



DIOCESAN PLANNING PRIORITY NO. 1: SUNDAY

**CHAPTER 10
SUNDAY**

SECTION 1	Why is Sunday a Diocesan planning priority? pg.2
SECTION 2	What is the Church saying? pg 3
SECTION 3	What do we see happening? ...Trends pg 5
SECTION 4	Best Practices pg 8
SECTION 5	Preaching pg 10
RESOURCE A	Assessment tool: Observations of the Sunday Experiencepg. 14
RESOURCE B	Assessment tool: Observations with Music Ministrypg. 17
SECTION 6	Sample Goalspg. 20

DIOCESAN PLANNING PRIORITY NO. 1: SUNDAY

CHAPTER 10 SECTION 1

WHY?

Why is Sunday a Diocesan planning priority?

Among the many activities of a parish, “none is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Day.” – Pope Saint John Paul II.

The Holy Mass is the center of all parish activities because it is the gift of the Eucharist that is the source and summit of our faith. As Pope Saint John Paul II states in the apostolic letter *Dies Domini*, “The Eucharist is not only a particularly intense expression of the reality of the Church's life, but also in a sense its "fountain-head".

The people, gathering to worship together on Sunday, is the most visible sign and the most important activities for the parish community. **Therefore, what happens at a parish on Sunday warrants our attention and care with proper, well-informed and prayerful preparation.** It is reverently noted that objectively speaking, we encounter the person of Jesus Christ at every Mass, who is made present through the people of God, the Word of God and most profoundly, through His real presence in the Eucharist.

We also acknowledge that as we listened to the people of our diocese, although they expressed a *desire* for this objective reality, they also expressed that they often have varied *subjective* experiences on Sunday at their local parishes. The hope is that all those who attend Mass at every parish would experience a life-changing and life-sustaining encounter with Jesus Christ. As we take steps towards serving the liturgy well, there are several key elements surrounding the celebration of Mass that can help dispose people more fully to recognize and receive that objective reality and gift. Perhaps another way we can look at it is, to consider a fine piece of art, it is in and of itself beautiful and because of its beauty, we are good stewards of that art and desire to frame it well, so to draw focus and attention to its beauty. In the same way, there are certain elements of the experience of Sunday that we can learn to attend to, that have the ability to ‘frame’ the beauty of the Mass for people. In a sense, aiding to draw attention to the beauty which already exists.

Given the nature of Sunday Mass and its importance in the lives of the faithful, it must be prepared with special care. – Pope Saint John Paul II.

CHAPTER 10

SECTION 2

WHAT IS THE CHURCH SAYING

What is the Church saying?

“The fundamental importance of Sunday has been recognized through two thousand years of history and was emphatically restated by the Second Vatican Council: "Every seven days, the Church celebrates the Easter mystery. This is a tradition going back to the Apostles, taking its origin from the actual day of Christ's Resurrection — a day thus appropriately designated 'the Lord's Day'." Dies Domini – Pope St. John Paul II

“..the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows” Sacrosanctum Concillium, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (10)

“Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.” Sacrosanctum Concillium, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (14)

“...every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.” Sacrosanctum Concillium, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (5)

“it would be a mistake not to see in the homily an important and very adaptable instrument of evangelization...This preaching, inserted in a unique way into the Eucharistic celebration, from which it receives special force and vigor, certainly has a particular role in evangelization, to the extent that it expresses the profound faith of the sacred minister and is impregnated with love...”
Evangelii Nuntiandi, *Evangelization in the Modern World* - Pope Paul VI (43)

“Given the nature of Sunday Mass and its importance in the lives of the faithful, it **must be prepared with special care**. In ways dictated by pastoral experience and local custom in keeping with liturgical norms, efforts must be made to ensure that the celebration has the festive character appropriate to the day commemorating the Lord's Resurrection. To this end, it is important to devote attention to the *songs used by the assembly*, since singing is a particularly apt way to express a joyful heart, accentuating the solemnity of the celebration and fostering the sense of a common faith and a shared love. Care must be taken to ensure the quality, both of the texts and of the melodies, so that what is proposed today as new and creative will conform to liturgical requirements and be worthy of the Church's tradition which, in the field of sacred music, boasts a priceless heritage.” Die Dominis, Pope St. John Paul II (50)

What is Pope Francis saying?

“Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.” Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium ; Joy of the Gospel*, no. 24

“The homily takes up once more the dialogue which the Lord has already established with his people. The preacher must know the heart of his community, in order to realize where its desire for God is alive and ardent, as well as where that dialogue, once loving, has been thwarted and is now barren.” Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium ; Joy of the Gospel*, no. 138

“Preparation for preaching is so important a task that a prolonged time of study, prayer, reflection and pastoral creativity should be devoted to it.” Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 145

“Some pastors argue that such preparation is not possible given the vast number of tasks which they must perform; nonetheless, I presume to ask that each week a sufficient portion of personal and community time be dedicated to this task, even if less time has to be given to other important activities. Trust in the Holy Spirit who is at work during the homily is not merely passive but active and creative. It demands that we offer ourselves and all our abilities as instruments (cf. *Rom 12:1*) which God can use. A preacher who does not prepare is not “spiritual”; he is dishonest and irresponsible with the gifts he has received.” Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 145

What is the USCCB saying?

“When the liturgy of a parish is celebrated well, the faith of the members of the community is strengthened. It is also a door to evangelization. The community of faith is a place of invitation, welcome, and hospitality, especially for those who are inquiring or returning.

The Church’s liturgy, by its very nature as a proclamation and enactment of the Good News of salvation, is an evangelical act: “The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.”

Living as Missionary Disciple, USCCB

CHAPTER 10

SECTION 3

WHAT DO WE SEE HAPPENING? ...TRENDS

If we truly listen to people and look at the trends, we see that indeed there is an urgency that warrants us relooking at the time we take in every parish towards preparing for Sunday. If we look at national statistics, we can see that people are ‘telling us’ why they are often choosing to leave the Catholic Church and we can see that clearly there has been a steady decline in Mass attendance.

- Of course, we have shared the staggering statistics of our diocese losing 1/3 of our Catholics in 40 years.
We have shared with you before the dramatic decrease of 67% to 38% in our Catholic population.
- Our Mass count, weekend Mass attendance in this Diocese ... numbers are slowly on the increase.
However, consider that in 2004 we sat over 30,000 on any given weekend and now we sit a little over 23,000. That’s a decrease of nearly 21% in 13 years. And, lest we look to other trends for relief, the general population has actually increased by nearly 13,000 in that same timeframe.
- Right now, the number of parishes who sit less than 500 people at all their weekend Masses is 19 of 38. If we don’t do anything different, by our 50th anniversary we expect 22 parishes – that’s over half of the diocese – will sit less than 500 people at all their weekend Masses.
- Right now, the number of parishes who sit less than 300 people at all their weekend Masses is 8 of 38. If we don’t do anything different, by our 50th anniversary we expect 14 parishes – that’s 1/3 the diocese – will sit less than 300 people at all their weekend Masses.

While these statistics can be alarming, we have found many parishes across the nation that are successfully engaging and evangelizing people regularly through the Sunday experience, have focused their preparation for Sunday liturgy on 3 key elements:

1. Hospitality
2. Hymns (Liturgical Music)
3. Homily

These parishes have intentionally built in adequate time for preparation and prioritized this preparation within the weekly rhythm of the parish’s activity. These parishes are providing adequate formation of those involved in serving the liturgy in any way. For example: scheduled time for priests and deacons to properly prepare homilies, including time to get helpful feedback from parishioners and to get a good sense of the community’s joys and struggles. It means proper formation for musicians and insisting on adequate preparation and rehearsal time as well as coordination with the priests. It means properly forming hospitality ministers as well as cultivating a spirit of hospitality and awareness of hospitality within the entire parish community.

The Disciple Maker Index

In 2017, every parish in our diocese participated in a parishioner survey called the Disciple Maker Index. This was an assessment tool developed by Catholic Leadership Institute in partnership with Measuring Success that measures the spiritual "health" of a worshiping community in two areas:

1. Individual State of Spirituality - a pastor can see aggregate data as to the level of spirituality of his parishioners.
2. Parish effectiveness - the parish community can assess its effectiveness by measuring how it is living and fulfilling its mission as part of the Catholic Church based on feedback from parishioners.

An assessment of this kind:

- Offers a scientific method for tracking individual spiritual growth.
- Allows each parish to assess how important each foundational ministry is to its members and how effective the parish is in carrying out that ministry and impacting the broader local community.
- Provides invaluable input in the planning process to set priorities and allocate resources in the parish.
- Supplies built-in metrics for a parish to evaluate the effectiveness of their pastoral plan.

What can we learn from the Disciple Maker Index?

There are many ways we can use the data from this tool to help guide our planning process and gauge need and later growth in our parishes. However, let's look at what in-depth analysis of over 25,000 nation-wide responses from the DMI have consistently revealed, as it relates to SUNDAY.

