



FOSTERING A SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNION

ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON PASTORAL PLAN

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Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Office of the Cardinal

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with much joy and anticipation that I share this Archdiocese Pastoral Plan with you. This plan reflects the hopes, insights and aspirations of the faithful in our Archdiocese. It is a plan that has come directly from your input and is a vision for how we as a Church will grow today while simultaneously looking forward to the future. The goals and dreams of thousands of our faithful are gathered in these pages, together with the longings of those who for a variety of reasons find themselves away from the Church. I believe it provides us with a solid foundation upon which we can grow together in continuing to meet the needs of Christ's people now and in the years to come.

You won't find information within this plan about some of the challenges we will face in the future. They are challenges that we as people of faith welcome as opportunities. The unfailing grace of God continues to make us his light in the world, amidst the difficulties, so that we might reflect the love of the Father, the mercy of Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

I encourage each parishioner, each parish, and every member of our clergy and religious spend time with the goals and desires expressed in the pages that follow. As you read, note that our Pastoral Plan does not direct for action to be taken on every stated objective. Rather, with prayer and reflection, parishes should discern which objectives God is calling them to focus on in order to grow in Christ's love – individually and together as a Church. Furthermore, I encourage you to build relationships with each other parishes or groups within our Archdiocese as you work to put these objectives into action. If each parish acts on just one or two objectives effectively, we will make monumental strides towards growing in love, supporting the needs of the faithful, and living a Spirituality of Communion.

I am pleased that an initial release of this plan to parishes late last year has already resulted in the adoption and embracing of many of its concepts. I know that each of our communities will find the process of sharing our collective wisdom, love and hopes for the future to be valuable, and recommit to promoting a true Spirituality of Communion for love of God and neighbor. With assurances of my continued prayers for you, and entrusting all these good works to the prayers of the Mother of God, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Daniel Cardinal DiNardo

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston



DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE

The 10-county area that encompasses the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston will experience three significant trends that will affect our parishes. These trends include:

- Rapid population growth in the area encompassing the Archdiocese
- An increasingly diverse, growing and multi-cultural Catholic population
- The number of priests available for service will remain at the current level in parishes for the foreseeable future

