

National Black Catholic Congress XII

Pastoral Plan of Action

*“The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me:
Act justly, love goodness, and walk humbly with your God”*

LUKE 4:18; MICAH 6:8

Introduction

The Pastoral Plan of Action was developed by delegates who were appointed by bishops from every diocese in the United States. These women and men brought the concerns and needs of their local communities, and worked together to develop a list of pastoral priorities. They also prayed and listened to the major presentations of Congress. These priorities led to a Preamble, which was presented and affirmed by the Assembly at the close of Congress XII.

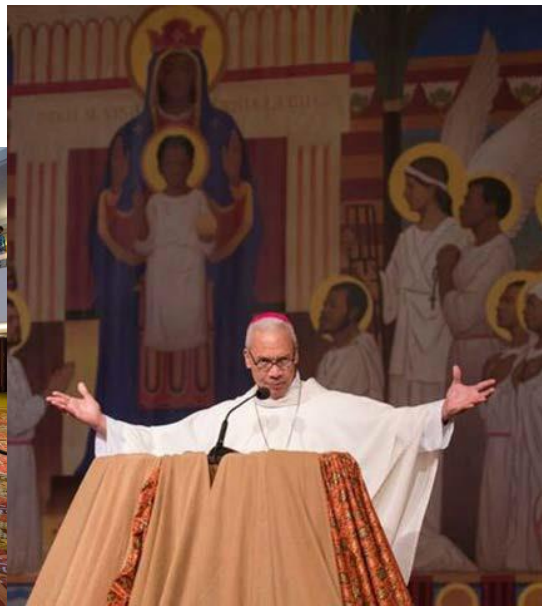
It was the intention of the delegates that every individual, parish, community, and diocese use the Preamble to guide their unique pastoral planning with Black Catholics for the next five years.

Preamble

- We believe the Holy Spirit, who is Lord and Giver of Life, is upon us. Because of this, we recommit ourselves to live our Baptism as Catholics, to be “authentically Black and truly Catholic” and to seek leadership in our Church on all levels.
 - We commit ourselves to promote the causes for canonization of the five holy women and men being considered for sainthood in our Church.
 - We commit ourselves to act justly by living in proximity with those who are suffering and neglected. Specifically, we seek to promote the dignity and life of every person from the unborn to natural death. We commit ourselves to dismantle racism in all forms, which is an obstacle to justice and evangelization. We also commit ourselves to address the challenges of mental illness, mass incarceration, domestic violence, and other issues that challenge the sanctity of life.
 - We commit ourselves to love goodness by sharing our Faith with others using creative ways, especially social media, as we evangelize in our community. We commit ourselves to support the Catholic Schools in our community.
 - We commit ourselves to walk humbly with our God and affirm the universal call to holiness as it is lived out in all forms of vocations in our Church – marriage, single life, consecrated women and men and clergy.
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- We commit ourselves to listen and respond to the needs of the youth and young adults in our community as we pass on the legacy of our Faith.
- We commit to align these priorities with the outcomes of the Convocation of Catholic Leaders as “missionary disciples” called to spread the Joy of the Gospel.
- We commit ourselves to apply these priorities on the local, diocesan, regional and national levels and review them on a yearly basis.



Pastoral Strategies and Diocesan Initiatives

Topic I: *Spirituality and the Saints*

Objective 1.1: Develop and implement an ongoing process to enable Black Catholics to enhance their Africentric Spirituality.

Action Step 1.1.1:

Commit to become a better Catholic by word and action, by going to daily Mass and monthly Confession, and by committing to a weekly study of Sacred Scripture and an hour spent in Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Action Step 1.1.2:

As a parish, reach out to the diocese to build a strong line of communication about pastoral needs, spirituality, and the unique gifts you bring to the diocese.

Action Step 1.1.3:

Form a committee of peers to review the formation resources your parish uses, and if they aren't adequate, reach out to the Diocesan OBM and Ethnic Offices, to request that revised or replacement formation resources be made available.

Action Step 1.1.4:

Have your parish design and promote cultural experiential activities that infuse Catholic Social Teaching in the Sacramental Preparation.