I. Parishioners indicate Sunday experience as primary driver as to whether or not they recommend the parish

Analysis of data collected from nation-wide Disciple Maker Index Survey indicates the top factors that impact **parishioner's likelihood to recommend the parish** include:

1. Recommendation of the pastor
2. Offering a vibrant and engaging Sunday Mass
3. Feeling welcome and accepted
4. Preaching that connects to everyday life
5. Helping them recognize how God is working in their life

** If, through the analysis of the data, it is clear that the above 5 areas are the primary things that drive whether or not a person is to recommend the parish to someone, we can see how important the experience of Sunday is to parishioners. And, why it is so important that we put intentional effort into Sunday.

II. Role of Sunday in forming Disciples

Analysis of DMI data indicates that, in addition to the leadership of the pastor, parishioners grow spiritually by the following 5 indicators:

1. Forming Parishioners as disciples
2. Offering Vibrant and engaging Sunday Mass
3. Making them feel welcomed and accepted
4. Preaching that connects to every day life
5. Helping them recognize how God works in their lives

- This shows us that along with intentional discipleship formation, the SUNDAY Mass experience is the most important factor that will directly impact a person's spiritual growth.
- **Sunday** plays an essential and vital role in **forming disciples of Jesus Christ**.

CHAPTER 10

SECTION 4

BEST PRACTICES FOR SUNDAY

After thorough research and visits to parishes around the U.S. and Canada, we found that parishes that have Liturgies that are effectively engaging and re-engaging parishioners on Sunday, take an initial focus on improving a few key areas. These best practices are as follows:

Hospitality

Hospitality is meant to be more than a “warm welcome” by a few greeters who walk into the church on Sunday. Parishes that are flourishing have spent time cultivating a ‘culture of hospitality’ within those who attend Mass regularly. This allows the community to become a powerful channel of God’s love to all those who come to Mass on Sunday. This is what allows people to feel ‘at home’. And, feeling ‘at home’ can dispose a person to an openness to God, and an openness to what they are about to encounter in the Mass.

As we begin to assess how our parishes are doing with hospitality, it is important that we are always considering ‘what might be the experience of a person who has never been here?’ or even, ‘what might be the experience of someone that has never been to a Catholic Mass?’. The hope is that those in hospitality ministry and a large number of parishioners in the pew, have a loving openness to everyone coming to Mass on Sunday and encounter each person with joy and with a hope that the person they meet will be open to a life changing encounter with God, *this Sunday*.

Imagine if those in hospitality ministry and a large number of people in the pew, really did *see* with reverence those around them at Mass and imagine if these same people had the desire to make everyone in the church feel ‘at home’. To cultivate this culture of hospitality will take intentionality and effort. It will take formation and ongoing assessment. It will take invitation from the pastor and us all helping on another move from a ‘habit of faith’ to an enlivened faith that responds to the reality of us being one family of God. It will take intentional recruitment of parishioners who have a gift of hospitality, who naturally exude joy and welcome. It will take ensuring that you are really taking into account and have a feel for *who* is coming to each Mass. If for example you have a 9:00 Mass that is primarily consisting of families with young children, you would hope to have people on hospitality ministry who naturally relate to families and are able to anticipate the needs of both parents, children and the family unit as a whole.

It is important to consider that hospitality begins from the time anyone drives or walks onto the campus of the parish. We can ask ourselves, ‘is it easy to find where to enter the church?’ , ‘are the grounds and walk from the parking lot to the church, inviting and beautiful?’ , ‘ if I’m not Catholic, is it easy for me follow along and know what is happening?’. In summary, we should always be considering what the experience of others might be, so that we might anticipate their needs and what would make them feel most at home.

Knowing how to find what we need, is an important aspect of hospitality. It is important to consider if things like the restroom or cry room are easily identified and easy to find. It is important to consider what information parishioners might be wanting to find on Sunday. Are there people available to help them find the answers they are looking for, or the forms they are looking for? If for example, an announcement is made at Mass that retreat registration has begun, is there an easy way people can register after Mass that day?

Additionally, hospitality can become a means for CONNECT, the first step in Formation Life Cycle. Therefore, when we consider the CONNECT element of hospitality, we should consider ‘what do we want to direct them to next?’. In this way, we are intentional and open to helping people perhaps take important next steps in the their journey of faith. All those who minister in hospitality should know the formation life cycle and be mindful of how their ministry fits in with the overarching purpose of the parish, to make disciples

Hymns (Liturgical Music)

Music is a powerful gift indeed. Music has the ability to speak the language of love, to touch the human heart and move us in a particular direction. *Song* has the ability to help us express and communicate something deep within us, in a way that mere spoken word may be insufficient. As we have probably heard the quote from St. Augustine, “he who sings, prays twice”.

