

## *The Ten Essentials of Parish Life*

Our predecessors on the Diocesan Pastoral Council published the first edition of The Ten Essentials of Parish Life in 1992. The Second Diocesan Pastoral Convention in 1988 outlined ten abiding values that the delegates felt were essential to parish life. They recommended that for a parish to be a vibrant community, each of these ten essentials must be present in some degree. Following the convention, the members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council developed the essentials of parish life over the course of four years. We are grateful for their work, and we see the blessing and the direction that the document has offered us during the past ten years. Parish staffs, pastoral councils, and various committees have discussed the ten essentials as a basis for pastoral planning.

As we plan for the future in our parishes we naturally refer to the mission of Jesus. This mission of Jesus has been the ongoing ministry of the church. For 2000 years ministers have been offering **Formation**, **Gathering** communities, celebrating in **Worship**, and **Reaching Out** in service. The ten essentials of parish life expand on the four-fold mission of Jesus. They are a means for us to evaluate, plan, and bring new life to our parishes.

For the past year we have reflected on the document and its value for parish life today. We see a need to update the ten essentials in light of changes in the last decade. It is with gratitude to the past and with hope in the future that we humbly offer this revision of these pastoral issues.

We wish to offer a vision of parish life that is practical for the 86 parishes in the Diocese of Oakland. We will reflect on the essential and offer some suggestions or considerations on how that essential can be realized. Our list of considerations is not exhaustive; it is merely a means to stimulate reflection, creativity, and growth.

This revised edition of The Ten Essentials of Parish Life is dedicated to Bishop John Cummins in recognition of his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 3, 2003. We offer our gratitude for his support and dedication to the work of the Diocesan Pastoral Council through the years.

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July 2003

Dear Friends:

I express the thanks of all of us to our Diocesan Pastoral Council and staff from our planning office.

The earlier document on the Ten Essentials of Parish Life has served us very well. Parish is really the basic unit of the diocese and in that sense of the Church. The experience of community, instruction in the faith, and the primary religious action of worship take place in the parish.

The Church in the United States has kept a very steady focus over the years on the centrality of the parish. Building up the quality of the ministry, making people feel at home, offering both opportunity and initiative have been great blessings.

At the same time, it is important that a parish not become focused on itself. It has to have constant sense of responsibility for those who live within its boundaries, whether of the household of the faith or otherwise. It has to have a deep sense of belonging to the family of the diocese, with its benefits as well as its obligations. It has to have a deep sense of the universal Church. Such is the blessing that is ours from childhood of realizing we belong to a global family.

Again, the thanks of all of us for the promise of benefit that this document will bring.

Sincerely,

John S. Cummins  
Bishop of Oakland

## *The Ten Essentials of Parish Life*

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## #1 SPIRITUALITY

Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They answered, "John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

Luke 9: 18 - 20

Each Sunday we are invited to respond to Jesus' question with an affirmation of faith. Our spirituality gives depth and texture to our words; it is the lived expression of the faith we profess. A living spirituality signifies a living faith, even as it witnesses to the presence of Jesus Christ in our midst. Such a spirituality is nourished by Scriptures and the Sacraments and in turn it manifests itself in prayer and in service.

Scripture and the Sacraments are the two legs on which sound Roman Catholic spirituality walks. Regular, solid involvement with the Scriptures is basic. Well-prepared preaching, opportunities for Bible study and faith sharing, availability of written and artistic resources to deepen understanding of the Scriptures nourish spirituality. So, too, well-planned and appropriately participative sacramental celebrations carried out in an environment respectful of the cultural background of the people are central to the faith-life.

Given such nourishment, the believer will seek opportunities for prayer and service. Prayer is best taught by praying. However, to provide formal and informal occasions of prayer is helpful and encourages participation. Celebrations of feasts like Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Joseph the

Worker, festivals important to the people, are also helpful. A series of articles on "devotions" in *America* during Lent of 2003 examines the pastoral benefits from the return of some once quite popular devotions.