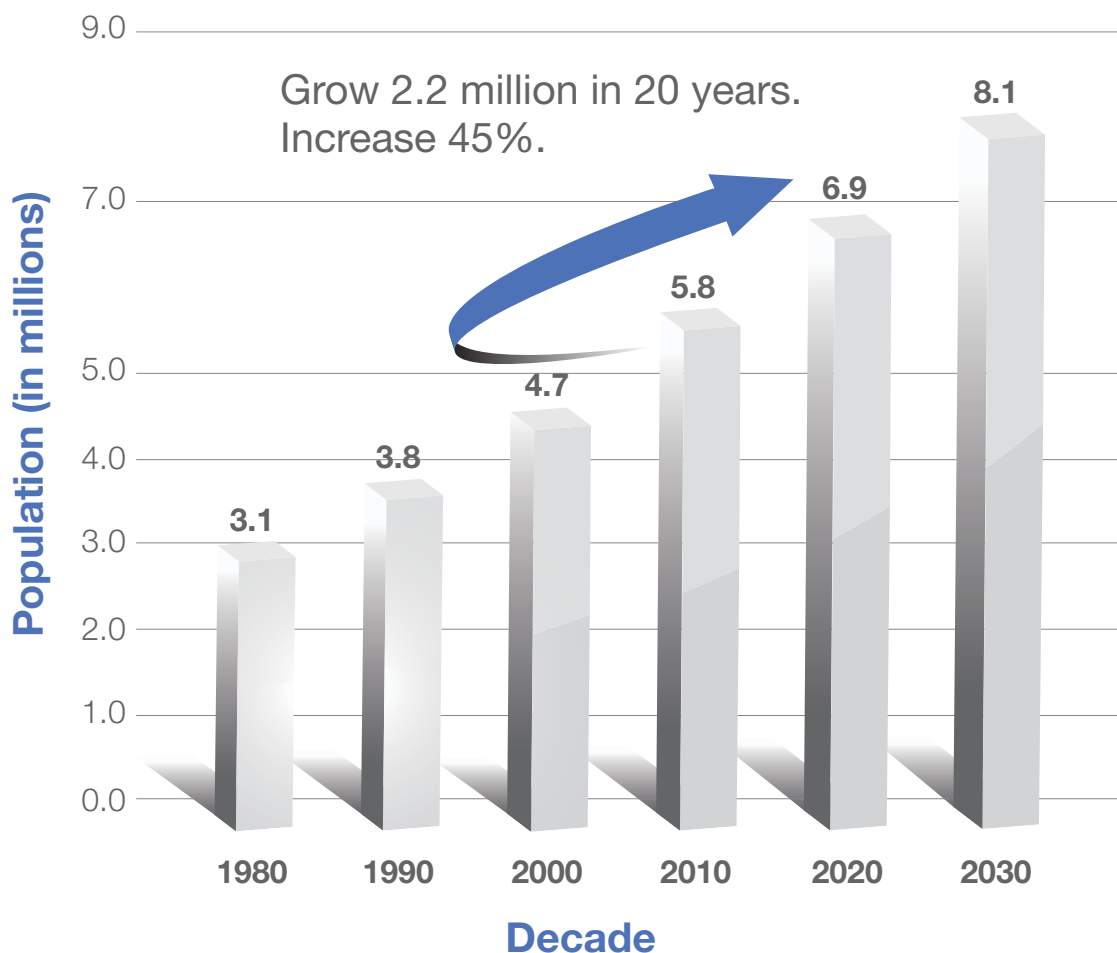
Rapid population growth

The area encompassed by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston is experiencing a significant increase in the general population. Projections for the period 2000 to 2020 indicate total population will grow by 48 percent, or 2.2 million persons.

The projected growth is centered in Harris and the immediate surrounding counties. In the period from 2010-2015, Harris County is expected to grow by approximately 500,000, while the counties of Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston and Montgomery will have combined growth of 250,000.



POPULATION GROWTH Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston



Source: Texas State Data Center, 2007. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2007. US Bureau of Census.

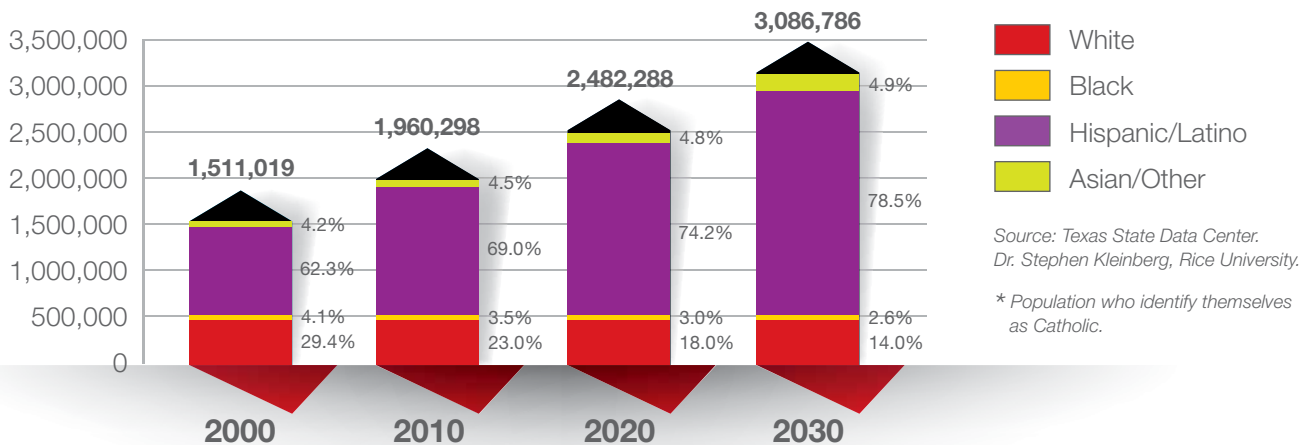
Diverse, growing and multi-cultural Catholic population

During this same period of growth in the general population (2000-2020), the Catholic population is projected to increase by two-thirds, or approximately 1 million Catholics, with an increase of approximately 500,000, or 25 percent, in the period 2010-2020.

This growing population of the Archdiocese will continue to grow in diversity.