Action Step 1.1.5:

As a parish, organize a mission and contact the Diocesan OBM and Ethnic Offices for possible presenters who would be available to speak.

Action Step 1.1.6:

As part of the youth ministry, have a group research and present the history and origins of the parish.

Objective 1.2: Create more opportunities to increase awareness of Black Saints in the life of the Church.

Action Step 1.2.1:

Contact the Diocesan OBM and Ethnic Offices for resources that can be used to increase the knowledge of Black Saints through catechesis.

Action Step 1.2.2:

Teach the lives of the Black Catholic holy women and men who are being considered for sainthood. Get information on each of the Guilds and pray the prayer at Daily Mass.

Action Step 1.2.3:

As a parish, establish an annual collection to support the canonization process of Black Catholic women and men.

Topic II: *Leadership in the Church*

Objective 2.1: Create opportunities to develop existing leaders and invite new parishioners to undertake leadership positions in lay ecclesial ministry.

Action Step 2.1.1:

Form a parish committee for the purpose of identifying and nurturing leaders, so they are prepared to take on the positions necessary to meet the needs of a vibrant parish.

Action Step 2.1.2:

Research local opportunities for leadership training and provide access to up and coming leaders within your parish.

Action Step 2.1.3:

Institute within your parish leadership development days to provide direction and enrichment.

Action Step 2.1.4:

Develop a mentoring component to provide nurturing and support to new leaders.

Action Step 2.1.5:

Contact the Diocesan Office of Priest Personnel to identify retired Black Catholic clergy to act as leaders and/or mentors.

Objective 2.2: Affirm and celebrate lay leadership as an essential component in fostering full stewardship.

Action Step 2.2.1:

As a parish community, acknowledge and celebrate Black Catholic leaders annually through an awards banquet.

Action Step 2.2.2:

Give leaders an opportunity to address the congregation about the program they are overseeing. They can use this opportunity as an outreach for volunteers, to inform the parish about a critical program, and to give recognition to the leaders for their service.

Topic III: *Addressing Social Justice issues*

Objective 3.1: Identify and eradicate racism

Action Step 3.1.1:

Increase dialogue with other predominantly Black parishes within the diocese.

Action Step 3.1.2:

Develop a corporate consciousness or responsibility regarding the critical issues we identify as those that need to be addressed.

Action Step 3.1.3:

Generate an action plan to address those identified issues.

Action Step 3.1.1:

Host talking circles to improve race relationships across cultures and among neighboring parishes.

Action Step 3.1.2:

Request that your local diocese address not only the intrinsic value of all human life, but also place an emphasis on the value of Black lives, especially in light of the increased violence in our cities.

Action Step 3.1.3:

As a parish, enter into a “Sister Parish” relationship with a White parish. Create opportunities for dialogue about recent national occurrences of violence motivated by racism.

Action Step 3.1.4:

Network with other parishes of diverse cultures to help support one another and to understand that all are part of a larger church than your own parish community.

Action Step 3.1.5:

Host community dinners and invite local parishes of diverse cultures. If using a ‘pot-luck’ format, encourage each parish to bring dishes that reflect their culture.

Objective 3.2: Increase prison ministry and outreach

Action Step 3.2.1:

Volunteer to mentor and advocate for someone who is returning home from prison by helping with mental challenges, job placement, and spiritual renewal.

Action Step 3.2.2:

Volunteer to host a bible study with inmates, in both male and female correctional institutions.

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Action Step 3.2.3:

Create a ministry and develop a curriculum for juvenile offenders or ex-offenders. Test the curriculum, and then provide a sustainable model to other parishes or dioceses.

Objective 3.3: Provide education and support for those experiencing domestic violence

Action Step 3.3.1:

Get permission from the pastor of your church to have an evening discussion on domestic violence, and plan and present this discussion or invite a guest presenter. The Catholics For Family Peace website, <http://www.catholicsforfamilypeace.org>, offers a Domestic Violence Awareness Toolkit that will get you started.