While service in its many forms flourishes in the Diocese of Oakland, it would be valuable to reflect on the link between service and spirituality. A living faith, the faith that does justice, is expressed in the active love of others. (Matt. 25)

#### Considerations for spirituality:

- Provide opportunities for deepening prayer life and reflecting on the life of the Spirit.
- Be sensitive to how various groups express their faith in distinctive religious devotions and practices.
- Be conscious that your spiritual activities reflect the wealth of Catholic heritage and the diverse cultures within your parish.
- Enhance the environment to further support the flourishing of your spiritual life, both as individuals and as a faith community.
- Speak the message of the Gospel clearly in your educational programs, liturgical services and in your gatherings as people of faith.
- Give witness to your faith in the expression of your daily activities. Indicate areas of conversion that need to be addressed.
- Respond in practice to the needs around you. Provide room and invite all members to share their gifts and talents in service.

## #2 LITURGY

"For the liturgy is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church."  
Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy # 2

We often speak in the words of the Second Vatican Council, saying that liturgy is the "source and summit" of the Christian life. Worship is central to our spiritual life as a Christian people. Through our worship we celebrate God's continual presence among us. The challenge to every parish is how to involve the people in full, conscious, active participation, a challenge that requires thoughtful preparation and continual training.

For the past ten years we have approached this through:

- Fostering a sense of community
- Forming the community
- Training liturgical ministers
- Creating liturgy planning groups

Today we see a need for continuing the education and training, and for placing greater emphasis on forming those who are involved in planning and ministering the celebrations: priests, deacons, ministers of music, lectors eucharistic ministers and liturgy committees. More is needed than ministers doing their particular role; there is a need to see how we can "raise our hearts and minds to God."

In this new millennium church we are also called to stretch in terms of our multicultural liturgical celebrations. For many strangers, liturgy is the first point of contact with the parish. Our liturgies need to welcome the stranger. How we celebrate the Paschal Mystery in the midst of diversity is a question we continually carry with us as we plan and pray together.

Many parishes have liturgy committees that plan for seasonal liturgies and special occasions. We see a need today for those committees to formulate an overall vision of liturgical life in the parish beyond weekly or seasonal

celebrations. These committees also can evaluate liturgies and liturgical ministers. Without this vision our liturgies can become routine and fail to connect people with God and with one another.

Continuing formation in liturgy needs special emphasis. Parish liturgical formation includes training for the ministers and forming the assembly. The formation of the assembly takes place in a wide variety of places: sacramental preparation, all levels of faith formation, youth ministry, and the community gathering of Sunday Eucharist.

Considerations for liturgy:

- Assure that your Sunday worship invites all of the community to prayer and action.
- Create a parish liturgy committee representative of the diversity of the parish, formed by liturgical documents, and able to evaluate the liturgical life of your parish.
- Provide preaching that relates to the Scriptures of the Sunday and to the lives of the people living here.
- Train liturgical ministers who represent the diversity of your parish in age, gender, and ethnicity.
- Develop liturgical space for celebrating the Eucharist in accord with liturgical guidelines.
- Utilize the formation days and resources offered by the diocesan liturgical resource office.

### #3 FAITH FORMATION

"God commanded our ancestors to teach their children;  
so that the generation to come might know, that they too may rise and  
declare to their children that they should put their hope in God ."

Psalm 78: 6

Strong faith formation programs for both adults and children are basic to a successful parish. Formation is important because the human being must continually be formed - in the sense of "conformed to Christ" - before he or she can fully share the life of the Church. The Bishops at the Second Vatican Council stressed the need for Christian formation by declaring that, "Before one can come to the liturgy, one must be called to faith and conversion."

In order to do this our parishes need to include a focus on adults. The United States bishops in their pastoral letter, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, encourage us to continue to offer formation to our children, but they say "Adult faith formation needs to be at the center of our catechetical efforts." This idea is supported by many church documents. This change in emphasis warrants our attention as we plan our parish education and formation programs.

Our Catholic school system handles some formation, but we need to seek out ways of forming the majority of our children and our adults. Confirmation programs are an essential part of the formation process, both for teenagers and adults. Small Christian Communities also play an important role in forming our parishioners in the faith. Liturgy itself is formative, but much more is needed to have articulate Catholics who are comfortable in expressing their faith and values.