- Currently 77 percent of the Catholic population is not Caucasian. The Hispanic/Latino Catholic population is now 69 percent with 74.2 percent projected for 2020.
- More than 40 percent of households report a language other than English is spoken at home.

Projected Catholic Population by Race*



Priest projections

The projected number of priests to serve this fast-growing population will remain stable if the number of ordinations and incardinations remains constant. However, as a result of the projected increase in the Catholic population, the ratio of Catholics to priests will increase by 32 percent.

Projected Numbers of Archdiocesan and Religious Priests Available for Active Service in the Parishes 2010-2030

Year	Archdiocesan Priests	Religious Priests	Total
2010	142	100	242
2020	139	93	232
2030	136	87	223

Based on Fall 2010 data including the ordination, incardination and resignation rates over the past 10 years. Report by Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2011.



THE HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE FAITHFUL

The foundation of the Pastoral Plan was created by listening to the faithful. In an effort to understand what is valued, what parishes and the Archdiocese should do more of and what was important to pass on to the next generation, several communications tools were used to collect feedback.

The communications tools used to collect information included:

- **Listening Sessions** – attended by parishioners, priests, deacons, religious, youth, inactive Catholics, young adults. Conducted throughout the Archdiocese, more than 1,800 participants contributed over 3,200 comments.
- **Surveys** – provided in the pews and online. Respondents from at least 128 parishes participated in the survey, with more than 4,600 individuals completing questionnaires.
- **Parish Pastoral Council Sessions** – gathering information from Pastoral Councils within the Archdiocese. These included input from 37 Parish Pastoral Councils, involving 312 council members.

Participants affirm key areas where the Archdiocese and parishes should focus in the coming years:

- a. Increasing Archdiocesan and Parish communication
- b. Providing social services and outreach – church programs and ministries
- c. Embracing our diversity and multi-cultural components
- d. Providing formation and education for our priests, deacons and religious
- e. Supporting spiritual growth for Catholics
- f. Developing programs for children and youth
- g. Addressing challenges of growth in the Archdiocese
- h. Providing meaningful prayer, liturgy and sacraments

To view the full document showing all data collected in this process, please visit: www.archgh.org/pastoralplan/documents. View the document titled *Current Reality*.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Fostering a Spirituality of Communion

Through much prayer, discernment, reading and reflection, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC) formed a vision which can be accomplished by following the words of Blessed John Paul II, to build a Spirituality of Communion.

Before any planning, we need to understand that the Church is first a communion, a body that lives in unity with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, who described his union with the Father through the Holy Spirit, said that those who follow him – those in his church – will be with him through the Holy Spirit – as a communion. The vision of the APC is that our Archdiocese will become one that lives this Spirituality of Communion in our homes, parishes, archdiocese and community.

To more fully understand how to live in a Spirituality of Communion, read the words of Blessed John Paul II in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, No. 43 (back cover).



PATHWAYS WILL LEAD US TO A SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNION

A roadmap of Pathways to lead us was defined, engaging all in the Archdiocese to live a Spirituality of Communion, to address the hopes and needs of the faithful and positively impact our current reality. The three Pathways are:

Live Our Faith

Support Catholics of all ages in the daily practice of their faith; in their vocational response, in their family life and in their commitment to lifelong formation.

Share Our Faith

Commit to fully engaging all young people in their faith, and encouraging them to share it with others. Commit to enthusiastic outreach to all those who do not participate in Church and dialogue with those of other faiths.