Action Step 3.3.2:

Place brochures and flyers about domestic violence in general areas of the church, such as women's bathroom, narthex, church hall, etc. It is especially important that these are available in areas where they can be accessed discreetly. Reprint information in the bulletin about the statistics and signs of domestic violence. Add a list of resources for people who are experiencing this traumatic situation.

Action Step 3.3.3:

If someone tells you about an abusive situation, let him or her know that God does not condone abuse. Encourage them to seek professional assistance, and they can start by calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). Let them know that intervention is necessary or the abuse may escalate or become more severe. **[Do not offer couples counseling to address domestic violence. It can be very dangerous for the survivor!]**

Action Step 3.3.4:

Volunteer at a domestic violence shelter or hotline and learn the best practices for handling these situations.

Action Step 3.3.5:

As a priest or deacon, preach a homily that says that domestic violence is not right, and there is no biblical support to abuse the people we love. As a layperson, ask your pastor to consider preaching against domestic violence during a homily.

Action Step 3.3.6:

Share what it means to be in a healthy relationship and remind parishioners that relationships should be safe and loving.

Objective 3.4: Increase awareness of and work to eliminate human trafficking

Action Step 3.4.1:

Conduct a parish workshop teaching the indicators of human trafficking in order to identify potential victims. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security offers an online Human Trafficking Awareness Training at www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/awareness-training.

Action Step 3.4.2:

If you believe someone (within the U.S.) may be a victim of human trafficking, report your suspicions to authorities by calling 911 or the 24-hour National Human Trafficking Hotline 1-888-373-7888. These victims, including undocumented individuals, are eligible for services and immigration assistance.

Action Step 3.4.3:

Help your parish become conscientious and informed consumers. Ask who picks your fruits and vegetables or makes your clothes. Check out the Department of Labor's List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor. Go to: <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods>. Begin a letter campaign to local companies asking them to investigate the source of their goods in order to prevent human trafficking in their supply chains. Publish the information your parish discovers in your church bulletin, advocating patronage of zero-trafficking stores and service providers.

Action Step 3.4.4:

Form a committee of parish and community members to write to local, state and federal government representatives to let them know you care about combating human trafficking, and ask what they are doing to address it.

Objective 3.5: Promote outreach to address other forms of social injustice

Action Step 3.5.1:

As a parish, collaborate with social service organizations, such as Catholic Charities, to address housing issues, drugs, and violence in your community.

Topic IV: *Catechesis and Evangelization*

Objective 4.1: Develop and promote a comprehensive and lifelong Africentric Formation and Education Program

Action Step 4.1.1:

Convene a committee to review religious formation and education resources to be used in Black parishes. Contact your Diocesan OBM or Ethnic Ministry Office for recommendations of alternative materials if necessary.

Action Step 4.1.2:

Identify and incorporate models of effective digital learning into youth ministry and outreach.

Objective 4.2: Integrate and apply Catholic Social Teachings in Africentric Catechesis

Action Step 4.2.1:

Develop ongoing parish activities that infuse the Human Life and Human Dignity perspective within the Africentric Catechesis.

Action Step 4.2.2:

Design and promote cultural experiential activities to infuse Catholic Social Teaching in Sacramental Preparation.

Objective 4.3: Outreach to the unchurched members of the local community

Action Step 4.3.1:

As a parish, host a Family and Friends Day in the Fall and an Outdoor Revival in the spring to reach to the unchurched in the community.

Action Step 4.3.2:

Instead of welcoming only those who act like our parish members, start welcoming all people; once they feel accepted for whom they are, they will begin to change their values and beliefs, then they will change their behavior. Focus the Eucharistic Liturgy and parish community on developing an open-group strategy in which everyone feels like he or she belongs.

Action Step 4.3.3:

One in three unchurched will be struggling with personal problems such as finances that affect their ability to make mortgage payments and buy food. They may need help with childrearing, perhaps with discipline or the ability to attend school events. If they are single parents, they may be struggling with the entire parenting load. They want to know if following Jesus will make a difference in their lives. Create opportunities for groups to meet for conversation and Bible Study to address the life issues the unchurched face from a biblical perspective.