We are blessed that our Bishop, John Cummins delivered a paper to the Vatican Congregation on the topic, "Passing on the faith in a multicultural environment." This awareness of the challenges and possibilities as

presented by our bishop offers us direction as we seek ways of offering formation in a multiethnic diocese. Our parishes are challenged as we face obstacles on many fronts, fighting for the time and attention of our children, youth and adults. We need to look for ways to provide formation opportunities for people to mature in their faith.

Preparation for the sacraments requires all parishes to have basic faith formation programs. In addition we look to new and innovative ideas for passing on the faith, aware that we are all on a lifelong journey of faith. We can best reach the destination if we are formed and informed along the way, so that we can clearly see where we are headed.

Another dimension of this essential is immigrant formation. Here we are challenged as a diocese and as parishes to respond to those who are joining us with a different understanding of church. We are called to offer faith formation for those who live out their faith in various models of church.

#### Considerations for faith formation:

- Provide ongoing faith formation for all Catholics.
- Support catechists in their efforts for continual formation and certification.
- Offer activities and resources to help adults experience, understand, and live their faith.
- Develop faith formation that is life-long in order that adults can fulfill their leadership roles in this new era of church ministry.
- Show that faith formation benefits children and youth by enriching the parents' role as their children's teachers, and by setting an example to the children that learning about God does not end with Confirmation.
- Encourage members of your parish to participate in the School for Pastoral Ministry in English or Spanish.

## #4 LEADERSHIP

But if I washed your feet - I who am Teacher and Lord -  
then you must wash each other's feet.

John 13: 14

Finding and developing leadership potential is essential if individuals are to take the places God equipped them for in the Body of Christ. We hear often that Christ has no hands and feet on earth but ours. Each parish needs to encourage its members to place their hands, feet, and minds in God's service.

In discussing leadership we note first the pastor and pastoral staff of the parish. As a diocese we strive to form our leaders so that they can understand the direction and values called forth by Vatican II. In these times of decreasing numbers of priests to pastor our parishes, we need to cultivate vocations to the priesthood and religious life. We commit ourselves to forming parish life directors capable of building community and offering good pastoral leadership. We seek pastoral staff members who have developed competencies for their fields of ministry.

In addition to the pastoral staff, Canon Law mandates that each parish have a pastoral council and a finance council. We believe that these two councils are important consultative bodies for the pastor. We count on these councils to play a greater leadership role in the parish of the future. We do not see the pastoral council as directing the administration of the parish but as a guide for the parish in collaboration with the pastor and pastoral staff. The task of this leadership body is to explore pastoral issues; pray, reflect on, and study them; and make recommendations to the pastor. Its valued purpose is to be advisory; its focus is visioning where the parish is headed and planning around pastoral issues.

The leadership of the finance council is also crucial, as many parishes face financial challenges. This council is to offer long range financial planning much as the pastoral council offers long range pastoral planning. As the finance council plans and monitors the annual budget, it also looks to the

future financial life of the parish. The council should be responsible for the soundness of finances in all parish organizations, including the school, since the school is part of parish ministry.

There is more to leadership than the staff and councils. Every parish has a growing number of well-trained leaders. These leaders might be self-developed and experience-educated, or they might be products of our diocesan ministerial training programs. The School for Pastoral Ministry, a three-year program, offers training for lay leaders. La Escuela de Ministerios Pastorales is a program for Spanish-speaking ministers. There are several masters programs for lay ecclesial ministers and an abundance of learning opportunities in the Bay Area.

How can a parish recognize potential leaders? Here are some possible gifts to look for:

- Catholic Christian identity supported by a strong prayer life
- Sense of boundaries and balance
- Person of integrity who can articulate a vision
- Vibrant intellectual life with a hunger for learning
- Ability to listen and collaborate
- Someone who has close friends
- Gift to motivate and inspire others
- Skill to call forth gifts in others

#### Considerations for leadership:

- Develop a mission for our parish that is shared by the pastor, council, staff, and other leaders.
- Assure that our parish personnel have job descriptions and annual evaluations.
- Promote on-going formation of our parish leaders by attendance at workshops and classes on diocesan and national levels.
- Offer discernment of gifts workshops so parishioners can clarify their talents and see how they can serve as leaders.
- Foster dialogue so school personnel and the parish staff, paid and unpaid, can work together collaboratively.

