



ATTACHMENT G

PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

PRAYER RESOURCES FOR THE PLANNING GATHERINGS

This prayer booklet is a companion to the PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING. It has been created as a prayer resource for the Phase One meetings of small groups, such as the parish leadership group or cluster leadership meetings that have been given the responsibility of reflecting on the parish profile and studying the criteria for parish viability. These prayers may also be used for meetings of the Committee for Parish Renewal and Restructuring in Phase Two. **It is not meant to be used with a larger gathering such as a parish town hall meeting.** Simple, brief prayers are included in this resource as suggestions for those larger meetings.

In his Pastoral Letter, “EMBRACING THE FUTURE WITH HOPE,” introducing the PASTORAL PLAN, Bishop Braxton stresses that prayer must be the heart of this process if it is to bear fruit. He has urged us to allot a significant amount of time for prayer during all of our gatherings. As we proceed with the PASTORAL PLAN, it is important to remain grounded in the Gospel as we reflect on the specific realities that make up our individual parishes and schools. Only in this way will we be able to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit and dispose ourselves to the sacrifices we may be called upon to make for the good of our parish communities and the good of the Church in southern Illinois.

When smaller groups make use of this resource, they should begin with breaking open the Word and faith sharing. This form of prayer can make a significant difference in the quality of the discussions and planning. The closing prayer can be used immediately following the faith sharing or can be reserved for the end of the meeting.

In addition to the prayers, at the end of this booklet are petitions that can be used for the Prayers of the Faithful at weekend celebrations of the Eucharist. Certain petitions may be particularly appropriate at a specific juncture in the process. They are samples that can be modified to fit each particular faith community.

As the Diocese undertakes this important renewal process in the year of our 125th Anniversary, pastoral planning must not be just another task. It must be rooted in the Good News of Jesus Christ who is the source of our confidence in the present and our hope for the future. Please remember that prayer must not be rushed nor neglected, because if it is, the planning will become just another task and the mission of the Church, the Good News of Jesus Christ, will be forgotten.

PRAYER DURING PASTORAL PLANNING

Leader: Almighty God and Father, we the people of the Diocese of Belleville prayerfully look to the future. During this time of pastoral planning, we implore the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us the gifts of wisdom, courage and hope.

All: May we exercise the virtue of prudence by opening our hearts and minds to be good stewards of the legacy of faith inherited from those who built the Church of southern Illinois;

Leader: May we exercise the virtue of justice by opening our hearts and minds to assure that the voices of persons from all generations, all vocations and all areas of the diocese are welcomed and respected;

All: May we exercise the virtue of fortitude by opening our hearts and minds to understand and acknowledge the spiritual and practical realities of our day and prepare for the days to come; and

Leader: May we exercise the virtue of temperance by opening our hearts and minds to accept the changes in diocesan, parish and personal life that the Holy Spirit, through this planning process, is guiding us to make.

All: Under the protection of Immaculate Mary, our Mother and our Patroness, may we discern and implement what is best for the diocesan Church and all the faithful of southern Illinois. We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

“DO NOT BE AFRAID”

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Word of the Father,
All: come, Lord, come;
Leader: and take our fear away;
All: replace it with your love.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 43:1-3a

But now thus says the Lord,
 who created you, O Jacob,
 And formed you, O Israel:
Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
 I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the water, I will be with you;
in the rivers you shall not drown.
When you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
 and the flames shall not consume you.
For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

The prophet Isaiah insists that the humiliation of Israel in being sent into exile was the punishment of God for sin. Yet Israel is still the servant of God. God has redeemed Israel and promises to protect it during any ordeal.

As we participate in pastoral planning, what fears do I - and the people of our church - have? What can we do to help build our community's confidence that God will lead us through this time of change?

(If people are reluctant to share, proclaim the Scripture passage a second time.)

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs:
We pray for openness to new possibilities and opportunities, we pray to
the Lord....
All: Lord, hear our prayer.
Leader: And for what else shall we pray...

Lord's Prayer

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us offer the prayer Christ taught us:
Our Father...

Closing Prayer: PRAYER DURING PASTORAL PLANNING

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Amen.

“DYING AND RISING”

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Bless the Lord God at all times; and ask him to guide you in his paths,
All: so that all that you do may be rooted in him.
Leader: Ask God to guide you that you may do what is pleasing to him in
sincerity and with all your strength
All: So that all that you do may be rooted in him.

Scripture Reading: John 20:11-18

Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping. And as she wept, she bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” She thought it was the gardener and said to him, “Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabboni (which means Teacher)!” Jesus said to her, “Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and what he told her.