And we see that music in the liturgy can be a great gift, it is meant to help us enter into a dialogue with God. It is meant to help us offer a hymn of praise to God! When done well and beautifully, music has the ability to open and move our hearts to enter into that dialogue and to recognize the beauty within the mystery and reality of what and WHO we are encountering at every Mass.

As we researched *what* impacts people’s experience of Mass, **music** is always at the top of that which is most influential. And, why it is so important that we devote attention and care to our music ministries in order to ensure the quality of our music at Mass.

As *positively* impactful as beautiful liturgical music can be in helping a congregation enter more deeply into dialogue with God, unfortunately, we know also that music done poorly or with poor quality, can have as much of a distracting and negative impact on people’s experience of Mass.

This is why St. John Paul II reminds us, “**it is important to devote attention to the songs used by the assembly**, since singing is a particularly apt way to express a joyful heart, accentuating the solemnity of the celebration and fostering the sense of a common faith and a shared love. **Care must be taken to ensure the quality**, both of the texts and of the melodies, so that what is proposed today as new and creative will conform to liturgical requirements and be worthy of the Church’s tradition which, in the field of sacred music, boasts a priceless heritage.” *Die Dominis*, Pope St. John Paul II (50)

A first step towards improving music, would be to assess current music ministry groups and take steps in moving towards a standard of excellence. Skilled musicians tend to attract skilled musicians, and often in our parishes we perhaps haven’t allowed for the opportunity for good musicians to step into those roles, often because they simply can’t relate or see themselves contributing in the way music is being offered at present. Also, often we haven’t provided adequate opportunities to form young people or adults in a way that allows them to use their gifts of music to serve the liturgy.

A well formed music ministry should include the following:

1. Skilled musicians
2. Prayer and discernment as primary part of how the music ministry plans, prepares and ministers
3. An understanding of the liturgy and the role of sacred music in the liturgy
4. An understanding of how to apply the three judgments that are to be made in preparing liturgical music for the Sunday celebration:
 - a. The Liturgical Judgment: how the music accords with the liturgical season and this particular liturgy (with special attention given to the Scripture readings).
 - b. The Musical Judgment: is the music of good quality? Musical form and quality are not to be confused. The Church recognizes and accepts many different forms of music.
 - c. The Pastoral Judgment: will the music selected enable this particular congregation to give expression to its faith and foster a union of hearts and minds? Does the music selected recognize the abilities and diversity of the congregation?
5. Adequate time for preparation and rehearsal.

CHAPTER 10

SECTION 5

PREACHING

From the
Apostolic Exhortation

Joy of the Gospel
(*Evangelii Gaudium*)
His Holiness Pope Francis

II. The homily

135. Let us now look at preaching within the liturgy, which calls for serious consideration by pastors. I will dwell in particular, and even somewhat meticulously, on the homily and its preparation, since so many concerns have been expressed about this important ministry, and we cannot simply ignore them. The homily is the touchstone for judging a pastor's closeness and ability to communicate to his people. We know that the faithful attach great importance to it, and that both they and their ordained ministers suffer because of homilies: the laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them! It is sad that this is the case. The homily can actually be an intense and happy experience of the Spirit, a consoling encounter with God's word, a constant source of renewal and growth.

136. Let us renew our confidence in preaching, based on the conviction that it is God who seeks to reach out to others through the preacher, and that he displays his power through human words. Saint Paul speaks forcefully about the need to preach, since the Lord desires to reach other people by means of our word (cf. *Rom* 10:14-17). By his words our Lord won over the hearts of the people; they came to hear him from all parts (cf. *Mk* 1:45); they were amazed at his teachings (cf. *Mk* 6:2), and they sensed that he spoke to them as one with authority (cf. *Mk* 1:27). By their words the apostles, whom Christ established "to be with him and to be sent out to preach" (*Mk*3:14), brought all nations to the bosom of the Church (cf. *Mt* 16:15.20).
The liturgical context

137. It is worthy remembering that "the liturgical proclamation of the word of God, especially in the eucharistic assembly, is not so much a time for meditation and catechesis as a dialogue between God and his people, a dialogue in which the great deeds of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the covenant are continually restated".[\[112\]](#) The homily has special importance due to its eucharistic context: it surpasses all forms of catechesis as the supreme moment in the dialogue between God and his people which lead up to sacramental communion. The homily takes up once more the dialogue which the Lord has already established with his people. The preacher must know the heart of his community, in order to realize where its desire for God is alive and ardent, as well as where that dialogue, once loving, has been thwarted and is now barren.