## #5 BELONGING/HOSPITALITY

"Yours is the word that welcomes the stranger to be at home"

Austin Fleming, O. P.

Christian hospitality flows out of the good news that Christ is in you and Christ is in me. Once we can grasp this truth, it forever changes us. This truth leads us to a loving service that provides an environment where we know we are at home with self and others.

The parish spirit of hospitality exemplifies Christ's welcoming and inclusive love for all. In a hospitable parish, the pastor's loving welcome exemplifies the spirit of all the members. They feel a sense of ownership and responsibility; they consider themselves hosts, not guests. True hospitality requires a welcoming spirit that fosters every parishioner's sense of belonging, of being a part of a parish family. A true sense of hospitality is a catalyst for developing all the essentials of parish life.

The atmosphere of parish life needs to be one of inclusion that gathers, welcomes and encourages all without exception. All parts of the body of Christ must function in harmony for the good of the whole. In a climate of inclusion, parishioners welcome an invitation to serve in ministries, to help other members of the parish family. With a sense of family, of ownership, members of the parish are able to make a commitment to the life of their parish.

A warm welcome to all parishioners can increase the members' comfort and their love for the Church. Although hospitality needs to permeate the whole of parish life, many parishes form a hospitality committee to assist in developing a sense of hospitality. This committee can keep the importance of hospitality before the community. Coffee hours after weekend liturgies are a popular way of welcoming and gathering. Social activities may be the responsibility of a group who sponsor community meals. Home visitors follow up with newly registered parishioners to welcome them, to explain ministries and activities that they might enjoy, and to invite them to serve in ministries that fit their interests. When ethnic groups with a distinctive culture are

encouraged to start activities appropriate to their interests, everyone will be able to say, "This is our parish."

As part of the Body of Christ and part of the same parish family, each member is called to share friendship and welcome. Hospitality at Sunday Mass is only a first step in forming a loving community. Our hope is to create an environment where all know the presence of Christ and reach out in loving service.

Considerations for hospitality:

- Encourage parishioners as the Body of Christ to follow the example of Jesus in sharing our love, our welcome, our giving.
- Inform the assembly that welcoming those who attend our liturgies is a ministry for all of the parish, not only a committee.
- Train greeters and leaders in cultural sensitivity to reach out to visitors and newcomers.
- Develop a hospitality ministry that organizes coffee hours after Mass each weekend.
- Provide dances and community meals (such as Lenten soup suppers).
- Train home visitors to follow up with newly registered parishioners to welcome them, to explain ministries and activities that they might enjoy, and to invite them to serve in ministries that fit them.
- Invite visitors to the sick to bring the love of Christ and of the parish to those who are unable to attend Eucharist.
- Promote communication throughout the parish. This is a key part of hospitality.

## #6 SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

"Where two or three are gathered in my name,  
there am I in their midst."

John 18:20

Small Christian Communities (SCC's) are gatherings of Christians who come together regularly to pray and to sing, to share their human stories and their faith with one another, to read the scriptures together, and to seek ways to respond to God's presence in their lives and in the world. They often meet in one another's homes. There may be five or six people, or ten or twelve, and the types of people who belong reflect the wider body of God's people - parents, children, singles, grandparents, teenagers, working and retired people, priests, religious sisters and brothers - in short, "the body of Christ." The members know one another personally. They offer support to one another. They are usually active in their parish community, and they seek to respond to the needs of people in the wider community.

In 1999 Pope John Paul II said about SCC's: "In such a human context, it will be easier to gather to hear the word of God, to reflect on the range of human problems in light of this word, and gradually to make responsible decisions inspired by the all-embracing love of Christ." (Ecclesia in America)

Many different kinds of groups within a parish may function as Small Christian Communities. The hallmark of a true "small community" is long term Christian growth in an atmosphere that embodies on a small scale the attributes of the Church. The small community is a sample of the parish as a whole.

Most often groups focus on the scriptures, using the readings for the upcoming weekend. Faith sharing grows from discussion, from sharing ideas and difficulties. Different groups in the parish may place greater emphasis on a particular dimension of the small Christian community. Ethnic groups might form around favorite devotions or activities from their own background.

