

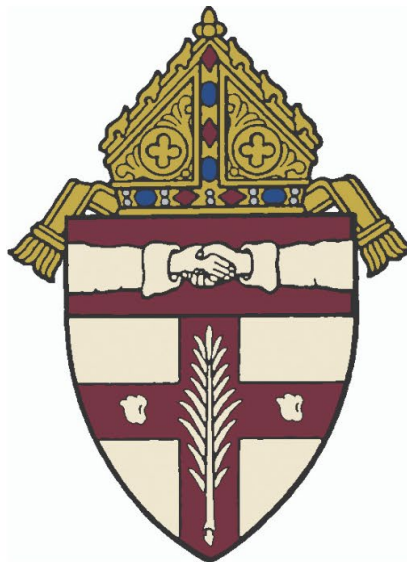
Living as Missionary Disciples

Office of Evangelization & Discipleship
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO



Personal & Parish Transformation

*A Follow-up Resource from the December 1, 2020
Diocese of Owensboro "SEND" Event*



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Dear Friends in Christ,

Our Diocese of Owensboro is blessed with incredible priests, who have sacrificed and given so much to shepherd the faithful of western Kentucky. We are also blessed with wonderful vowed religious women, who have been providing excellent leadership and pastoral care in this diocese for generations. In addition, we have permanent deacons and lay ecclesial ministers sharing their tremendous gifts in the Church and countless parish volunteer leaders in all of our 78 parishes. As a diocese, we are truly blessed – yet there is work to be done.

As we reflect on our call to raise up Missionary Disciples in our parishes, we must first look to our leaders. Are we a living reflection of Missionary Discipleship and together do we reflect the mission of Jesus? We cannot overlay a single plan of evangelization and discipleship over our 78 parishes and say we've done evangelization. It starts with us and through the power and gifting of the Holy Spirit; it grows organically and uniquely in the soil of each parish. We first must step back and evaluate. Where is God leading the Church today?

Admittedly, we are not where we know we could be. We can all see the struggles, decline and apathy in our parishes, but we can also see opportunity! The challenge of changing the culture of our parish communities is not an easy task. This challenge invites a collaborative effort guided by the Holy Spirit. As we work together, without pretense and judgment, we can be the beautiful body of Christ that reflects God's love to one another and the world. We can discern next steps, one step at a time that can lead us to the culture change that is needed in each of our parishes. We all need to pray and work together co-responsibly step up and bring new life to our parishes.

It is necessary to celebrate the good ministry efforts that are already present in our parish communities, while also stepping back to reflect, retool, and refocus our energy on efforts that need to adjust or change. The hope is to move forward with a fire in our bellies that will ignite our parishes with vision and growth in the years to come! You may be surprised to find that this journey is filled with new life and abundance. You are invited to take time to pray, discern, and assess where you are as a person of faith and parish community and then consider your next steps.

The following pages contain three important sections: Personal Care & Discipleship, Parish Staff/Team Development, and Parish Evaluation & Planning. Each section includes a tool to foster increased evangelization and discipleship for you, your parish staff and parish leadership.

Sincerely,

The Evangelization & Discipleship Committee:

Jeff Andrini, Lori Lewis, Martha Hagan, Pat Jones, Fr. Larry McBride, Amy & Tom Payne, Fr. Carmelo Jimenez Salinas, and Chris Wooldridge

I. Personal Care & Discipleship

How do you model personal renewal? This is an extremely important question that gets at a root problem in the Catholic Church.

Our lack of joy, zeal and personal growth as leaders in the Church, is a reflection of what we see in our parishes. This is not meant to be a blanket condemnation of our ministry efforts, but generally speaking, contemporary people do not look at what we say, as much as what we do! "Postmodern times altered the spiritual palates of many Catholics... Many Catholics hunger for a deeper experience of real community... The more members feel like they belong, the deeper they will believe and commit." (Engaging a New Generation, Frank Mercadante, page 38). Although we know community is important, our focus has been on teaching the faith, and unfortunately, modern people see the failures of Church leaders and the lack of joy in our lives, and find nothing worth investing their lives in.

The culture change that is needed is that we start with ourselves! Each one of us need to ask, is my relationship with God the single greatest source of my life and do I have a community where I can share the joy of God's love and be vulnerable about my need for ongoing growth? We never arrive at perfect, this side of eternity! Therefore, our disposition needs to be rooted in a humility that says I am radically dependent on Jesus to live a life that reflects his love and mercy to all. And I cannot do it alone.

