

OBJECTIVES, PREPARATION AND ACTIVITIES OF THE PASTORAL VISIT OF THE PARISH

**“The pastoral visit is an apostolic endeavour,
an event of grace.”**
(Directory of Bishops)

Using the orientations suggested in this document, the pastor and the parish team, along with the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Administration Board (Parish Finance Committee) prepare the Archbishop’s pastoral visit.

GOALS OF THE VISITATION

1. To come into personal contact with the priests, parish life directors and priest moderators, deacons, pastoral coordinators, pastoral associates, and lay people responsible for various areas of the pastoral life of the parish.
2. To become acquainted with the reality of the environment, the socio-economic condition of the people, the current pastoral programs, and the overall functioning of the parish.
3. From a faith perspective, to look at the parish community in its main components : faith education at all ages, sacramental and liturgical life, the sense of community, co-responsibility, service to society, the relationship of the parish with the archdiocesan and universal Church; financial organisation and the state of recordkeeping of sacramental registers and other archival material.
4. To bring encouragement and hope to those involved in pastoral work and to all the people of the parish.
5. To celebrate the Eucharist and to proclaim the Word of God with the parish community convened for the occasion.

PREPARATION OF THE VISIT

1. In each parish, the Parish Pastoral Council or a special committee of this Council takes on the responsibility of the preparation, facilitation and evaluation of the visit.
2. To prepare, there are questionnaires to be completed and submitted to the Archbishop one week before the meeting with the Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Committee.
3. Questionnaire I is more general in nature and must be completed by each parish. Questionnaire II, which is more detailed, is meant to guide you towards a deeper analysis. It is optional, but could be a useful tool for the parish in its preparations.

In addition, before the Archbishop's visit, the Diocesan Financial Administrator and/or his internal audit team will be on site to perform the necessary audits. This will also be the case for the Diocesan Chancellor who will verify the sacramental registers and other archival material.

4. The pastoral visit of the Archbishop is announced beforehand and is preceded by explanations teaching the parishioners about the meaning of the visit. This can then also be an occasion for consultation amongst all the parishioners on various aspects of the visit.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE VISIT

The pastoral visit will take place over two or three days. In a general manner, the schedule of the pastoral visit, to be planned by the Pastor, the chair of the Parish Pastoral Council and the chair of the Parish Finance Committee in consultation with the Archbishop, will include the following elements, according to the realities of the parish:

- Individual visit with the pastor or the team comprised of parish life directors and priest moderator
- Joint meeting with members of the Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Committee, beginning with a discussion of the pastoral dimension followed by the financial situation
- Individual visits with lay people involved in pastoral life, either employed or volunteer, especially the coordinators of the various areas of the pastoral life of the parish.
- Visit of the sick and elderly
- Visit with young people (either through catechetical programs, meeting with teenagers, school classes or other such opportunities)
- Other visits or meetings

The visit concludes on a weekend:

- The Archbishop will preside all weekend Eucharistic celebrations, where he will offer on what he has observed and recommendations and encouragement for the future.
- Open forum/townhall meeting whereby the parishioners can ask questions of the Archbishop and offer suggestions in regards to their parish and to the diocese

QUESTIONNAIRE I

QUESTIONNAIRE OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION AND GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

(to be completed by the Pastor or Parish Life Director
together with the Parish Pastoral Council)

A) Name of parish _____

B) Statistics

Catholic population

Members with collection envelopes or direct debit _____

Other registered members _____

Estimated number of Catholics in the territory
of your parish _____

Estimated total number of households served
by your parish _____

Estimated percentages according to age _____

Over 60 _____

From 30 to 60 _____

From 20 to 30 _____

From 7 to 20 _____

Less than 7 _____

Average Sunday attendance _____

Baptisms: number in each of the last five years

201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____

First Communion: number in each of the last five years

201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____

Confirmation: number in each of the last five years

201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____

Marriages: number in each of the last five years

201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____

Funerals: number in each of the last five years

201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____ 201_, _____

C) Overall Perspective / General Observation

- General description of the parish

- Comments on pastoral and spiritual life of the parish. Principal pastoral initiatives and endeavours to respond to possibilities and challenges that have been identified in regards to the parish as a whole.

- Financial situation and building/material issues to be dealt with

D) Pastoral Life

- Number of children in your catechetical program _____
- Number of teenagers in your youth ministry efforts _____
- List of councils and committees involved in the pastoral life of your parish, as well as the various associations, spiritual movements and also groups involved in charitable and social justice efforts. **(please indicate on a separate sheet)**
- Names and functions/responsibilities of pastoral workers employed in your parish **(please indicate on a separate sheet)**

E) Leadership and Organization of the Pastoral Life of Your Parish

- Does your parish have a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC)? Yes / No
- Name of the chairperson of your PPC _____
- How many members on your PPC? _____
- Number of years per term _____ Renewable: Yes/No How often? _____
- Does your PPC have a constitution and bylaws? Yes / No
- How are members chosen to be on the PPC? By election? By appointment by the pastor? Please explain the process and time of the year that it happens.