Small communities reach out into society to bring gospel values to life. They might sponsor food drives, baby showers for poor mothers, gifts for families in need. They work to spread information on major social issues, remembering the words of John Paul II, "We are all really responsible for all."

Considerations for small Christian communities:

- Encourage Small Christian Communities to meet on a regular basis. The diocesan office for Small Christian Communities offers help in forming communities in parishes, training leaders, and providing materials.
- Promote adult faith formation through small Christian communities which offer shared study, shared experience, and community service.
- Organize a parish core group to develop and maintain small Christian communities.
- Invite members of Small Christian Communities to explain the value and the blessing that the SCC has been in their journey of faith.
- Utilize the small communities in your effort to welcome the stranger.
- Inspire and invite others in the parish to grow spiritually through involvement in a small community.

## #7 DIVERSE CULTURES/GIFTS

"God distributed gifts in such a way that no one has all of them because God wanted to make us dependent on one another."

St. Catherine of Siena

A parish is truly blessed when it is endowed with a variety of gifts among its parishioners, including a diversity of age, sex, culture, skills, and living conditions. These gifts are not truly appreciated until they are recognized, respected and incorporated into parish life. If those who have these diverse gifts are relegated to odd hours of the day or out of the way locations they are not recognized. If their culture, music, and food are not included in our liturgical and social assemblies they become invisible.

We value the differences and recognize that diverse gifts bring richness to the church and our experience. Diversity within a parish is seen as a mosaic rather than a melting pot. Healthy interaction is necessary. The United States Bishops in their document "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us", suggest that we hear three calls - conversion, communion, and solidarity.

The bishops speak of a **conversion** that enables us to welcome others into our lives. The next step is **communion** in which we sit around the table sharing our lives and seeing how we belong to the same family of God. The third step is **solidarity**, where we are willing to walk with our sisters and brothers as we struggle together with the injustices of our world. You can see how these three steps are a progression in which we truly welcome the stranger in our midst.

As we live out the bishops' document we can see the need to go beyond ethnic foods and dress. Eric H. F. Law in his book, Sacred Acts, Holy Change, suggests that we move beyond the external culture which is on the tip of the iceberg, and we delve below the surface into the internal culture. This includes dialoguing on assumptions, values, patterns, and myths. The internal culture is challenging because it contains unarticulated beliefs and values, and is often difficult to change. This can be the real work of respecting and celebrating diverse cultures and gifts.

### Considerations for diverse culture and gifts:

- Use parish census surveys to identify gifts and cultural or ethnic diversities and needs.
- Plan activities and workshops at the parish or deanery level that are designed to help parishioners discern their gifts and discover ways to use them.
- Encourage participation at liturgies and celebrations that reflect your cultural diversity. These activities should be well planned and express the spirituality of participants.
- Develop liturgy committees that are sensitive to ethnic and cultural dimensions. They might study "Guidelines for Multicultural Celebrations" by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions.
- Look for guidance from the ethnic pastoral centers of the diocese. These centers can help parishioners and pastoral staffs understand cultural differences and promote ways of creating community among ethnic groups.
- Renew your efforts to ensure that representative committees and ministries reflect the makeup of the parish.
- Invite your parish pastoral council to take the lead in developing a community spirit within parishes where several ethnic and language groups exist.

## # 8 STEWARDSHIP

"As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another  
as good stewards of God's varied grace."  
1 Peter 4: 8-10

In today's church we invite people to be more than members. We call them to be disciples and good stewards. We teach them to live a way of life based on the understanding that all is a gift from God: everything we are and have is freely given for our good. This truth is basic to our faith and is often repeated throughout Scripture. Just as basic and repeated is another truth: we should return a portion of our gifts to God in gratitude for God's abundant generosity. That is the basis for Stewardship.

God empowers us through the Holy Spirit to reach out and respond to the needs of one another, to build the Reign of God. One day we will be asked to give an account of the gifts entrusted to us by God. Stewardship starts not with the needs of the parish, no matter how important these are, but with the personal need of each one of us to return to God a truly grateful portion of our time, talent and treasure in thanksgiving for all the blessings given to us. Stewardship of treasure, for example, says that more important than the material need of the parish is the need of the giver to give. A good steward discerns the talents he or she has and uses those in ministry in the family, parish, workplace and community.