There are no lone ranger pastors, no lone ranger lay ecclesial ministers; instead, we must be in community. The first line of the Didache – an early document in the Church called the "Training of the Twelve Apostles," – says, "There are two ways: one of life and one of death! And there is a great difference between the two ways" (The Didache, Aaron Milavec, page 3). The way the early Christians, and all successful Christian leaders since, have followed the path to life is in real community. Unless any of you are called to be a hermit or desert monk, the path of personal and ongoing growth is in community. When we leaders invest in this for ourselves, we will be models of what will drive parish transformation.

As I mentioned above, we need to take a step backward before we make big plans for parish renewal and reflect on our own experience of discipleship. We need to ask a few questions and be willing to honestly evaluate how we could take a step forward in our personal discipleship:

1. Do I have an active relationship with God through daily prayer and reflection?
2. Do I meet regularly with others to pray, and share my joys, sorrows and faith?
3. Do I have special times for extended personal prayer at least monthly?
4. Do I participate in at least one annual retreat to invest in my relationship with God?
5. Do I seek spiritual direction on a regular or needed basis?

See below for further explanation.

Personal Prayer

As Catholics, we have so many ways to pray. We have traditionally been known for our ritual and rote prayer. Other forms of prayer serve to enrich our relationship with God as well and strengthen our experience of the Mass and reception of Holy Communion. We have such a rich resource as a Church of various types of prayer. Different personalities find different forms of prayer more meaningful, and that is fine. So there is no one-size-fits-all method that we all need to follow. However, it must be rooted in relationship. Jesus wants us to open the doors of our lives and let him in. He wants to spend time with us and he wants to change us. If our prayer is not changing us, then we need to change something. If Eucharistic adoration does not lead to Eucharistic action in our lives, we might need some spiritual direction on how God is moving in our soul and equipping us for growth in our lives.

Although there is no cookie cutter way to pray, it should be daily, non-ceasing and include one or more of the following: Eucharist, scripture, lighting a candle, contemplation, journaling, praise, intercession, thanksgiving, and lot of other options. The important thing is that we have an appointment with God each day, where we can be alone with God, share our heart and receive love. This is the most important appointment of your day. But prayer should also be an ongoing conversation with the Lord. Through this experience, we can learn to trust the Holy Spirit to guide us along the path of God's will.

We all know how important daily prayer is, and we also know how easy it is to go through life without this daily time and how days, weeks and months can go by without seriously investing in our relationship with God and personal growth. Therefore, we need the accountability and encouragement of other disciples.

Community

We each need regular community. There are two types of community that are essential for every ministry leader. You can certainly do ministry without these community

structures, which is good as access to these is not always easy. However, long-term effectiveness is greatly increased as one or both of these communities are fostered in your life.

The first is an intimate group of 4-6 people that meet regularly for accountability and support. Let's call this a Growth Group. Normally these groups are of the same gender. The purpose is to come together weekly, or bi-weekly, or even monthly if that is the only available option, and share life and faith. This gathering includes prayer, which can be led by a different person each time, scripture or a devotion followed by faith sharing and then personal sharing about both struggles and joys since you last met. It ends by sharing prayer intentions and closing with prayer. Members are encouraged to pray daily for one another and to occasionally check in and support one another between gatherings. Contact the Office of Evangelization & Discipleship for additional resources.

The second group is our parish team. This might include parish staff, paid or volunteer, and/or other parish leaders. For most parishes, let's call this a Parish Staff Meeting, but it can also be a good model for other parish groups as well. When meeting with parish staff, take a good amount of time to share prayer and to share your lives and faith with one another. This is the kind of Christian community that grows strong and is attractive to others and models for the parish what community can and should be. This is not a place to share the deepest, darkest struggles of our lives, but it is time to share in the grace of God and to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for everything on the meeting agenda. It can take many forms and it is good to share the leadership for this prayer among the members, so there is variety, but there must be time to invest in relationship with one another through sharing life and faith. Again, this is a very good model for other parish gatherings as well.