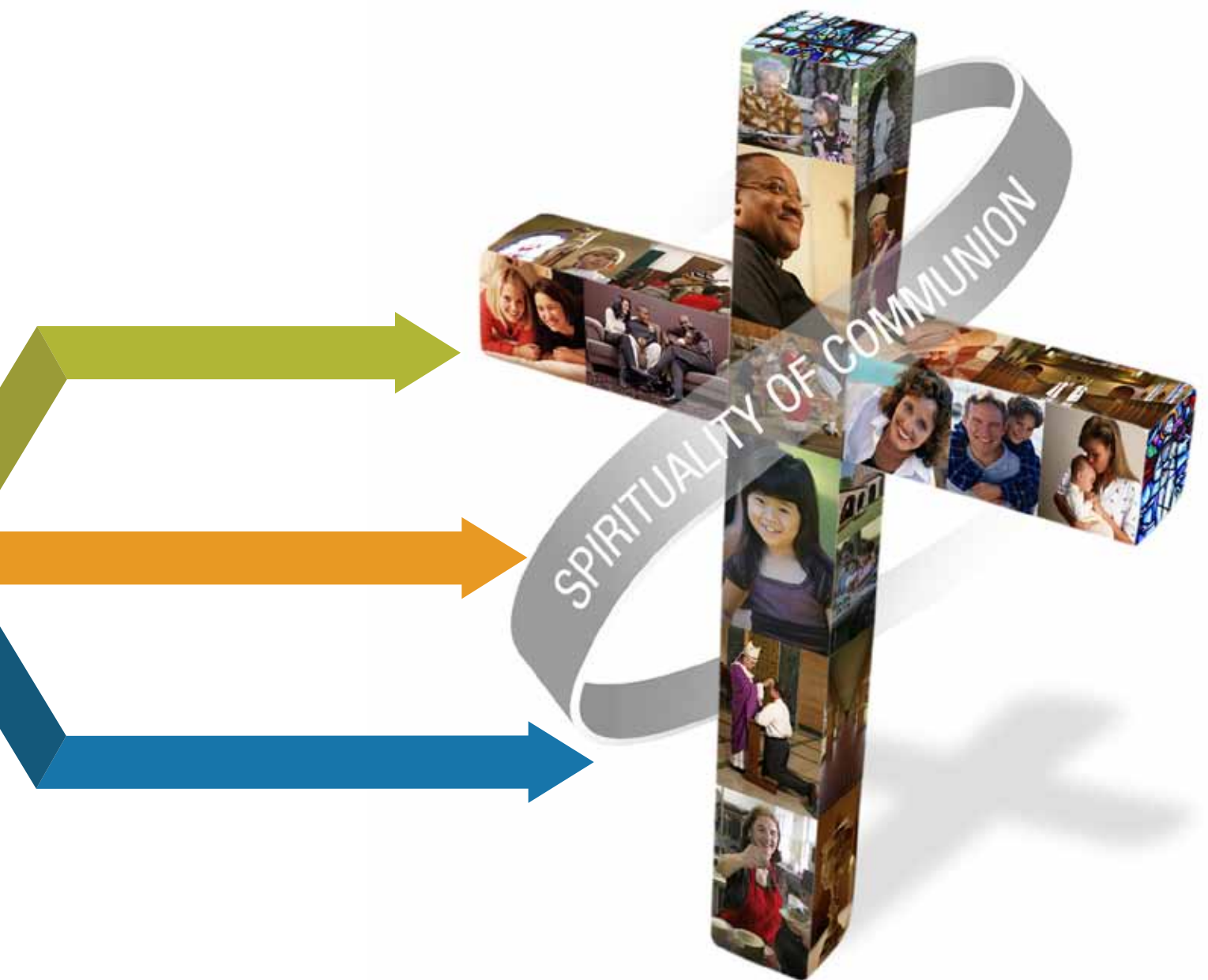
Nurture Our Faith

Nurture spirit-based relationships between and among the faithful.

We are able to foster a Spirituality of Communion through our Pathways, to live our faith, share our faith, and nurture our faith.



MUNION



"A Spirituality of Communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us."

Blessed John Paul II,
Novo Millennio Ineunte, No. 43



KEY CATEGORIES MAPPED TO PATHWAYS

The 7,000 faithful who participated in the feedback (defined on page 4) shared their hopes and aspirations with the Archdiocese. These can be mapped to the Pathways by category, leading us from our current reality to our future – an Archdiocese living a Spirituality of Communion.

KEY CATEGORIES

Archdiocesan/Parish Communications

Church Programs/Ministries

Diversity/Multicultural

Priests/Deacons/Religious Roles
and Training

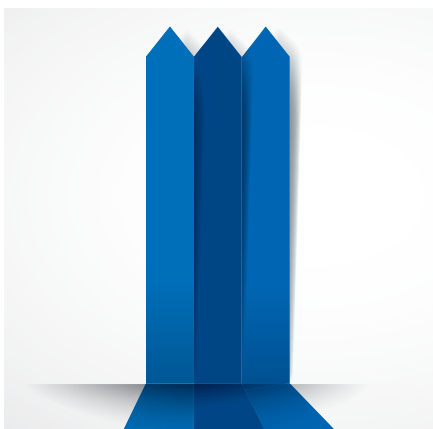
Spiritual Growth/Catechesis

Youth and Children's Programs

Challenges of Growth

Passing on the Traditions and
Values of our Faith

Experiencing the liturgy
and Sacraments



For more detailed information please visit
[http://www.archgh.org/pastoralplan/
documents](http://www.archgh.org/pastoralplan/documents).