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

Dying and rising, even on a daily basis, are part of the Christian life cycle. Recall one such cycle in your own life: a time when you had some sense of “new life” after a time of struggle or darkness. What was it like for you to experience the joy of the “new life”? Did God seem to be a part of that experience? If so, in what way?

(If people are reluctant to share, proclaim the Scripture passage a second time.)

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs
We pray for those who are suffering through war or domestic violence,
we pray to the Lord...
All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: And for what else shall we pray...

Lord's Prayer

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us offer the prayer Christ taught us:
Our Father...

Closing Prayer: PRAYER DURING PASTORAL PLANNING

Leader: Almighty God and Father, we the people of the Diocese of Belleville prayerfully look to the future. During this time of pastoral planning, we implore the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us the gifts of wisdom, courage and hope.

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Amen.

“CLAY IN THE HANDS OF THE POTTER”

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Speak to us, O God.
All: Speak to us your truth.
Leader: Dwell with us, O God.
All: Dwell with us in love.

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 18:1-6

This word came to Jeremiah from the Lord: Rise up, be off to the potter's house; there I will give you my message. I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at the wheel. Whenever the object of clay which he was making turned out badly in his hand, he tried again, making of the clay another object of whatever sort he pleased. Then the word of the Lord came to me: Can I not do to you, O house of Israel, as this potter has done? says the Lord. Indeed, like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, house of Israel.

Silent Reflection

Question for Faith Sharing

In what ways is it difficult, in what ways is it easy, to see yourself, our parishes, or our diocese in the hands of God, the Potter?

(If people are reluctant to share, proclaim the Scripture passage a second time.)

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs.
We pray for an increase in faith, we pray to the Lord...
All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: And for what else shall we pray...

Lord's Prayer

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us offer the prayer Christ taught us:
Our Father...

Closing Prayer: PRAYER DURING PASTORAL PLANNING

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Amen.

PRAYER AT A TIME OF STALEMATE

Leader: Now that we seem to be at an impasse, let us pause for prayer...

All: Heavenly Father, hear us as we pray.
We have come to a position from which we are unable to move ahead
in unison.

And so, we pause to ask your divine assistance.
Help us to back away from this issue so that we might view it
from a vantage point not weighed down by personal interests or colored
with a merely practical logic.

As we pray in silence, guide us to resolve this issue
by the light of the Gospels,
with the gentleness and compassion of Christ
and with true humility of heart.

Silent prayer for perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, allowing people to leave the room for a period of reflection. Upon returning:

Lord's Prayer

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us offer the prayer Christ taught us...
Our Father...

Leader: Lord, we come together again in your holy name.
All: Having been nourished by the stillness,
and having heard the divine voice within our hearts,
let us resume our meeting
to see if we can reach a decision that is for
our common good and
for the good of the whole Church.

Amen.

**INTERCESSIONS FOR THE PASTORAL PLAN
FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**

We pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit as we discern the future of our parishes, we pray to the Lord:

We pray for patience as we strive to discern the will of the Spirit as we plan for the restructuring of our parishes, we pray to the Lord:

We pray for perseverance to continue to work as builders of God's kingdom as we plan for the future, we pray to the Lord:

We pray for sensitivity to ideas and opinions that differ from ours, we pray to the Lord:

We pray for creativity to plan for parish life with a new vision, we pray to the Lord:

We pray for a desire to move from selfishness to selflessness as we plan for the future, we pray to the Lord:

We pray for imagination to discover the possibilities that can lead our parish and our people into the future, we pray to the Lord:

We pray for gentleness in thought and in word as we discern the will of the Spirit for our parishes, we pray to the Lord:

We pray for peace and unity in our homes, our Church, and our world, we pray to the Lord:

PRAYERS FOR LARGE GROUP GATHERINGS

Prayer of Thomas Merton

My Lord God
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following
your will does not mean
that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that my desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope that I have that desire
in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything
apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this
you will lead me by the right road
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always
though I may seem to be lost
and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear,
for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me
to face my perils alone.

Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known
that anyone who fled to thy protection,
implored thy help,
or sought thine intercession was left unaided.
Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee,
O Virgin of virgins, my mother;
to thee do I come, before thee I stand,
sinful and sorrowful.
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so
much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal
life. Amen

Come Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit
and they shall be created.
And You shall renew
the face of the earth.

O, God,
who by the light of the Holy Spirit,
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same Holy Spirit
we may be truly wise
and ever enjoy His consolations,
Through Christ Our Lord. Amen