- Are there rules in place to try to ensure that there is a variety of people serving on the PPC over the years, ensuring that members do not serve for any more than two consecutive terms on the PPC before stepping down for a time?

Yes / No

- What efforts have been made in the last five years to establish or revitalize the organization and functioning of your Parish Pastoral Council, PPC? To review the communication and collaboration between the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Committee/Administration Board?

- What efforts have been made in the last five years to make evangelization the primary focus of the Parish Pastoral Council and the parishioners, to strive to become a parish of missionary disciples, rather than a parish simply assuring the status quo?

QUESTIONNAIRE II

DETAILED QUESTIONNAIRE

In the following sections, please offer your comments on the present situation, on your challenges and difficulties, on your hopes for the future and on the initiatives/projects you plan on developing.

1) Faith education, spiritual growth and evangelization:

My parish is.... a place where we evangelize by proclaiming the Word of God in relation to the personal and communal lived experience of its members, of those who have distanced themselves from the Church and of those who have not yet come to the faith.

- a) What are some past efforts and current projects for evangelization? How do we make ourselves present to those who are no longer coming to Church and to those who have fallen away from the faith? How do we share our Christian faith with those who do not have the faith?
- b) Parents are the first educators of their children in faith. How do we accompany them as they prepare their children for Baptism, after Baptism and in early childhood?
- c) How do we accompany parents at the time of the sacramental preparation of their children for First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation?
- d) How do our elementary school children and adolescents grow in their faith? Describe your catechetical program, youth ministry efforts, involvement of children and youth in the life of the parish.
- e) Describe your efforts to support the journey of faith in an on-going way for young adults, adults and seniors, through faith formation sessions, retreats, small faith-sharing communities, Nathanael, etc.
- f) How do we prepare couples for marriage through the “For Better and Forever” couples’ program? What support is given to these couples after their marriage?

2) Sacramental, liturgical and personal prayer life:

My parish is...a place where Liturgy celebrates Jesus Christ in relation to the lived experience of its members.

- a) The quality of your Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist: How does the assembly participate? Is there youth involvement in the liturgy? Do we celebrate parish events in our liturgies?
- b) Attendance at Sunday Mass: What percentage of the parish population regularly attends Sunday Mass? What are our reflections on this situation? What pastoral actions can be undertaken?
- c) The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation: What form does it take? When is it offered? What can we do to foster a rediscovery of the Sacrament of Reconciliation among those who have been baptized?
- d) Baptisms, weddings, funerals: What are our observations and remarks?
- e) Non-sacramental liturgical celebrations and devotions (e.g. adoration hours, rosary, evenings of prayer).
- f) Visiting and bringing communion to the sick and shut-ins.
- g) Family prayer, personal prayer.

3) Sense of belonging:

My parish is....a place with a sense of belonging to a family of faith.

- a) What projects have nurtured community spirit in the parish, to be a welcoming community marked by mutual support?

4) Involvement in society:

Our parish is ...a place which leads to apostolic/prophetic action and active involvement in society, with special attention to the poor.

- a) What are the main socio-economic problems experienced by the people of our parish and our city or region? How do we respond to these needs? Aid to the poor, prisoners, refugees and immigrants, those that are alone in life.
- b) Is there an awareness among the members of the parish of their responsibility toward missions and aid to developing countries? What parish projects have been developed in this regard?

5) Co-responsibility in our parish:

Our parish is...a place with a true sense of co-responsibility.

- a) What is the lived experience of the co-responsibility of the pastor or parish life director and the laity within the councils, committees, and movements in the parish? What is the measure of collaboration in the parish and the level of participation of lay people?
- b) Describe the manner of functioning of the Parish Pastoral Council, working with the pastor, in providing leadership and necessary planning for the parish's life. What support or resources are needed by the PPC to fulfill their role?
- c) The efforts taken to provide formation and training to lay people, that they might take on the ministries needed for the viability and vitality of the parish. In what areas of parish life is this already present? In what areas would this formation and support need to be developed?

6) Relationship with the archdiocesan and universal Church:

Our parish is...a place where the Ecclesial communion is expressed in harmony with the archdiocesan and universal Church.

- a) Is there collaboration at the deanery level? What efforts/projects are done in common?
- b) The commonalities between our parish life and diocesan priorities. How are the diocesan priorities realized in our parish?
- c) Is there parish participation in archdiocesan initiatives, training sessions, and implementation of archdiocesan priorities?
- d) The quality of communications between our parish and diocesan pastoral and administration and services. How can the diocese improve its communication with the parishes and parishioners?
- e) Has your parish accessed the resources and assistance offered by pastoral services at the Diocesan Centre? Has the help received met our needs? What are our expectations with respect to archdiocesan services? What are our expectations of the Archbishop?
- f) What is the relationship between our parish and the members of other religious denominations? Is there ecumenical collaboration in the wider community (city, town, regions)?