138. The homily cannot be a form of entertainment like those presented by the media, yet it does need to give life and meaning to the celebration. It is a distinctive genre, since it is preaching situated within the framework of a liturgical celebration; hence it should be brief and avoid taking on the semblance of a speech or a lecture. A preacher may be able to hold the

attention of his listeners for a whole hour, but in this case his words become more important than the celebration of faith. If the homily goes on too long, it will affect two characteristic elements of the liturgical celebration: its balance and its rhythm. When preaching takes place within the context of the liturgy, it is part of the offering made to the Father and a mediation of the grace which Christ pours out during the celebration. This context demands that preaching should guide the assembly, and the preacher, to a life-changing communion with Christ in the Eucharist. This means that the words of the preacher must be measured, so that the Lord, more than his minister, will be the centre of attention.

A mother's conversation

139. We said that the people of God, by the constant inner working of the Holy Spirit, is constantly evangelizing itself. What are the implications of this principle for preachers? It reminds us that the Church is a mother, and that she preaches in the same way that a mother speaks to her child, knowing that the child trusts that what she is teaching is for his or her benefit, for children know that they are loved. Moreover, a good mother can recognize everything that God is bringing about in her children, she listens to their concerns and learns from them. The spirit of love which reigns in a family guides both mother and child in their conversations; therein they teach and learn, experience correction and grow in appreciation of what is good. Something similar happens in a homily. The same Spirit who inspired the Gospels and who acts in the Church also inspires the preacher to hear the faith of the God's people and to find the right way to preach at each Eucharist. Christian preaching thus finds in the heart of people and their culture a source of living water, which helps the preacher to know what must be said and how to say it. Just as all of us like to be spoken to in our mother tongue, so too in the faith we like to be spoken to in our "mother culture," our native language (cf. *2 Macc* 7:21, 27), and our heart is better disposed to listen. This language is a kind of music which inspires encouragement, strength and enthusiasm.

140. This setting, both maternal and ecclesial, in which the dialogue between the Lord and his people takes place, should be encouraged by the closeness of the preacher, the warmth of his tone of voice, the unpretentiousness of his manner of speaking, the joy of his gestures. Even if the homily at times may be somewhat tedious, if this maternal and ecclesial spirit is present, it will always bear fruit, just as the tedious counsels of a mother bear fruit, in due time, in the hearts of her children.

141. One cannot but admire the resources that the Lord used to dialogue with his people, to reveal his mystery to all and to attract ordinary people by his lofty teachings and demands. I believe that the secret lies in the way Jesus looked at people, seeing beyond their weaknesses and failings: "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (*Lk* 12:32); Jesus preaches with that spirit. Full of joy in the Spirit, he blesses the Father who draws the little ones to him: "I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes" (*Lk* 10:21). The Lord truly enjoys talking with his people; the preacher should strive to communicate that same enjoyment to his listeners.

Words which set hearts on fire

142. Dialogue is much more than the communication of a truth. It arises from the enjoyment of speaking and it enriches those who express their love for one another through the medium of words. This is an enrichment which does not consist in objects but in persons who share themselves in dialogue. A preaching which would be purely moralistic or doctrinaire, or one which turns into a lecture on biblical exegesis, detracts from this heart-to-heart communication which takes place in the homily and possesses a quasi-sacramental character: "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (*Rom* 10:17). In the

homily, truth goes hand in hand with beauty and goodness. Far from dealing with abstract truths or cold syllogisms, it communicates the beauty of the images used by the Lord to encourage the practise of good. The memory of the faithful, like that of Mary, should overflow with the wondrous things done by God. Their hearts, growing in hope from the joyful and practical exercise of the love which they have received, will sense that each word of Scripture is a gift before it is a demand.

143. The challenge of an inculturated preaching consists in proclaiming a synthesis, not ideas or detached values. Where your synthesis is, there lies your heart. The difference between enlightening people with a synthesis and doing so with detached ideas is like the difference between boredom and heartfelt fervour. The preacher has the wonderful but difficult task of joining loving hearts, the hearts of the Lord and his people. The dialogue between God and his people further strengthens the covenant between them and consolidates the bond of charity. In the course of the homily, the hearts of believers keep silence and allow God to speak. The Lord and his people speak to one another in a thousand ways directly, without intermediaries. But in the homily they want someone to serve as an instrument and to express their feelings in such a way that afterwards, each one may choose how he or she will continue the conversation. The word is essentially a mediator and requires not just the two who dialogue but also an intermediary who presents it for what it is, out of the conviction that “what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor 4:5).