Stewardship is another way of worshipping, praising and thanking God. It is good news for the parish when a substantial number of people practice stewardship. Even more important, it is good news for the members themselves.

Stewardship works best in a parish that offers hospitality and opportunities for participation. The parish needs to welcome all and realize that all have gifts to share. It is essential to give people an opportunity to discern their gifts and talents. Then people need to be given an invitation to use those gifts and talents in parish and community ministries. Parishioners should have a yearly opportunity to commit or re-commit to ministries. New parishioners should be informed of ministries and be invited to serve

when they join the parish. It is also important for the parish to thank people who practice stewardship.

Persons of all ages can practice stewardship. Children can learn about it and begin to put it into practice in their own small ways. Young people should be encouraged to develop their talents and use them to serve the parish and community. Adults need to practice stewardship in the workplace and community as well as the parish. Retired men and women have more time to get involved in parish ministries. Even the homebound and elderly can continue to contribute by telephoning other homebound folks, by helping with parish mailings and by praying for the needs of the parish.

Considerations for stewardship:

- Encourage your parish to practice good stewardship of all the gifts that it has to share.
- Develop a parish brochure listing the ministries in which parishioners can become involved.
- Help people to discern their gifts and talent.
- Create an annual opportunity for people to commit or re-commit to serve in ministries.
- Invite new parishioners to become involved in ministries.
- Provide a thank you or recognition event for those who give their time
- Establish on-going stewardship education for all ages.
- Encourage parishioners to move toward the goal of giving a tithe (5% to the parish, 5% to other charities)
- Inspire parishioners by having the parish tithe outside of itself.
- Increase the percentage of people who give to the parish on a regular basis.

## # 9 SOCIAL MINISTRY

"What you did for the least of these, you did for me."

Mt. 25:45

As followers of Christ, we are called to live out the values of our faith in the world, serving our brothers and sisters, and working for greater justice and peace in the world.

This call is grounded in the Christian and Hebrew Scriptures, and in the life of Christ and the early Church. Our traditions of justice and mercy, have grown and developed over centuries, inspired by the prophetic lives of the saints, the goodness and sacrifice of believers, and the teachings of the Councils of the Church, the popes, and bishops.

These teachings, which continue to develop today, are called Catholic Social Teaching, and serve to raise up the moral questions of our day, applying the principles of ethics and theology, and challenging the church and others to moral action. Catholic Social Teaching began over 100 years ago with the document of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, which addressed the concerns of the industrial age, especially the rights and dignity of workers.

Documents of Vatican II addressed the issues of Catholics living in the modern world, reaching out to the larger community, and addressing pressing issues of war and peace. In 1971, *Justice in the World*, from the World Synod of Bishops, declared that social justice is a constitutive part of the preaching of the Gospel, an essential part of the mission of the church.

In their subsequent document, *Communities of Salt and Light*, the Bishops remind us that this is a call for each follower of Christ and a central aspect of parish life. They state: "We cannot be called truly 'catholic' unless we hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace." And, "We are convinced that the local parish is the most important ecclesial setting for sharing and acting on our Catholic social heritage."

In the first edition of The Ten Essentials of Parish Life this essential was referenced as "Outreach". Today, we recommit ourselves to developing and integrating Social Ministry in all the parishes of the Diocese of Oakland.

This leads us to ask: "What does this Social Ministry look like on the parish level?" Social ministry is happening in our parishes throughout the diocese; it comes in many forms. We have some suggestions in the considerations below, but look around your parish and see how many ways you are already involved in social ministry. You will notice that social ministry is flourishing in hospitals, inner city schools, and aging care advocacy. There are also dining rooms, homeless shelters, nurseries, tutoring programs, and visitors to the sick and elderly.