OBJECTIVES SUPPORT THE PATHWAYS TO OUR FUTURE AND ENABLE THE FAITHFUL TO LIVE IN A SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNION

Objectives were developed by assimilating the information provided by pastors and other parish leaders about existing activities that supported the Pathways, as well as activities to enhance or extend and share with others. The objectives are like stepping stones along the path. They enable our faith community to create and live our desired future – a community living a Spirituality of Communion. Only through the commitment and ongoing action of our parishes, priests and parishioners will we make this vision a reality.

There are nine objectives defined on page 9 to help our Archdiocesan faithful walk the path toward living a Spirituality of Communion, thus meeting the hopes and aspirations of the faithful. Each objective relates to one or more Pathways. Some Pathways have multiple objectives that support it.

Parishioners and parishes are encouraged to work together creatively to determine which objective best enables them to grow in a Spirituality of Communion and reinforces the activities occurring within their parishes. Reflection questions are provided to help with this task. Resources for addressing each objective are provided in the document, *Toward a Spirituality of Communion*, at <http://www.archgh.org/pastoralplan/documents>. Chancery staff will identify additional resources throughout the planning cycle and make them available to parishes.

Everyone in the Archdiocese is invited to engage in helping achieve our vision, working together and across parishes to meet one or more of these objectives.



OBJECTIVES MAP TO PATHWAYS

The nine objectives are not presented in priority order.
No one objective is more important than another, yet each
is viewed as important to the faithful of the Archdiocese.

- 1 Educate and form the faithful in a Spirituality of Communion, recognizing that it embodies our vision for the future of the Archdiocese.
- 2 Engage parishioners in the life of the parish by providing opportunities to offer their talents and skills, and by recruiting, forming and empowering them to serve in existing parish groups and ministries.
- 3 Stimulate the whole community to create a welcoming and accessible environment for hospitality and evangelization through embracing a Spirituality of Communion.
- 4 Evaluate, develop, and plan liturgical and spiritual development opportunities that promote individual spiritual growth and an increase in holiness, while facilitating active participation by the faithful in the celebration of the liturgy.
- 5 Promote an interchange among the various cultural communities within a parish and draw on resources of archdiocesan departments to build stronger intercultural connections.
- 6 Partner with at least one other parish by meeting regularly with parish leadership to identify opportunities to share resources.
- 7 Identify and provide resources and opportunities for adult formation responding to the various life stages and cultural needs of the parish adult community.
- 8 Assist parents in their personal sanctification and provide resources in prayer, catechesis, and service to nurture the spiritual development of their children.
- 9 Ensure a vibrant comprehensive youth ministry (addressing all components outlined by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry) that actively engages adolescents and young adults of all cultures by making use of parishes and archdiocesan resources.

If we are truly living out the Pathways, we will become recognized as a people who are practicing the Spirituality of Communion.



For more detailed information please visit
<http://www.archgh.org/pastoralplan/documents>.



1

Educate and form the faithful in a Spirituality of Communion, recognizing that it embodies our vision for the future of the Archdiocese.

The pastoral plan for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston is grounded in the concept of a “Spirituality of Communion” as described in Blessed John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, No. 43 (back cover). Yet many Catholics are not aware of what a Spirituality of Communion is or what it entails. Therefore, it is essential to form and educate parishioners in the Spirituality of Communion. This step is in many ways the foundation on which all the other elements of the pastoral plan are constructed.

Reflection

- How do we help parishioners move from spectators to actively practicing a spirituality of communion?
- What avenues already exist that can be used to educate and form all parishioners in the Spirituality of Communion?
- What resources do we need from the Archdiocese to support this objective?



2

Engage parishioners in the life of the parish by both providing opportunities to offer their talents and skills, and by recruiting, forming and empowering them to serve in existing parish groups and ministries.