144. To speak from the heart means that our hearts must not just be on fire, but also enlightened by the fullness of revelation and by the path travelled by God’s word in the heart of the Church and our faithful people throughout history. This Christian identity, as the baptismal embrace which the Father gave us when we were little ones, makes us desire, as prodigal children – and favourite children in Mary – yet another embrace, that of the merciful Father who awaits us in glory. Helping our people to feel that they live in the midst of these two embraces is the difficult but beautiful task of one who preaches the Gospel.

III. Preparing to preach

145. Preparation for preaching is so important a task that a prolonged time of study, prayer, reflection and pastoral creativity should be devoted to it. With great affection I wish to stop for a moment and offer a method of preparing homilies. Some may find these suggestions self-evident, but I consider it helpful to offer them as a way of emphasizing the need to devote quality time to this precious ministry. Some pastors argue that such preparation is not possible given the vast number of tasks which they must perform; nonetheless, I presume to ask that each week a sufficient portion of personal and community time be dedicated to this task, even if less time has to be given to other important activities. Trust in the Holy Spirit who is at work during the homily is not merely passive but active and creative. It demands that we offer ourselves and all our abilities as instruments (cf. Rom 12:1) which God can use. A preacher who does not prepare is not “spiritual”; he is dishonest and irresponsible with the gifts he has received.

Reverence for truth

146. The first step, after calling upon the Holy Spirit in prayer, is to give our entire attention to the biblical text, which needs to be the basis of our preaching. Whenever we stop and attempt to understand the message of a particular text, we are practising “reverence for the truth”.^[113] This is the humility of heart which recognizes that the word is always beyond us, that “we are neither its masters or owners, but its guardians, heralds and servants”.^[114] This attitude of humble and awe-filled veneration of the word is expressed by taking the time to study it with the greatest care and a holy fear lest we distort it. To interpret a biblical text, we need to be patient, to put aside all other concerns, and to give it our time, interest and

undivided attention. We must leave aside any other pressing concerns and create an environment of serene concentration. It is useless to attempt to read a biblical text if all we are looking for are quick, easy and immediate results. Preparation for preaching requires love. We only devote periods of quiet time to the things or the people whom we love; and here we are speaking of the God whom we love, a God who wishes to speak to us. Because of this love, we can take as much time as we need, like every true disciple: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3:9).

147. First of all, we need to be sure that we understand the meaning of the words we read. I want to insist here on something which may seem obvious, but which is not always taken into account: the biblical text which we study is two or three thousand years old; its language is very different from that which we speak today. Even if we think we understand the words translated into our own language, this does not mean that we correctly understand what the sacred author wished to say. The different tools provided by literary analysis are well known: attention to words which are repeated or emphasized, recognition of the structure and specific movement of a text, consideration of the role played by the different characters, and so forth. But our own aim is not to understand every little detail of a text; our most important goal is to discover its principal message, the message which gives structure and unity to the text. If the preacher does not make this effort, his preaching will quite likely have neither unity nor order; what he has to say will be a mere accumulation of various disjointed ideas incapable of inspiring others. The central message is what the author primarily wanted to communicate; this calls for recognizing not only the author's ideas but the effect which he wanted to produce. If a text was written to console, it should not be used to correct errors; if it was written as an exhortation, it should not be employed to teach doctrine; if it was written to teach something about God, it should not be used to expound various theological opinions; if it was written as a summons to praise or missionary outreach, let us not use it to talk about the latest news.

148. Certainly, to understand properly the meaning of the central message of a text we need to relate it to the teaching of the entire Bible as handed on by the Church.

Resource A

Observations of your Sunday Experience

To be used by: Parish Implementation Teams, Parish Staff

Purpose: Observations of all areas of Sunday can help you begin to identify what you are doing well On Sunday, as well as what things you may want to focus on improving. This tool should also help you learn, what things you should be looking at/ considering each Sunday.

How to use: We would recommend you give this to several people at each Mass as an ‘observer’. You could also, additionally use as an Implementation team or staff. Discuss common things observed.

DIRECTIONS:

In an effort to make parishioner’s experience of Sunday the best it can possibly be, we would like to get your feedback and observations.

