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Friday, September 12, 2003

Gathered and Sent: Synod Initiatives, Priorities, Strategies

text only version

Following are the Pastoral Initiatives, Priorities and Strategies for the Synod of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

PASTORAL INITIATIVE I: Evangelization and "The New Evangelization"

Proclaiming the presence and power of God in the world. Every baptized Catholic is called to participate in the mission of Christ and the Spirit, the mission of the Church, proclaiming in word and deed the message at the heart of Jesus' life and ministry: the Reign of God among us here and now, at this time and in this place. The whole life of the Church in all its dimensions is to serve this MISSION:



announcing in what we say and do the Good News, the year of God's favor, the transformation of the world and the coming of the Reign of God, the reign of truth, holiness, justice, love and peace.

Central to this mission is EVANGELIZATION. There are three levels of evangelization. First, evangelization entails allowing one's own heart to be seized and saturated by the Gospel, responding to the call to lifelong conversion to Christ by the gift of the Spirit. Second, evangelization requires reaching out to others to proclaim in word and deed the Reign of God. Third, evangelization demands that the values of the Reign of God -- a reign of truth, holiness, justice, love and peace -- permeate each and every culture, transforming every sphere of life.

Because we are called to holiness of life through the grace of our baptism, we have a responsibility to proclaim to others the experience of Christ in our lives -- to our families, in our places of work, in our neighborhoods, as well as in the public square. Every Catholic should be able to convey a personal knowledge of God's love and salvation in the language of the Scriptures, by way of the experience of the Sacraments, and through an appreciation of the tradition of the Church. Further, today there must be a NEW EVANGELIZATION, focused on evangelizing or re-evangelizing under-catechized, inactive, and alienated Catholics, as well as on re-animating those who have already discovered the presence of Christ in their lives. The "new evangelization" also means that each one of us who already has faith in Jesus Christ allows Christ to touch the unconverted corners of our lives.

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Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in America (Jan. 22, 1999), 6, 28 and 66: AAS91 (1999), 737-815; Apostolic Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente (Nov. 10, 1994), 21: AAS87 (1995), 17; Address at the Opening of the Fourth General Conference of Latin American Bishops (Oct. 12, 1992), 17: AAS 85 (1993), 820; Encyclical Redemptoris Missio (Dec. 7, 1990), 37.4: AAS 83 (1991), 249-340; Post-Synodal Exhortation Christifideles Laici (Dec. 30, 1988), 34: AAS 81 (1989), 455.

PASTORAL PRIORITY:

A specific pastoral plan for "the new evangelization" of all Catholics (laity, clergy and religious) is to be established on the level of the archdiocese and implemented in each parish.

PASTORAL STRATEGIES:

--On all levels, (parish, deanery, pastoral region, and archdiocese), resources are to be prioritized and allocated to promote evangelization.

--A collaborative effort is to be initiated among the pastoral offices of the archdiocese, pastoral regions, and the parishes in designing new, simple and effective models for "the new evangelization."

--On all levels, media and electronic technology, in particular, radio, television and the Internet, are to be utilized in evangelization.

PASTORAL INITIATIVE II:

Structures for Participation and Accountability

Toward greater participation in decision-making and responsibility for mission. If all the baptized are to share in the Church's mission, then the structures of Church life and governance must be renewed, and some new structures established, to allow for the greatest degree of participation on the part of the greatest number of the baptized. Participation in the mission of the Church is rooted in baptism, strengthened in confirmation, and nurtured by regular celebration in the Eucharist. All receive gifts from the Spirit that call them to build the Church, and advance the Reign of God. For effectiveness in mission, Catholics must be convinced that they are truly the Church, that they are an integral part of its mission, structure, and governance. To accomplish this, the Church must evaluate and revitalize present structures and devise new ones to provide for increased participation, collaboration, and accountability in mission and ministry. This demands greater inclusion of the enormous diversity of peoples in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the many language and socio-economic groups, the range of ethnic-cultural heritages, both male and female, the spectrum of age, the multiplicity of jobs and professions, persons with disabilities of various kinds, as well as the many who are marginalized in various ways in society and Church. All are called to be attentive to this rich diversity, to encourage active participation of all in the Church according to each one's particular gifts and specific ecclesial calling,

just as all are called to greater accountability.