Special Times of Prayer

As ministry leaders, we each know when our bucket of spiritual resources is getting low. And we need the encouragement and support of one another to occasionally use work time to seek the guidance and indwelling of the Spirit and to be filled with God's love and purpose. This could mean once a month stepping out of the office and going to the chapel for a couple hours. It could mean taking an afternoon once a month to attend a local retreat house and having time carved out for retreating with the Lord. In most cases, you will need to work this out with your supervisor, but the fruit of this time spent is usually very evident in those we supervise. This also might be a time to see a spiritual director.

Annual Retreat

Many of us have been on retreat before. Usually we are leading it, serving on the team or there to insure it all goes well logistically, but this is very different from taking a personal retreat. You are encouraged to find opportunities for such a retreat. In dialogue with your supervisor, consider budgeting under professional development a personal retreat and attending annually at a local retreat house. Again, although this is time out of the office, it is directly related to your effectiveness as a disciple of Jesus. We all need to invest in our ongoing personal and spiritual health. The parish is not always going to provide for your every need, but for the spiritual needs of our employees, this is an important step. If this is not allowed for any number of reasons, you might consider using some of your tithe or personal resources to insure you have time for this important part of your ongoing spiritual health.

Spiritual Director

Another important resource in our spiritual lives is the opportunity to visit with a spiritual director. These are available in a variety of places such as St. Meinrad and we have a list of 8-10 people around the Owensboro area on our diocesan website under "discipleship resources." At times there may be an associated cost that prevents people from participating regularly, but we all have times in our lives where this could be the first step in addressing an issue in our spiritual or personal lives. This spiritual companion will reflect back to you what they hear and offer spiritual wisdom and care.

Parish transformation happens when the parish leaders take their own discipleship seriously as individuals and as a team. As these leaders invest in these important personal growth and well-being practices, the fruit of their lives become a model for how the entire parish could grow through basic practices of personal and community prayer and sharing life and faith together. It must start with the leaders.

Personal Discipleship Reflection

The present pandemic has pushed all of us in Church leadership to find new ways of being Church and to support those in our care and beyond. It has also revealed deficiencies in our own faith and practices, leading us to isolation, worry and grief. Now is the perfect time to do a self-assessment and discern how you can take a step forward in your discipleship.

On a scale 1 to 10, rate the following: (1-Not at all, 10-Excellent)

1. The effectiveness of my prayer life today: _____
2. I feel close to God: _____
3. My emotional health: _____
4. My physical health: _____
5. My spiritual health and well-being: _____
6. I regularly talk on the phone or meet with a supportive friend or group: _____
7. I share life and faith with other ministry leaders regularly: _____
8. I participate in retreats in normal years: _____
9. I have talked with my supervisor about my spiritual health: _____
10. I see the value in meeting with a spiritual director: _____

Score and discern your next step. 100 to 80 points- you are striving for excellence, keep it up. 79-60 points- you are not far off and some small adjustments will lead to greater happiness and health. 59-40 points- Life happens and we get off track, time to find some support and make some changes. 39-0 points- God has so much more in store for you. Reach out and find support and accountability for what you know you need.

Which of the following do I need to commit to for the following month? Pick one.

- Go to daily Mass
- Set aside 10-30 minutes each morning to pray
- Talk to my supervisor about my spiritual health
- Make plans to go on retreat
- Make a virtual or in-person visit with a spiritual director
- Advocate that our staff spend 15-20 in prayer and faith sharing each week
- Join a small faith sharing or Growth Group

What am I going to commit to doing to take a step forward in my personal discipleship?

Sign your name and date it: _____

Parish Staff Discipleship Reflection

As a parish staff, it is important that we care for and support one another while living the mission of Jesus in our parish. In the busyness of ministry and especially during the present pandemic, it is easy to lose sight of our need to support one another. In an effort to discern if there is anything we could do differently as a staff that would increase our effectiveness in working together, please fill out the top section rating these 10 statements. Do this individually ahead of time and have one person volunteer to collect them and give a combined rating for each question.

On a scale 1 to 10, rate the following: (1-Not at all, 10-Excellent)

1. We care about one another: _____
2. We pray together as a staff: _____
3. Our meetings begin with a time of prayer: _____
4. We celebrate milestones in each other's lives: _____
5. If I am down or struggling with a situation, I can ask someone to pray with me:

6. We share our faith stories and experiences with one another: _____
7. We take time annually to go off site and retreat as a staff: _____
8. We have taken personality, work styles, StrengthsFinder, or similar tools to grow as a staff and better understand ourselves and one another: _____
9. I feel supported and cared for on our staff: _____
10. I feel supported and cared for by my direct supervisor: _____

Get an average for each question and discuss as a staff. (Have one person collect the responses and give an average point total for each question.) A score of 10-8 points- you are striving for excellence as a staff and building meaningful community together. A score of 7.9-6 points- you are on the right track, keep building on your successes. A score of 5.9-4 points shows this is happening, but that improvements need to be made. A score below 3.9 may mean this has not been part of your culture, but maybe you can try something new.

