What opportunities for prayer does the Parish provide across lines of denomination and faith?
 - o Who does the Parish partner with in times of stress and violence, to offer petitions for victims of war or natural disaster?
 - o Does the Parish have annual celebrations that bring together ecumenical and interfaith partners?
 - o Does the Parish have times of retreat (Taize, Zen sittings, etc.) that bring together those of diverse religious backgrounds?
 - o What lectures, readings, and/or discussions does the Parish help sponsor so that congregations can learn more about one another’s beliefs and history?
 - o What are the service opportunities the Parish cosponsors with other faiths to help the homeless, those in poverty, or those suffering from addictions?

Also to attend to: parish outreach to elderly parishioners whose needs are sometimes forgotten and are now immobile and/or infirmed. These persons have little or no capacity to attend Mass and other parish sponsored functions. Is some kind of highlight of their reality recommendable?

Models: ways of envisioning structures and organizations.

- Hub Parishes: These parishes act as an umbrella to house and support smaller ministries. The smaller entities may be Jesuit affiliated ministries (JVC, IVC, ISN, etc.), social services (English as a second language, housing assistance, legal clinic, etc.) or spiritual ministries (training of directors, house of prayer, etc.). The actual ministry or service need not happen at the parish; ministers may go out into the community or surrounding communities. These parishes highlight cross-sector apostolic cooperation.

- o How many independent ministries or organizations operate out of the Parish?
 - o How do these ministries contribute to the support of the Parish?
 - o How does the Parish support the ministries/organizations?
 - o Do parishioners use the services provided by the ministries/organizations?
 - o Are the recipients of the services welcome in the church?
 - o Do the services further the mission of the Parish?
- Immersion Parishes: In this model the Society has accepted a parish in a specific neighborhood or region. The parish shares the life of communities subject to boundaries and/or discrimination. The community may be materially poor, or new immigrants, or specific racial or ethnic groups underserved by society and the Church. As the populations served can be mobile and shifting, this model may need to include a time limit. The Society would relinquish a parish to follow those served, accepting another parish in a new location.
 - o Did the Society accept the Parish because of the underserved population residing there?
 - o Did the parishioner change over time to become an underserved population?
 - o What is the makeup of the parishioners?
 - o What are the specific needs of this community that are unmet?
 - o What steps is the Parish taking to help meet these needs?
 - o Has the Parish received financial support from other Jesuit institutions? Other religious or civic organizations?
- University Parishes: The Society would accept or retain parishes that have an impact on the development of young leaders who can help direct the Church of the future. The Society may also value a particular faculty for its contributions to the intellectual life of the Church and desire a close association. The parish could be part of campus ministry or it could be a stand-alone parish adjacent to a university.
 - o Which university does the Parish serve?
 - o Does the university own the Parish building?
 - o Has the local diocese asked the Society to focus on serving the university community?
 - o Does campus ministry use the church or does it operate out of its own space?
 - o What percentage of parishioners are students? Faculty, staff, or administrators?
 - o How does the university calendar influence the liturgies and programs of the parish?
- Pulpit Parishes: The Society would accept and retain those parishes that can advocate on behalf of those with little voice in the political, economic, and social arenas. A parish that attracts political leaders, business leaders, and/or those who wield influence in our society could provide a platform for the Church's and the Society's message. Pulpit parishes would have an influence that extends beyond the parish boundaries.
 - o Who are the people of influence that attend this Parish (political, business, or cultural leaders)?
 - o Do the parishioners have access to those in city, state, or federal government?
 - o Are the parishioners generous in their donations to support works of charity?
 - o Does the Parish advocate on behalf of the homeless, immigrants, victims of human trafficking, etc.?
 - o Do homilies call attention to injustice and to Catholic Social Teaching?
 - o Do parishioners experience tension between the message of the Gospel and the norms of society?

Parish Vitality – Fruitfulness of Mission: Regardless of the model or outreach dimensions of a specific parish, Provincials highlighted three factors contributing to the vitality of a parish entrusted to the Society of Jesus, and fruitfulness of the parish’s mission:

- Sustainability: a sustainable infrastructure will vary by the model and circumstances of a specific parish. This may require a great deal of creativity on the part of the parish leadership. A vital Parish is not satisfied with maintaining the status quo, but leverages whatever resources it has, however modest or exceptional, to be generative.
 - o What steps has the Parish taken to assure future leadership in the face of few priests?
 - o Does the Parish have a plan to deal with the aging of its buildings?
 - o How is the Parish insuring its financial vitality into the future?
 - o Does the Parish have a development program to seek grants and financial contributions?
 - o Does the Parish have a partner organization to help it achieve its goals?

- Vocations: another dimension of fruitfulness of a Parish is the growth of parishioners’ understanding of their unique and unfolding vocation. Fruitful parishes help parishioners at all life-stages, particularly teens and adults in their 20s and 30s, identify and share their gifts in service to each other, in the Church and the world.
 - o Does the Parish offer programs for its youth to discern their vocations (single or married persons, lay or religious)?
 - o Does the Parish have a culture that is both strong and flexible enough to faithfully explore vocations in respectful dialog with sensitive topics such as the ecclesial role of women in the Church and the status of LGBT parishioners?
 - o Does the Parish offer retreats and spiritual direction for youth to discern their call?
 - o Does the Parish have relationships with vocation promoters (diocesan and religious), with those supporting marriage (e.g. Engaged Encounter), and service organizations that help explore vocational options (e.g. JVC)?

- Spirituality: a fruitful Parish is attentive to the spiritual life of parishioners and corporately as a Parish. In addition to catechetical programs and sacramental preparation for children, youth and their parents, ongoing adult faith formation is a priority of fruitful parishes. Jesuit parishes share the charisms of Ignatian spirituality with intention and creativity, forming disciples who respond generously to practical and spiritual needs around them, are comfortable sharing their faith with others and inviting others to join them at the table of the Lord.
 - o What day and evening programs does the parish offer for those early in their spiritual growth?
 - o Does the Parish offer series that invite continued spiritual growth?
 - o Does the Parish offer or collaborate on retreats in daily life?
 - o Does the Parish promote spiritual direction (individual or group format)?
 - o Does the Parish offer or collaborate on Annotation 19 retreats?