PASTORAL PRIORITIES:

The archbishop, regional bishops, and archdiocesan leadership team are to guarantee the development of structures which provide for appropriate religious and lay participation in decision-making and processes of accountability at archdiocesan, regional, deanery and parish levels.

Each regional bishop is to be given the authority, oversight, and resources (personnel and finances) to administer his pastoral region effectively [second level priority].

PASTORAL STRATEGIES:

--In view of the declining number of priests available to serve as pastors, a comprehensive study, including consultation with laity, regarding parish consolidation, clustering, the creation of new parishes, and staffing by combinations of clergy and lay ministers appropriate to each parish, is to be undertaken, and a plan developed and implemented.

--A regional pastoral council is to be established in each region to address common goals, concerns, challenges, and the sharing of resources.

PASTORAL INITIATIVE III:

Ongoing Education and Formation: Adults; Young Adults; Youth

Understanding the Catholic tradition; passing it on to the next generation. All the baptized are to be "well-formed in faith, enthusiastic, capable of leadership in the Church and in society, filled with compassion and working for justice" (United States Bishops' pastoral plan for adult faith formation, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, 1999, 30). In order to be more effective in the Church's mission, both now and in the decades ahead, clearer focus and more concerted effort must be given to ongoing education and formation throughout each stage of life. Christians who have come to know Jesus the Christ have always sought ways of explaining their experience of him to others, and manifesting this experience through faith-filled action. In doing so, they have endowed us with a rich tradition.

We are now challenged to appreciate this heritage, to pass it on to a new generation, and to make it vital in an ever-changing world. But only those who are first evangelized themselves, those who experience the presence and power of the Spirit of Christ, can truly grasp this tradition and then hand it onto others. What is needed in our own time and place is enthusiastic leaders who can motivate the whole Church, but especially youth and young adults, to be and build the Body of Christ in the world.

PASTORAL PRIORITY:

Effective religious education and faith formation programs are to be offered throughout the archdiocese on all levels -- children, youth, young adults and adults.

PASTORAL STRATEGIES:

--The plan for the ongoing education and formation of adult Catholics is to include scripture study, social justice education, opportunities for theological understanding, and personal appreciation of all the sacraments, respect for diversity, spirituality and spiritual direction.

--Within each pastoral region, a sufficient number of young adult programs are to be established on an inter-parochial basis through the mutual cooperation of parishes, including the sharing of resources and personnel, to provide for the faith formation needs of young adults.

PASTORAL INITIATIVE IV:

Ministry and Leadership: Lay; Consecrated Life; Ordained

Toward deeper commitment to witness, worship, and service. Baptism and confirmation give each one a share in the Church's witness, worship and service for the good of its mission -- the mission of Christ and of the Spirit -- for the transformation of the world. Through baptism all share in the witness, worship, and service of the Church. The call to ministry and leadership comes specifically from the grace of baptism, and so there are many forms of ministry that pertain to the laity, and are not restricted to clergy and religious. Indeed, "the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1547).

This "baptismal grace of all" is the context within which all kinds of leadership in the Church -- the vitally important priestly role of bishops and presbyters to build up and lead the Church as visible signs of its unity, the role of deacons ordained specifically for the service of charity, as well as the importance of the consecrated life as prophetic sign of the coming reign of God, and committed lay leadership -- are affirmed. What is called for in all exercises of ministry and leadership is collaboration with one another for the building of the one Body of Christ. With well-trained and deeply committed ordained and lay ministers and leaders in the Church, the Word will be effectively preached to our own faith communities, and inactive Catholics and non-Catholics will hear the Good News proclaimed with vigor and joy. This Word of God "is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but is before all else a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Redemptoris Missio, 18).

PASTORAL PRIORITY:

On the archdiocesan level, processes are to be established to ensure better collaboration and cooperation among the laity, religious and clergy so that the laity can more effectively assume their baptismal responsibility in the mission of the church.