There are so many opportunities to improve our discipleship as a team. Each of these above practices and outcomes help us build meaningful community. Start with small steps to address these important aspects of parish staff dynamics, which will bear good fruit and lead to greater growth and support for the team. And again, we cannot create a dynamic culture in our parish until we live and model this dynamic Christian culture as a parish staff.

Three discussion questions:

- What most surprised you?
- What two areas above were the lowest and what can we do to address one or both areas?
- What single area of need would be the easiest to address and what could we implement to improve it?

II. Parish Staff/Team Development

The ultimate leader of the parish staff is certainly the pastor. However, it is also common for the responsibility for much of this section to be shared with or delegated by the pastor. Rather than a pastor being the direct supervisor of all 12 staff members, the pastor may have two or three direct reports and these individuals might in turn have one or more people reporting to them. This shares the responsibility load and allows time for direct supervisors to insure their reports have the resources and support they need to do their jobs. If this process of a managerial model is new to you or you have questions, ask the human resource office for support or ask for a training in the diocese for priests and other direct supervisors on your staff.

As mentioned earlier, the greatest resource we have is the human resources represented in our lay ecclesial ministers and our parish members. First, we need to support and care for our parish staff and create a culture of teamwork and shared leadership. Once we begin to model this in the parish, the culture can slowly begin to change to an empowerment or “leader/leader” model, which again would be a great diocesan training opportunity.

The bottom line is that across all types of employment, people last longest in jobs where they have a good relationship with their direct supervisor and they feel cared for and support in their role. Additionally, a parish staff that is praying together, sharing life and faith will be developing a vibrant culture of support and trust. Then adding opportunities to encourage personal health and well-being, ongoing personal and professional development and all staff development activities will deepen community and increase the effectiveness of the staff.

Personal Health & Wellbeing

The direct supervisor is responsible for providing care and support to each employee under their direction. This includes meeting with them regularly, taking an interest in their personal, professional and spiritual well-being and helping them to fully become the ministerial leader that God has called them to be. Even if key staff is unpaid, it is important to take an interest in their ongoing health and support them in this manner.

Each staff member should have a job description and a clear understanding of their work hours and responsibilities. It is a rare parish staff member that cuts corners and barely does the job. Most work hard and always give a little more than expected. If that is not the case with a specific employee, then it must be addressed head on. For the majority, the supervisor role is more like a coach, mentor and even friend. Taking a

personal interest in the employee, not just because it's the job, but because they want to make their job enjoyable and insure they have all the necessary resources and support to be effective.

Often times when lay ecclesial ministers put in time way above and beyond the standard expectation, a supervisor might say something like, "Carol, you have been here every day this week and three nights in a row, are you planning to stay home tomorrow or is there a break coming up soon for you?" Expressing personal care, affirming them for work well done, meeting with them regularly to insure they are being supported and are doing well, personally, professional and spiritually, is an important part of the supervisor's job. Even having more difficult conversations like, "I have heard from two parents that you have not returned their calls, are you aware of this?" Or, "I really appreciate that you have so many good ideas, but I want to encourage you to learn when to back off and let others contribute."

Everyone has a supervisor and needs to feel supported and cared for. This is a major shift in culture for many on parish staffs. But these are the kind of best practices that help keep employees and create a deeply Christian and caring culture that begins to transform the staff and then begins to create parish transformation. It starts small, but there is no short cut or easy fix to creating culture that supports and cares for one another.

Ongoing Personal & Professional Development

A supervisor is also the key person on staff that encourages employees to keep growing and healthy personally and professionally. There may be some situations where an employee may be going through difficult personal situations that might require some outside counseling or time off. The supervisor should encourage them to get the help they need and may even use parish resources to support them, although that is used with discretion.

In addition to ongoing personal development, it is primarily the role of the supervisor to insure the employee has been fully trained for their role and is continuing their formation to stay current and effective. This might include setting an annual goal that employees would attend diocesan training opportunities, an annual conference or minimally be certified at the Advanced level if they serve in any faith formation areas. Ongoing training and development is important for most parish staff members and should be encouraged.