Action Step 4.3.4:

Organize and provide materials to begin a 2x2 ministry to evangelize to those in need. Provide teams of two members with bags of necessities and Bibles.

Action Step 4.3.5:

Call a meeting of the congregation to discuss how to increase hospitality in the church through a greeter program where visitors are welcomed and acknowledged, or create a gift bag for first time visitors that includes a church bulletin and some other small items.

Topic V: *Support Catholic Schools*

Objective 5.1: Creating more sustainable Catholic schools in the community

Action Step 5.1.1:

Research successful models of sustainability of Catholic Schools in urban communities, e.g., Jubilee Schools in Memphis, Gesu School and Independence Missions Schools in Philadelphia, Cristo Rey High School Network.

Action Step 5.1.2:

Understand the history and importance of Catholic Schools in the African American community, especially the stories of Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange (first school for African American children). Also, the stories of Sister Thea Bowman, Archbishop Wilton Gregory and other African American Catholics who converted to the Faith from their experience in Catholic Schools.

Action Step 5.1.3:

Volunteer at your local Catholic school to assist with tutoring and fund-raising. Create a model and share with other parishes and dioceses.

Action Step 5.1.4:

Gather the data of the Parish School - enrollment, budget, parent concerns.

Action Step 5.1.5:

Form a Task Force, which will include school leadership, parents and community members with the goal of development and sustainability of the school

Action Step 5.1.6:

Focus on programs such as Sponsor a Student, One Day Challenge, Annual Gala and others. These programs are most successful when they involve parents and community leaders, along with school officials.

Topic VI: *Vocations in all forms*

Objective 6.1: Promote and support Black Catholic vocations

Action Step 6.1.1:

Form a youth vocations outreach group, and construct a comprehensive and easily implemented plan to increase the presence of Black clergy serving in Black Catholic parishes. Contact your diocese and request a list of Black Catholic clergy; invite them to come to speak to the youth during planned youth activities.

Action Step 6.1.2:

Celebrate Vocations Awareness week (November) within your parish. Choose one day to emphasize Black vocations. With the youth, prepare a request to the USCCB to establish a national date to promote Black vocations.

Action Step 6.1.3:

Contact your Diocesan Vocations Office to secure vocational materials that reflect Black priests, deacons, and religious engaged in parish activities, and display in parish schools, parish common areas, and church offices.

Action Step 6.1.4:

Youth vocations outreach should use social media, such as Twitter, SnapChat, and Instagram, to promote God's call to ministry on parish and diocesan levels.

Action Step 6.1.5:

Have the youth group research and create programs about Fr. Augustus Tolton, the first recognized Black Catholic priest in America. Contact St. Luke Productions (360-831-4500) about having the Tolton Drama perform at a local venue.

Objective 6.2: Development of an Africentric awareness for all non-African American or foreign-born clergy and seminarians assigned.

Action Step 6.2.1:

Parishes with a non-Black or foreign-born Black priest should hold monthly round table talks with members of their clergy. At this time, parishioners would have the opportunity to talk about concerns and issues they are having on a local and national level. Individual issues should be addressed one-on-one with a priest.

Topic VII: *Youth Ministry*

Objective 7.1: Parishes and dioceses must address the urgent issue of disengaged Black Catholic youth

Action Step 7.1.1:

Host a Youth Listening Session, where youth will be able to speak to the Pastor and Parish Council about their needs.

Action Step 7.1.2:

Youth ministry programs that are Africentric and based on today's reality must be established and strengthened.

Action Step 7.1.3:

Promote parish programs that affirm a sense of Africentricity to youth and young adults using social media.

Action Step 7.1.4:

Existing cultural/leadership programs should be made available and accessible to our youth and young adults as a means of developing upcoming leaders.

Action Step 7.1.5:

Investigate local, regional, and national opportunities for the development of Black Catholic youth and young adults.

Action Step 7.1.6:

With surrounding parishes, consider ways to convene a youth convention every three years.