PASTORAL STRATEGIES:

--A plan for the joint training of ordained and lay leaders, especially in processes of collaboration and shared decision making, is to be implemented.

--A "school of ministry for laity" or its equivalent is to be established in each pastoral region to train parishioners for participation in a variety of parochial ministries.

--Women are to be included on an equal basis in all aspects of church leadership, administration, and ministry not otherwise restricted by church doctrine.

PASTORAL INITIATIVE V:**Eucharist and Sacramental Living**

Becoming a holy people, rooted in prayer, living by the grace of the Eucharist and sacramental celebration. The Church's sacramental life becomes fruitful as the whole People of God integrate the sacramental celebrations of the Paschal Mystery with their efforts to transform the world in and through God's love. The Eucharist makes the gathered community, the assembly, what it is: We become what we receive; we receive the Body of Christ in the Eucharist to become the Body of Christ for the transformation of the world. "No Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist" (John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 33; cf. *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 6). We live by a transforming grace that allows us to recognize and embrace the sacredness of human life and living in its various dimensions. Our whole lives become a living expression of the Paschal Mystery -- the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ -- that we celebrate, primarily in the Eucharist.

Our participation in the Eucharist expresses our commitment to allow Jesus Christ to enter our lives, to nourish us with the Word, to sustain us with the sacrament of his Body and Blood, building us --- member for member --- into the Body of Christ. As the experience of the Risen Christ transformed the disciples, so our participation in the Paschal Mystery transforms us as well as the wider world. But this is only possible if we are steeped in the prayer that strengthens our commitment to a life of holiness.

PASTORAL PRIORITIES:

Each parish is to give priority to the Sunday celebration of mass as the primary occasion and

opportunity for revitalizing the spiritual life of the community and, accordingly, make appropriate provision for the full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful.

As the availability of priests continues to decline within the archdiocese, a comprehensive plan is to be developed on the archdiocesan, regional and parish levels for providing for the liturgical and sacramental needs of the people.

PASTORAL STRATEGIES:

--Archdiocesan guidelines are to be developed and implemented to guarantee opportunities for Catholics to receive communion, gather for prayer, and celebrate those sacraments and liturgical rites which can be administered in the absence of a priest.

--Ordained and lay ministers are to participate in ongoing, formal liturgical and homiletic studies.

PASTORAL INITIATIVE VI:

Social Justice: Living at the Service of God's Reign

Becoming a People of Communion and Justice for the life of the world. Building a world of communion and justice is a foreshadowing of, and participation in, the Reign of God. "Communion" describes our relationship with God, others, ourselves and all creation; a relationship rooted in the equality, mutuality, and interdependence at the heart of the divine life. Authentic communion calls for a willingness to share the resources of this Archdiocese across parish, deanery and regional boundaries. "Justice" is the activity of creating a world in which all may grow -- with particular attention given to the poor, the weak, and the wounded. The Gospel reminds us that we come to a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ through our experience of the poor and all those who are in need (Matthew 25: 31-46).

Those who are evangelized, who truly know the presence of Christ in their lives, reach out to the poor, to those who are last, littlest and least in Church and society, seeking and promoting justice. In striving for justice in society and in the Church we continue a long tradition of ministering to the disadvantaged and striving to transform unjust structures. We live out our baptismal call to service for the greater glory of God by giving witness to the grace of communion not only in the parish assembly but also in our neighborhoods, schools, town halls, and the wider political and economic order.



PASTORAL PRIORITIES:

On all levels, active collaboration with civil and religious institutions to improve the quality of life in

the local community is to be fostered.

A more equitable distribution of resources (finances and personnel) to assist poorer parishes and schools is to be implemented throughout the archdiocese [second level priority].

PASTORAL STRATEGIES:

--Parishes are to provide a social justice ministry to raise the consciousness of parishioners by educating and informing them on various issues of social justice.

--On the archdiocesan level, salary structures are to be established that provide for a just living wage and benefits, including health, retirement, and unemployment for both part-time and full-time church personnel.

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