A final thought in this section is actually a great place to start in supporting and caring for parish employees. It is an annual appraisal process. This simple practice will

transform your care and support for those you supervise. It also allows for an annual process of communication, celebrating the great ministry or service that this employee gave over the past year and allows time for discussing vision and setting goals for the coming year. See Appendix A for a couple examples of tools that has been approved for use in our diocese. Feel free to call the McRaith Catholic Center for support in implementing this annual practice. The annual appraisal process is used in the majority of all business sectors and is a clear “best practice” in employee engagement.

All-Staff Development Activities

The following suggestions are just a beginning of a resource to help you and your parish team to grow in individual self-awareness and to develop a greater understanding of the gifts of others, which improves relationships and synergy. There are many tools and we will keep adding to this list and invite you to share your best practices with us so we can improve this resource. Some of these require outside presenters and others can be done on your own. The first suggestion below is a great place to begin to form your staff with a vision of care and support for one another. The McRaith Catholic Center staff is looking for parishes that want to go through this retreat in 2021 and we will facilitate it for you.

Parish Staff/Leadership Retreat Day- It is extremely important for parish staff members and even parish leadership teams to make time to grow in faith together. Being a team is rooted in the communion of the Trinity and we are invited into this covenant relationship as individuals and as a community. However, it takes work. It is not the heavy lifting work of building something, but rather a more relational work that is rooted in vulnerability, shared leadership and the mission of Jesus. Some folks probably prefer the “heavy lifting” type of work, but as disciples of Jesus, dialogue, transparency and the work of being a team is essential. Providing time away from the office and the distractions of everyday ministry was important for Jesus and it should be important for us.

8:30 Arrival and settling

9:00 Naming Our Humanity- Share where you grew up, how many in your family and what number you are, one thing that was unique or difficult in your childhood.

9:30 Naming God’s Divinity- Praise and Worship and Group Spontaneous Prayer

10:00 Personal Prayer/Reflection- Gratitude for God’s Work in your life

10:45 Sharing Our Stories of Encounter

12:30 Lunch

12:45 Regather

1:00 Time of Accompaniment- Prayer Ministry for and With One Another

2:15 Break

- 2:30 Holy Hour (Vine and Branches) Personal Prayer/Reflection- Introducing Personal Keep, Stop, Start
3:15 Discerning Next Steps: Fostering a Vibrant Parish Culture Community & Send
4:00 End

There are many variations to this schedule, but the point of this retreat is to build relationships with one another. It is meant to be an opportunity to appreciate each other's humanity and the gift of God's divinity that we are invited in to be in communion. And the final "Send" element is that we are to go back and work on the group conversation in light of the movement of the Holy Spirit through our prayer and conversation of the day. We have to take this next step of following where the Spirit has led, which will always be to a place of health, personal and communal well-being and growth!

IDISC- Provides a complete profile of your personality. This includes identifying 1 of 14 personality types and offers strengths/challenges, defining characteristics, and suggestions for working with others. This inventory can be ordered at talentsmart.com. Click on the products and go to the IDISC. The cost is \$19.95 per booklet and each person on your team will need one. The simple instructions walk each person through discovering their type and then the 14 personality types are outlined. This is a great first step in further self-understanding and learning to appreciate the gifts of others and work with those on your team.

StrengthsFinder 2.0 or Living Your Strengths- We get so accustomed to trying to improve our weaknesses and these books provide a fresh new perspective to work on improving your strengths. These positive and engaging resources are filled with ways to enrich the members of your team and get to know what makes them tick. Consider purchasing a book for each member on your team and ask them to take the StrengthsFinder assessment and report back on their top five strengths. You could read a chapter and come together to discuss it and work through the book as a team. You could ask people to report what they learned about themselves and then research their findings to learn how to work more effectively with them. Go to store.gallup.com and click on the tab titled "For Individuals." Go down to the "Books" link and see these, and other books for your consideration. The cost is about \$20 per book and it is listed at Amazon for \$17.30.

The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace- This book is available online at Christianbook.com for \$11.49 each. It includes an access code to take the Motivating By Appreciation assessment. Then the team can assemble and discuss the findings.

Again, reading a section of the book and then gathering to discuss it can be a very effective way to build community and learn about your team.