Considerations for social ministry:

- Encourage parishioners to share their gifts and resources to meet the basic needs of those who are hungry, ill, aging, and homeless.
- Become involved in local issues like housing and health care, or join groups that serve local needs, such as Vincent de Paul.
- Coordinate efforts in the parish, the interfaith community, and other networks to bring about social change and respond to injustices on the local or world order. This may include community organizing, and efforts for legislative advocacy.
- Integrate the values and content of Catholic Social Teaching into the many aspects of parish formation, liturgy, and community life, connecting our work for justice with the Gospel and sacramental life of the Church.
- Promote study, conversation, prayer, and action on the political and social issues of our day, including a range of local and global concerns.
- Form Social Ministry Committees to coordinate and develop the various justice and service opportunities in the parish; to assess parish needs and resources; and to identify and train leaders for these ministries.
- Draw upon the guidance and resources of the diocesan staff working in Social Justice Resources, Respect Life, Ethnic Pastoral Centers, and Catholic Charities of the East Bay, as well as the resources provided by Catholic Charities USA, California Catholic Conference, and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

## #10 EVANGELIZATION

"Not that I boast of preaching the Gospel,  
since it is a duty that has been placed on me"

1 Cor. 9:16

Any effective evangelization must have roots in the very life of God. St. Bonaventure who lived back in the 1200's provides us with insight. He described God as the *bonum diffusivum*, as goodness in motion, as perpetually reaching out. This apt insight provides leaven for our appreciation of evangelization. In the first place, evangelization is God's goodness moving down to earth in the person of Jesus Christ. The Son of God is the great evangelizer. If you want a living definition of evangelization, look at Jesus Christ. He revealed himself as propelled by God and responsible to direct people toward a more intimate relationship with God and neighbor. Jesus is goodness in motion always reaching out. Today, the great evangelizer lives in his Church. It is for that reason that Pope Paul VI wrote, "The Church exists in order to evangelize. Evangelization is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity" (EN14). Or, to apply St. Bonaventure's insight, we exist to be God's goodness on the move. The Diocese of Oakland exists to reach out, to go and make disciples (Mt. 28:19). Because of this foundation, Catholic evangelization is mandatory, essential, even obligatory.

Over the past forty or so years, Catholic evangelization has gained sharper visibility. We can point to *On Evangelization in the Modern World* penned by Pope Paul VI in 1975 and cited above. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a national plan and strategy for Catholic Evangelization in 1992 titled *Go and Make Disciples*. In formulating a plan for evangelization the bishops issued three goals.

1. Live and share our faith in Jesus enthusiastically
2. Invite all people to share the Good News with us
3. Foster Gospel values in our society

In order to do this effectively, our parishes and communities of faith must look at the signs of the times within which we live.

Today, we live in a globalizing world that is new. The soft borders that characterize this new day propel a kaleidoscopic interaction of peoples and cultures like never before. Because of this fresh reality, Pope John Paul II has called for a new evangelization - new in ardor, methods and expressions. In 1999, the pope issued a map of new evangelization for the whole of America - the Caribbean as well as South, Central and North America. Building on the words of his predecessor Paul VI, John Paul II states in *The Church of America* that Catholic evangelization must be centered on Jesus Christ "present in the life of the Church calling people to conversion, communion and solidarity" (EA 3).

The Church of Oakland must experience conversion and call others to conversion, give witness to our communion as the Body of Christ and stand in solidarity with the poor in order to ensure the enactment of basic human rights and the common good. The duty in front of us might seem overwhelming; it is not! The following considerations provide parishes with possible and manageable plans to begin. Go... and evangelize!

#### Considerations for evangelization:

To foster conversion -

- Provide opportunities for faith formation on the USCCB pamphlet *Celebrating the Sacrament of Penance*
- Develop formation on Catholic Social thought as an object of reflection for individual and communal examination of conscience
- Create opportunities for cross cultural exchanges in order to build a greater awareness and appreciation of difference in the Church

To foster communion -

- Implement diocesan norms on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and the United States adaptations.
- Encourage families to talk about their faith life together and help them to be comfortable in sharing faith.
- Provide "Returning Catholics" opportunities to strengthen the sacramental identity of the parish.

To foster solidarity -

- Involve parishioners in the broader community and civic activities.
- Develop a Parish Social Ministry Committee
- Adopt a sister parish locally and/or globally