Every Catholic should have the opportunity to have the full experience of the faith which enables God to be the center of their lives. Spirituality of Communion requires more than just prayers and words, but deeds and actions that demonstrate our love for our God and one another. Parish communities are filled with parishioners who are very skilled either professionally or naturally. Some parishioners already share these “gifts” with established groups and ministries in the parish. Yet there are others who could impact the parish community and whose skills would be a welcome addition to unmet parish needs.

Reflection

- How can members of our parish be encouraged to use their unique gifts and talents in service of the church?
- How might we identify and register the skills parishioners are willing to share?
- How might we better recognize ministries so that parishioners are more aware of existing opportunities?



OBJECTIVE

3

Stimulate the whole community to create a welcoming and accessible environment for hospitality and evangelization through embracing a Spirituality of Communion.

As we look to our future, we need to prepare to reach out to the entire Catholic population, active and inactive, as well as other faiths. We need to commit to enthusiastic outreach to all those who participate in Church by fostering an engaging and empowering environment where all parishioners are co-responsible for creating a welcoming, loving environment – where participants can develop deep and genuine friendships within the community. We must also respect all faiths and share our faith confidently in dialogue with others.

All Catholics are called to holiness in whatever vocation or family setting they find themselves. We believe all Catholics benefit from formational experiences throughout their whole life.

Reflection

- How can we enhance or develop hospitality initiatives that go beyond ushers and greeters?
- In what ways do we reach out to “inactive” Catholics?
- What is the role of priests and deacons in welcoming the faithful?



4

Evaluate, develop, and prepare liturgical and spiritual development opportunities that promote individual spiritual growth and an increase in holiness while facilitating a full and active participation by the faithful in the celebration of the liturgy.

Our Catholic tradition has extraordinary depth and breadth of prayer and liturgy. And in our parishes there is already a richness of prayer and liturgical life. One essential aspect of that tradition is a Trinitarian spirituality. A Spirituality of Communion draws on the relationship of three Persons in one God – the Holy Trinity. Each parish is called to assist parishioners in that contemplation of the Trinity dwelling in us, using resources for understanding Scripture, learning church teaching, growing in spiritual life and prayer to guide us.

Extending the knowledge of our rich tradition to our parishioners promotes inner reflection and inspires steadfastness and personal attachment to the liturgy, ultimately encouraging the faithful to fulfill their vital role of actively engaging in the liturgy. Our clergy play a critical role in leading spiritual development and preparation of liturgy.

Reflection

- What are our parish's strengths in promoting personal prayer and celebrating the liturgy?
- How well do we engage Catholics in each age group in a rich experience of liturgy (children, youth, single adults, married adults, seniors)?
- Does the parish draw on the richness of movements and associations in providing options for growth in spiritual life?

OBJECTIVE

5

6

Respond to the intercultural reality of the greater Galveston-Houston area and our parishes, promote an interchange among the various cultural communities within a parish and draw on resources of archdiocesan departments to build stronger intercultural connections.

Many of our parishes enjoy intercultural richness and all parishes are blessed by the great diversity of cultural groups throughout our Archdiocese. This objective inspires the creation of models of learning, service, and worship that include and involve each cultural group in the daily life of the parish. We should strive to create an awareness and appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity within our Catholic family. In so doing, we hope to promote unity within diversity and experience how all cultures can be enriched by one another and strengthened by the Catholic faith that we share. The ultimate goal is fostering a healthy ecclesial integration of all our cultural communities within the Archdiocese.

Reflection

- In what ways can our parish benefit from engaging groups from multiple cultures within our parish – and other cultural groups throughout the archdiocese?
- Do our ministries and leadership reflect the interests and cultural makeup of our parish?
- Have we identified the needs of the different cultural groups in our parish?



Develop a collaborative relationship with at least one other parish by meeting regularly with parish leadership to identify opportunities to share resources.

For a growing Archdiocese like ours, inter-parish activities and programs, communications, and resource sharing creates an open dialog and forum for sharing and provides the benefit of understanding best practices. We must enable intra-parish synergies to encourage laity and religious leaders to better assist the clergy. This will enable parishes to become more vibrant centers of faith and parishioners to live the word in our homes and daily lives. Parish leadership can review their programs, events and strategies to determine strengths and opportunities for improvement. Then they can brainstorm opportunities to share their strengths with parishes that could benefit. They can also collaborate with other parishes that could provide support in areas of need.