Myers Briggs Type Indicator or Keirsey Report- This is an excellent way to introduce people to the concept of personality type and both of these indicators offer a letter combination representing 16 personalities. People are amazed at how well these tools identify their strengths and opportunities for growth and they learn so much about themselves and the people they work with. We may offer a MBTI workshop if it is needed in the diocese and you can find materials and info at Keirsey.com. Cost is \$20-\$30 per person for the assessment and accompanying workbook for the MBTI.

COVID-19 Celebration Exercise

We all know this year has been difficult on so many fronts, but it is so important to pause as a team and reflect on so many blessings and projects that would have not happened without this pandemic. We need to celebrate as a team...

Setting: There are many ways you could take time for this celebration exercise. Don't be afraid to lean into the particular personality of your staff and be creative. Here are some suggestions.

1. Set aside a couple hours or a day for a staff retreat and reflection and include some of the following questions in the process.
2. Have a special staff lunch and celebration and take time during the extended meal time to discuss the questions below.
3. Make an "Affirmation Wall" that includes the name of every parish team member and give people an opportunity to write down ways they wish to celebrate each other's ministry.

Possible questions for reflection:

1. What are your top 5 personal wins in the past 9 months? (Personal goals, exercise, work at home, family experiences, etc.)
2. What has been the greatest blessing for you during this experience?
3. What are your top 5 ministry wins in the past 9 months? (Ministry experiences where you were the lead for or were a part of a team on)
4. Where or when did God do something that was unexpected with your ministry effort?
5. Opportunity for Affirmation: What are 5 things you saw others on the parish team do that you are proud of in the past 9 months?
6. What are 5 ways you are proud of the work of your parish in the past 9 months?
7. Who do we, as a staff, need to reach out to and celebrate/affirm in our greater parish community from this time of reflection?

III. Parish Evaluation & Planning

Pastoral Council/Leadership Reflection

There are a wide variety of parishes in our diocese and no two are exactly alike. The Office of Evangelization & Discipleship in our diocese wants to help your parish take a next step in becoming a parish of Missionary Disciples.

Missionary Disciples is a term suggested by Pope Francis that is rooted in the primary call of the Church to be disciple-making and to evangelize others. Therefore, we need to look at our efforts to live as disciples of Jesus as a community of faith, and in turn ask, how well do we model Christian community and share Jesus with others.

Each of our parishes has much to celebrate and affirm, but it is also true that we have to take a critical look at how we care for and attract others to become active members and disciples of Jesus. We realize that many younger people are choosing not to be active members. Although many parishes are still tight-knit, and have a core group of dedicated parishioners, the challenge today is to attract and retain new members. This will require a shift in the way we do things and a new level of openness and involvement among all members in the mission of the parish.

Business as usual is not going to move our parishes into a new era of dynamic mission and growth. We need to take new steps in building a community of disciples among all our members and inviting others to join us in our efforts to live and proclaim a Catholic way of life, rooted in the person and mission of Jesus.

Study after study over the past several years in the Catholic Church reveals a need for parishes to focus on the following:

- A clear and compelling vision
- Offering encounters with Jesus and helping people grow in this relationship daily
- The necessity of excellent hospitality
- The priority of the Sunday experience
- Co-responsibility and leadership of all members
- Importance of innovation
- Adult faith-sharing groups
- Service to wider community

Evangelization is sharing the good news of a relationship with Christ with others. When our parishes do this well with their members, a dynamic community of disciples is created and this begins to transform the parish. The focus on welcoming others, serving the wider community and living the mission of Jesus is contagious and life giving. Our parishes need to reflect this in all we do. Begin by evaluating your current efforts and discerning your next step or two.

Parish Council/Leadership Reflection Tool

As a member of the pastoral council or a key leader within the parish, your perspective is extremely important. As we seek to understand the importance of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' document, *Living as Missionary Disciples*, and discern where God is calling us as a parish, we need to evaluate where we are at the present moment. Please rate the following questions 1 to 10 and help us discern key next steps. (Provide the document via email to all you are asking to respond: <https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/living-as-missionary-disciples/files/assets/basic-html/page-1.html>).