Please take time to review the following checklist, then, attend Sunday Mass as you normally would, however, from the time you enter and leave the Church parking lot, be particularly observant of your experience. Look at everything as if it was the first time you were stepping foot onto the campus of your parish. Look at everything as if you were not familiar with the Catholic Church or this particular parish. After Mass, take some time to check off all that apply.

ARRIVING AT THE PARISH

Facilities and parish grounds

- There was ample parking.
- Directional signs helped me park and know where to enter for Mass.
- If you had a special physical need, it was easy to park and access the Church.
- There was handicapped accessibility throughout the facility.
- The church and grounds were clean and well maintained.
- The church grounds were inviting and well landscaped
- I could easily and clearly hear the priest, readers, and music.
- I could easily and clearly **see** the various ministers and the liturgical actions.
- Restrooms were clearly marked
- Restrooms were clean, supplied and easily to use by families, the handicapped, etc.
- The lectors, priest, and musicians were easy to hear and sound was at a comfortable level.
- The temperature of the church was comfortable.

Resource A

Observations of your Sunday Experience

Hospitality

- Overall, I felt welcomed by the parish community.
- I was greeted by someone when I arrived, in a genuine manner.
- I felt ‘seen’ and noticed by others as I walked into the Church.
- ⊖ Parish information was readily available.
- Volunteers were identifiable in some way (nametags, etc).
- Worshippers were willing to move into the pews to allow others to enter.
- There was a place for children/families to go if they wished (i.e., “cry room”).
- After mass the priest was available to greet and/or converse with parishioners.

Environment

- The entrance of the Church felt inviting.
- The interior of the church conveyed a prayerful atmosphere.
- The art and architecture in the church expressed noble simplicity, beauty and fostered prayerful devotion.
- The general tone of the community was one of joy, happiness and anticipation of something great.

THE PEOPLE

The Congregation

- People arrived **punctually** and **remained** for the entirety of the Mass.
- People were generally **reverential** throughout the Mass.
- A majority of worshippers participated in the acclamations (singing) and the responses.
- The congregation was **united** in their gestures and postures.
- It was made easy for someone new to the Mass to know what was happening and how to follow along. (worship aid, prompt or explanation from the priest, etc)

The Clergy

- The clergy (bishops, priests, deacons) seemed approachable and caring towards the people.

The Lay Ministers

- Multiple persons were involved in different functions during the Mass.
- Lay ministers are reflective of and represent the various demographics of the parish (ages, states of life, etc.)
- Altar servers were well-trained.
- **Readers** were prepared and capable.
- Other ministers (e.g., commentators, ushers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion) were **well-prepared and reverential** in carrying out their duties.
- There was nothing distracting about the way the lay ministers served in their designated roles.

Resource A
Observations of your Sunday Experience

CELEBRATION

Liturgy of the Word

- The homily was organized, simple, clear, positive
- The homily connected to the readings of the day and/or the liturgical season.
- The homily connected to my everyday life.
- The preaching effected the people in a way that helped them to further experience and dialogue with God.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- There was an announcement (verbal or written) so that those who are not Catholic would know what to do, regarding reception of the Eucharist.
- The majority of the congregation recited the Mass parts together.
- There were periods of silence at appropriate parts of the Liturgy.

Music

- The music ministry (i.e., cantors, choir, instrumentalists) was well-prepared and capable.
- Musical selections were **appropriate** to the celebration.
- Musical selections were known by the congregation or easy to sing.
- The music ministry fostered the participation of the congregation.
- The music enhanced the liturgy and helped people to pray.

RESOURCE B
ASSESSING MUSIC MINISTRY
*Considerations for assessing and making initial improvement
with Music Ministry*

General

Is the music technically, aesthetically and expressively worthy of the liturgy ?

Does the music at Mass *support* the liturgy well and help the congregation participate fully, consciously and actively in the Mass?

Does it seem that those in music ministry are prayerful? Does that draw people into prayer?

Is the sound balanced?

Does the music ever feel like a distraction or something simply ‘endured’ ?

Other considerations

A well formed music ministry should have the following in place:

1. Prayerful and skilled musicians

Are those involved in the music ministry skilled musicians and with potential to grow?

Is there the need to recruit more skilled musicians?

If the musical skill level or sound is poor, might it be deterring good musicians from coming forward?

Do the musicians serve the worshipping community by enabling their liturgical singing, or does the music at Mass feel like a performance?

Does the music ministry team seem to be in ‘relationship’ with one another? / worshipping ‘communally’?