Reflection

- What does our parish do well that we could offer to share with other parishes?
- In what ways can our parish council share ideas and successes with other councils and at the Deanery level?
- In what areas would our parishioners benefit from sharing resources with another parish?



OBJECTIVE

7

8

Identify and provide resources and opportunities for lifelong adult formation responding to the various life stages of the parish adult community.

Each parish community is composed of people in various age groups and differing life stages that impact their openness or ability to fully participate in the formation opportunities offered by the parish. Access issues include limited transportation, physical barriers in parish buildings, being homebound or having a disability. This objective supports and engages all parishioners by recognizing, planning for, and responding to a variety of needs for formation throughout our life stages.

Reflection

- Has the parish assessed the breadth and scope of current adult formation opportunities?
- How does the parish determine adult formation needs of all parishioners?
- Are adult formation activities available to attendees in location, time and accessibility?



Assist parents in their personal sanctification and provide resources in prayer, catechesis, and service to nurture the spiritual development of their children.

The Catholic Church considers parents to be the chief catechists for their children partnering with others in the family and faith community: "Parents above others are obliged to form their children by word and example in faith and in the practice of Christian life; sponsors and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equal obligation." (Code of Canon Law 774-2).

The family is the domestic Church. "Faith is taught, caught and lived out within the family." (A Vision for the Future, 2012). Parents and extended family members are the communicators of tradition, faith and morals. They are encouraged and supported by their parish to pass on their Catholic identity and faith to their children.

The role of the parish is to support parents and the family at the time of sacramental initiation and Eucharistic celebrations, as well as provide ongoing formation opportunities and tools. Encouraging parents to participate in ongoing faith formation and prayer as a model to their family is also important. Parishes can draw on resources from the Archdiocese to provide ongoing formation for parents and extended family members.

Reflection

- Which parish activities already involve parents and how can we leverage these by offering resources to parents at those moments when they are already involved?
- What resources are offered by the parish to assist parents in their home as they teach their children to become disciples of Christ?
- How do we support parents in growing in their own faith in the midst of an already busy life of raising children?

OBJECTIVE

Ensure a vibrant comprehensive youth ministry (addressing all components outlined by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry – NFCYM) that actively engages younger and older adolescents of all cultures by making use of local and archdiocesan resources.



A comprehensive approach to youth ministry is a balanced mix of programs, events and strategies that address the eight components as stated by the NFCYM and identified in *Renewing the Vision: A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*.

In the context of this objective, younger and older adolescents are considered from 11 to 18 years old. A comprehensive youth ministry adopts a variety of approaches that are intended to address the changing needs and life situations of all adolescents of the parish.

Reflection

- Does our current youth ministry program address all eight components in *Renewing the Vision: A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* document?
- Does our current youth ministry address younger and older adolescents across all eight components? Is more attention given to one age group?
- Are our youth ministry activities responsive to the cultural demographics of the parish?



OBJECTIVE



ACTION PLANNING FOR PARISHES

Using the objectives as stepping stones with the pathways as a roadmap to the future, parishes are developing individual action plans to support the objectives. Parish Action Plans meet the unique needs of each parish while fostering a Spirituality of Communion across the Archdiocese. It is not necessary to address all objectives.

Parishes are encouraged to address those objectives that they believe can have the greatest impact in fostering a Spirituality of Communion in their parish. They are also encouraged to partner with other parishes to share ideas, resources and expertise. Because the plan spans three years, parishes are encouraged to think of actions that they would complete over the length of the plan period. Parishes are encouraged to write action plans as soon as they are ready to support one of the objectives. This is an open and ongoing process. It is intended to engage, throughout the next three years, the wide variety of parishes that make up the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

An Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan task group developed support materials for parishes to assist with Action Plan development. To view the Action Plan Workbook document, visit: www.archgh.org/pastoralplan. View the document titled *Action Plan Workbook*.

Nearly 50% of Archdiocesan parishes participated in the implementation planning process by June 1, 2013. As the plan progresses, all parishes are encouraged to join in Action Planning at any point. Support is always available at pastoralplan@archgh.org.