On a scale 1 to 10, rate the following: (1-Not at all, 10-Excellent)

1. We have a tight-knit community: _____
2. New people are joining our church: _____
3. People are welcomed well when they visit: _____
4. Our Sunday experience is engaging for all: _____
5. We have opportunities for people to experience Jesus: _____
6. Members are comfortable sharing their faith: _____
7. We have adult faith sharing groups: _____
8. Our parish mission is well-known and inspiring: _____
9. Families and young people are engaged in the parish: _____
10. Prayer is an important part of all our meetings and discernment: _____

Get an average for each question and discuss as a parish staff and pastoral council. (For example, you may have five people fill it out. One person collects the five responses, adds the five numbers for each question together and divides by the total number, in this case five. If question one had these five numbers: 7, 6, 9, 5 and 4, the total would be 31 divided by 5 equals 6.2.) A score of 10-8 points- you are living the mission of the parish well and inspiring new leaders. A score of 7.9-6 points- you are on the right track, keep building on your successes. A score of 5.9-4 points shows that improvement is needed. A score below 3.9 may mean this has not been part of your culture, but needs to be a greater focus going forward.

Three discussion questions:

1. What most surprised you?
2. What two areas above were the lowest and what can we do to address one or both areas?
3. What single area of need would be the easiest to address and what could we implement to improve it?

Parish Council/Leadership Evaluation Tool

Caution: This conversation, and the leading of the Holy Spirit, will lead to new life and vibrancy in your parish community!

How to transform the culture of the parish community

The following is just a teaser summary of 110 pages of the book by Fr. James Mallon titled *Divine Renovation*. Please see the book and study guide for further tools to discuss with your staff and leadership teams. Perhaps this book would be an excellent study for your parish council.

Values:

- Show me your budget and I will show you your values
- Look at your staffing
 - Evangelization
 - Adult faith formation
 - Youth
 - Young adult
 - Schools/religious education
- For our staff members who have multiple roles (i.e. DRE or Director of Faith Formation) what proportion of their time is allotted to doing which task?
- The New Evangelization is the transformation of the culture – which is a conversion of our values.
- We don't have to change our theology; we have to start living out this rich theology of the Christian life. It means a total conversion of our lived values.
- This is not a quick fix.
- Bottom line: are you willing to let go of your "safe plans" that you come up with and let God plan and dream for your parish?
- We need SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Agreed upon, Realistic and Time-bound.

Ten common values shared by healthy and growing parish communities:

1. Priority of the Weekend – Psalm 118:24

Thoughts: This is the one time of the week that we have the majority of our people (80%). Sunday Eucharist ought to be a "production" in the best sense of the word (not showmanship). Do we, as a parish, provide the WOW effect? Is the WOW effect on the lips of those sent out to glorify God with their lives? Do people want to attend? Do

newcomers return? Does our church building serve us well for gathering, celebrating and connecting?

Goals/Objectives for reaching goals?

2. Hospitality – Matthew 25:35

Thoughts: Think about the visitor. Put yourself in the shoes of someone who doesn't yet belong. Does our entire faith community understand its responsibility to be welcoming and hospitable- pew hospitality? Are we joyful? If Jesus is in your heart please notify your face! How well do we welcome strangers? How well do we reach out to strangers? Bathrooms? Cry room? Welcome Center for registration/membership? Do our office hours accommodate our parishioners' work and life schedules?

Goals/Objectives for reaching goals?

3. Uplifting Music – Psalm 96:1

Thoughts: Remember, songs move the heart and not just the mind. Are we investing in training our local talent or hiring good musicians? Do our parishioners understand why we sing and that "liturgy" means to work? How do we rate the music ministry of our parish? Does the music ministry of our parish encourage full, active, conscious participation of all the faithful? Does our worship space provide ample room for the music ministry?

Goals/Objectives for reaching goals?

4. Homilies – 1 Corinthians 9:16

Thoughts: This is when a priest has the vast majority of his people; make it count. Do the priests speak to the entire person- mind, heart, conscience and will? Do homilies provide exegesis on Sacred Scripture? It is Good News that is preached? Does one experience joy from the preaching ministry of the parish priest? Do you experience your priests as real and vulnerable while preaching? Recognizing that difficult truths must be spoken out of love for the people, do you feel loved by your priests who are called to preach Truth? Does the preaching ministry of your parish priests lead the community to Jesus? Does preaching lead to action? Does the pastor have a group of people that will give him good and honest feedback? Do homilies build on one another?

Goals/Objectives for reaching goals?