Is the music ministry aware of all the parts of the Mass?

Is the music ministry able to lead the congregation to full participation in singing the Mass parts?

Is there an attitude of excellence, out of the desire to serve the liturgy well and help the people of God pray...
is there an ongoing desire and commitment to improve musically?

Is there a cultivated culture of mutual aid, respect and encouragement rather than a criticism amongst musicians?

Is there communication amongst all parish musicians at a parish and a sense of community amongst all who share this common ministry?

RESOURCE B
ASSESSING MUSIC MINISTRY

2. Prayer and discernment, has a primary role in how the music ministry plans, prepares and ministers

Do the music ministers who select music consult with the pastor (for homily themes, consultation, pulse on parishioner needs, etc)?

Do those selecting music intentionally pray with the readings of the Mass?

Does the music ministry team have scheduled times of prayer together?

Is there regular and ongoing discernment about roles within the ministry, music selection, response from the congregation, etc.

Is there a formal process in place to select music for the liturgy?

Are musicians aware of the resources available to help them plan liturgical music?

Do music ministers take into account ability and learning pace when introducing a new song?
(repeating new songs to allow learning and participation)

3. An understanding of the liturgy and the role of sacred music in the liturgy

Has there been any formal formation or process of formation for all those involved in music ministry to learn about the Liturgy?

Has there been proper formation to learn about the role of music in the liturgy?

Has there been proper formation to learn how things like dynamics in the music and certain instrumentality can help support the movements of the liturgy?

4. Music Minister should understand how to apply the following three judgments when preparing music for the Sunday Celebration:

- a. The Liturgical Judgment: how the music accords with the liturgical season and this particular liturgy (with special attention given to the Scripture readings).
- b. The Musical Judgment: is the music of good quality? Musical form and quality are not to be confused. The Church recognizes and accepts many different forms of music.
- c. The Pastoral Judgment: will the music selected enable this particular congregation to give expression to its faith and foster a union of hearts and minds? Does the music selected recognize the abilities and diversity of the congregation?

Do music ministers understand how to apply these three judgments when preparing music for Sunday Celebration?

RESOURCE B
ASSESSING MUSIC MINISTRY

4. Adequate time for preparation and rehearsal

Are there standards and expectations in regards to preparation and rehearsal?

Is there an outside objective person there to help guide the rehearsal at times, offering feedback to aid in improvement?

Does the music ministry team take time to simply ‘pray and sing’ as a means of communal prayer and to aid in learning to sing with ‘one heart and one mind’.

CHAPTER 10

SECTION

SAMPLE GOALS

Hospitality Goal:

Every Sunday experience at _____ will help people feel welcomed and at home; saint or sinner, first time visitor or long term parishioner.

Benchmarks and guiding principles

A hospitality team will be established to recruit and form an enlivened hospitality ministry. The team will provide ongoing assessment and improvement.

Hospitality team will be formed in the dynamics of the '9' and the '5'; will be aware of all 'next steps' for parishioners and updated on all formation opportunities available in the parish.

New guidelines for ushers will be established.

Clergy will make intentional efforts on Sunday to help cultivate in parishioners an attitude of 'welcome' and hospitality.

A facility beautification plan will be established to foster both a sense of welcome and to maximize ability to get information to parishioners in a prompt and personal way.

Assessment of parish staff hours will be completed to ensure 'presence' and information is provided at times people most need on Sundays, lunch times, etc.

Music Goal:

By January 2021, all Masses will have a skilled and prayerful music ministry team that is able to enhance the beauty of the liturgy and assist people in praying through proper liturgical music and norms.

By January 2019, the _____ & _____ Mass will have the first updated music ministry team in place with updated norms and practices.

By January 2020 _____, _____ & _____ Masses will have the first updated music ministry team in place with updated norms and practices.

Benchmarks and guiding principles

Consider the one Mass that would be best or most impacted with an updated music ministry group and begin implementing new standards at that Mass.

Provide formation for those involved in music ministry on: the liturgy, the purpose and role of sacred music within the liturgy, prayer/discernment.

Establish Liturgical planning committee or some process for music selection. (consider a rotating 'seasonal list' of songs to aid in musician ability to play with good quality and congregation familiarity with songs)

Establish new recruitment strategies. For example: Identify at least 1 skilled musician from your parish and offer 'come and play' worship nights, as an opportunity to cultivate a sense of prayer and creativity, as well as to help identify giftedness and cultivate use of those gifts.

Music Ministry established new standard of excellence, rehearsal and prayer times together.