ACTION PLAN STEPS

1

Identify individuals to serve on a Parish Action Plan Committee.

2

Schedule a meeting and ask members to review the Objectives document and Action Plan workbook.

3

Select the objective(s) the parish wants to support.

4

Describe the action(s) for each objective.

5

Complete a Parish Action Plan form for each action.

6

Review and submit forms.

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council will follow up with parishes to share best practices and success stories.



ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan will span three years, beginning in 2013 and continuing through 2015. Each Parish Action Plan should be completed within that same period. Parishes may anticipate that specific objectives will be completed in varying amounts of time, from a few months to one or two years, based on the nature of the objective.

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council will collect Action Plan forms from parishes to gather success stories and challenges to share with others.



A HISTORY OF THE ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN

Current Reality

Feedback from 7,000 responders in "Listening to the Faithful" is compiled and analyzed.

Pathways

Three Pathways emerge as the roadmap leading us toward a Spirituality of Communion.

- Live our Faith
- Share our Faith
- Nurture our Faith

2011

2012

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

JUL

AUG

SEP

OCT

NOV

DEC

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

Listening to the Faithful

128 Parishes participate in Listening Sessions, Surveys, or through Parish Council input.

A Vision for the Future

Spirituality of Communion is defined as our destination, our vision for the future.



Objectives

Compiling Regional Meetings findings, nine objectives were identified to support our Pathways and lead us to living a Spirituality of Communion.

Regional Meetings

Regional Meetings across our Archdiocese identified how parishes already support the Pathways and what they hope to do in the future.

Report, Refine, Repeat

Parishes share successes and challenges and create new action plans.

Action Plans

Parishes write Action Plans to support objectives which best meet their needs and help them grow in a Spirituality of Communion.

2013

JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

View detailed information on all efforts above at www.archgh.org/pastoralplan



RESOURCES

This booklet contains highlights of the Pastoral Plan developed by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. The planning process began in the spring of 2011 and culminated into a fully developed plan by the summer of 2013. Parishes, the faithful, and chancery employees will be acting on these objectives for three years.

All documents reflecting the full pastoral planning process are listed below and can be obtained online at:

www.archgh.org/pastoralplan/documents



Current Reality

September 9, 2011



Toward a Spirituality of Communion: A Vision for the Future

January 16, 2012



Toward a Spirituality of Communion: Proposed Pathways

March 5, 2012



Toward a Spirituality of Communion: Objectives

February 26, 2013



Fostering a Spirituality of Communion: Action Plan Workbook

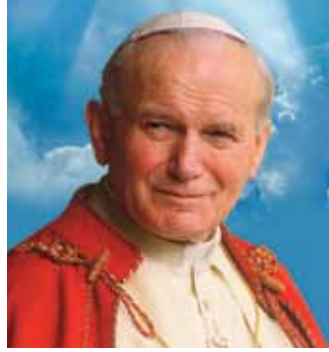
March, 2013

Acknowledgements

The Archdiocese is grateful for the countless hours, dedication and input provided by parishioners, priests, deacons, religious, chancery staff and others who have offered their insight, feedback and prayers in the development of this plan. We especially acknowledge the thousands of Catholics within the Archdiocese who have offered their dreams and aspirations as the foundation of this plan. We thank Daniel Cardinal DiNardo for generously sharing his wisdom throughout the process, and the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council who coordinated the efforts for this plan. We thank and praise the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for blessings too numerous to count. May God continue to bless us and protect us, and may the Holy Spirit guide our efforts and bring His church and His people to a full experience of the Spirituality of Communion.

Novo Millennio Ineunte, No. 43

Written by Blessed John Paul II



To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the greatest challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings.

But what does this mean in practice? Here too, our thoughts could run immediately to the action to be undertaken, but that would not be the right impulse to follow.

Before making practical plans, we need to promote a Spirituality of Communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up.

A Spirituality of Communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us.

A Spirituality of Communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as "those who are a part of me." This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship.

A Spirituality of Communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a "gift for me."

A Spirituality of Communion means, finally, to know how to "make room" for our brothers and sisters, bearing "each other's burdens" (Gal. 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy.

Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, "masks" of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.