5. Meaningful Community – Acts of the Apostles 4:32

Thoughts: The parish is a “family of families” – Authentic community is a place where we are known and loved. It is a place where we find others to whom we are accountable and who are accountable to us. What do visitors see? What would they conclude? Do we provide opportunities for a real and authentic experience of belonging? (Alpha, Name Tag Sunday, prayer partners, prayer ministry after Mass, connect groups, etc.) Are we a healthy church where people grow spiritually, serve others, and share financial resources sacrificially?

Goals/Objectives for reaching goals?

6. Clear Expectations – Luke 14:27-28

Thoughts: Do we communicate expectations for membership in the parish? Do we communicate what people should be able to expect, as members, from the parish? Is our Stewardship initiative all that it can be- Time (Discipleship); Talent (Ministry); Treasure (Sharing of Financial Resources)? Areas of improvement?

Goals/Objectives for reaching goals?

7. Strength-Based Ministry – 1 Peter 4:11

Thoughts: Do we assist parishioners with identifying their gifts/talents? Are we people first– not just plugging a hole when it comes to volunteering?

Goals/Objectives for reaching goals?

8. Formation of Small Communities – Luke 6:13

Thoughts: Meaningful community must become a normative part of the life of the Church. Caring for needs is the job of all. We need to bring our people to maturity. In larger parishes, Father can’t attend to the needs of every person or family; how are we all involved in ministering to others that Father can’t? It is highly suggested that we have connect groups in our parish – midsize is the preference – that would meet, maybe, once per month in each other’s home, share a meal, provide a time for prayer, take turns presenting a topic/sharing testimony, and share in some kind of outreach. After RCIA or an encounter with Jesus Christ how do we keep people connected to the community?

Goals/Objectives for reaching goals?

9. Experience of the Holy Spirit – John 14:12

Thoughts: The Holy Spirit is the Mystery of God in us; a life-altering experience of power. We need to remind people that they have the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit and that Faith in Christ includes a transformative experience of the Holy Spirit. Enthusiasm (en theo = In God) is the literal response to the presence of the Holy Spirit who is God in us and we in God. Does our parish provide experiences of the Holy Spirit?

Goals/Objectives for reaching goals?

10. Becoming an Inviting Church – John 1:39

Thoughts: Are our people intentionally invitational recognizing that we are all responsible for inviting people to Church, to the Faith? Do we, as a parish, possess a compelling vision of what we can be; do we need a vision statement? Do we equip our parishioners to be evangelizers? Goals/Objectives for reaching goals?

Conclusion

As you can see by this resource tool for our Living as Missionary Disciples SEND event, the primary mission of the Church is to make disciples. To make disciples, we must strive to foster parishes that are filled with enthusiastic followers of Jesus that are interested in living out the primary mission of the Church in all areas of their lives.

Beginning with the pastor and parish staff, and including all parish ministry leaders, there needs to be an intentional focus on helping people experience God's love through the person of Jesus. This encounter with Jesus needs to be fostered on a daily basis, where each disciple learns to see life from God's perspective and learns to share the Good News of our faith with others.

Through daily personal prayer and regular prayer with small groups in your parish community, the Holy Spirit will begin moving in wonderful ways to build up your parish. As prayer with others becomes more comfortable and the language of evangelization and discipleship begin to make more sense, the parish can begin moving toward addressing the goals of helping parishioners to "Encounter" Jesus, learn to "Accompany" them on their journey of faith and the importance of developing a vibrant "Community" of faith. Encounter, Accompany, Community and Send, have been the four themes that the leadership of our diocese have been working on for the past three years. Now it is time to share this more fully in our parishes and begin to reverse the trend of apathy and decline in parishes across our diocese.

More tools are being developed to support our parishes and the Office of Evangelization & Discipleship welcomes your input, questions and the opportunity to serve your parish, by working with your parish staff, pastoral council and/or other parish leadership. As we work together, we will share our best practices with other parishes and together we will all grow in living the mission of Jesus in western Kentucky!

For additional resources for Encounter, Accompany, and Community, please see the resource tool on the diocesan website. It can be found at the Evangelization & Discipleship webpage and then under the "Community" link. The resources is listed in the left column of this page or you can find it here: <https://owensborodiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/March-12-Booklet-edited-with-style.pdf>

Please call for support to help discern next steps in your parish.

Sincerely,

Jeff Andrini

Director of the Office of Evangelization & Discipleship

Diocese of Owensboro