

*St. James Catholic Church  
Parish Council and the Pastoral Plan*

The Parish Council serves as a consultative body representing the whole parish community in making recommendations to our pastor regarding the life and mission of our community. The council serves as a representative voice of the People of God; which includes all individuals and groups of the parish community.

With the pastor and staff, the Parish Council has a special obligation in the task of pastoral planning. It sets the direction for the parish by focusing on the parish's mission statement and organizing a plan to carry out that mission.

Parish Council Pastoral Planning Responsibilities:

1. Develop a plan to carry out our mission;
2. Establish committees to develop and implement goals, objectives and strategies for achieving our mission;
3. Coordinate various groups, committees, and activities related to the life of the parish;
4. Empower the gifts of the community members;
5. Encourage a network of communication with the parish and surrounding community;
6. Implement the Pastoral Plan by monitoring its progress and making adjustments.

**I. Vision Statement**

God calls the Catholics of the Archdiocese of Baltimore to be a welcoming, worshipping community of faith, hope and love. Through His Spirit, the Lord Jesus lives in those who believe, and reaches into our world with His saving message and healing love.

**II. St. James Mission Statement**

*Nourished by the Eucharist, Saint James Catholic Church proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our community through Word and Sacrament. Strengthened by the Holy Spirit we put our faith into action by serving Christ, thereby giving praise and glory to God our Father.*

**III. Mission Priorities**

As disciples of Jesus Christ, our mission is:

1. To evangelize ourselves, our families, our parish and local communities, and our world.
2. To celebrate our faith with joy through vibrant and prayerful worship.
3. To educate and become educated in the truths of the Gospel and in the formation of conscience.
4. To reach out in love and service to those in need.
5. To develop the material, financial and human resources of the Church and to manage them as faithful stewards.

**IV. Planning and Programming Principles**

Recommendations for the mission of the Archdiocese of Baltimore demand striking a delicate balance between generalizations and overly-specific suggestions. These themes are set forth as principles to influence the definition, direction and implementation of all mission areas.

1. Developing a spirituality for each mission priority is paramount. Each mission is rooted deeply in the Church's faith and traditions. Combining those traditions with modern learning will provide the foundation for both direction and growth.
2. Encouraging, retaining and attracting priests, deacons, religious and lay leaders who can support the mission is strategic.

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3. Making clear our gospel-based concern for the poor and vulnerable is a fundamental component of each mission.
4. Accepting on-going training – both spiritual and practical – for priests, religious and laity is essential if they are to execute their roles effectively and efficiently.
5. Recognizing the need to re-deploy existing resources to enable the mission priorities is essential. Implementing the mission priorities effectively will require reorganization of Archdiocesan structures and delivery systems.
6. Approaching all mission priorities with a multi-ethnic sensitivity and inter-generational awareness is central to the inclusivity of the vision.
7. Including an ecumenical and inter-faith dimension in our mission should be encouraged as much as possible.
8. Recognizing the pivotal role that technology plays in our modern society – and using it effectively in our mission efforts – is vital if we are to leverage fully our resources.
9. Recognizing that the most effective use of our resources includes a shift from parochial or parish-based to a broader, regional focus in program development and resource application.
10. Accomplishing the mission priorities necessitates continuous evaluation, accountability and on-going planning at every level.

**V. Mission Priority Action Imperatives (Ministries)**

1. **Evangelization** – To evangelize ourselves, our families, our parish and local communities, and our world.

Every Catholic is called through Baptism to proclaim the good news of God’s saving love and the hope of eternal life. The Archdiocese has the responsibility to educate and encourage Catholics to share their faith and to serve those around them as disciples of Jesus. Therefore, we recommend the following action imperatives:

- i. Foster the call to holiness of all members by promoting personal and communal prayer as an essential part of one’s life. To foster growth in prayer we need to provide models of different prayer forms based on sacred scripture and devotions that belong to the tradition of the Church. Innovative expressions of prayer at Archdiocesan celebrations could be reproduced on the parish level.
- ii. Promote personal spiritual growth and continuing conversion among those already involved in the Church through a follow-up of RENEW, the development of small base communities with parishes, prayer groups and other means.
- iii. Develop strategies to help Catholics learn how to share their faith in their families, neighborhoods and workplaces.
- iv. Reach out by personal invitation and a spirit of hospitality to alienated Catholics, to the un-churched, and to people with specific needs including:
  - Youth
  - Young adults, single and married
  - Ethnic groups, including African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians
  - Women
  - Families
  - Newcomers to the Archdiocese (or to individual parishes)
  - Seniors

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- Disabled
  - v. Expand the Church's witness in the public media by using Archdiocesan resources in cooperation with the various Catholic institutions of the Archdiocese (e.g. primary, secondary, and higher education institutions, hospitals and health care delivery institutions).
  - vi. Use technology to spread the Gospel message and make known the mission and description of the Archdiocese.
2. **Liturgy** – To celebrate our faith with joy through vibrant and prayerful worship.

Liturgy is of paramount importance to the work of the Church. Most individuals' experience of the Church is through liturgy. Each week, the Church reaches some 200,000 faithful across the Archdiocese of Baltimore through weekend liturgies. Liturgy is the central means by which we gather, are strengthened, and are sent back into the world to carry out the mission of the Church. Therefore, we recommend the following action imperatives:

- i. Improve Sunday liturgy in the Church beginning with an assessment of liturgical practices throughout the Archdiocese in light of the following dimensions:
  - Spirituality – how the liturgy fosters the spiritual development of the community.
  - Homiletics – what could be done to address concerns regarding preaching.
  - Diversity – how to respect and lift up the traditions of the various communities of the Archdiocese.
  - Relevancy – how to relate liturgy to the real life experiences of congregations and to the service and educational mission of the Church.
  - Training – what skills could be offered for the various roles exercised in the preparation and celebration of liturgy.
  - Technology – how to use technology effectively within the liturgy and to promote appreciation for ritual.
  - Environment – what possible tasteful elements to liturgical space and environmental design could be promoted.
  - Distribution – how to put quality liturgical resources at the disposal of those who contribute to the liturgy.
  - Inter-parish cooperation – what resources could be shared among parishes.
  - Budget – how current resources are being expended to support liturgy.
  - Music – what can be done to ensure a consistently high quality of music in liturgy.
  - Participation – what can be done to increase participation of the congregation in prayer and song.
  - Community – how can a greater spirit of community be formed to be more welcoming and caring of each other.
- ii. Make available appropriate materials for alternative worship services in the absence of a priest, for weekdays and, as the need arises, for weekends.

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3. **Education** – To educate and become educated in the truths of the Gospel and in the formation of conscience.

Teaching the Word of God is central to the mission of the Church. The Lord calls us to teach all nations, forming peoples in the truth of the Gospel as it is handed on in our living Catholic tradition. Therefore we recommend the following action imperatives:

- i. Enhance the effectiveness of all religious education programs offered through parishes and the various educational organizations of the Archdiocese. Begin with a study to include:
    - The methodology for preparing teachers of Religion in schools and in all Religious Education Programs;
    - The structure, methodology and content of the programs based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church;
    - The use of modern technology to reach out to untapped groups (including interactive, computer-based technologies);
    - The availability of resources to meet the diverse needs of minorities;
    - The evaluation of how resources are allocated among the various education programs.
  - ii. Develop a comprehensive plan for Catholic school education to meet evolving needs of the Archdiocese.
  - iii. Collaborate with the Continuing Education Center at St. Mary's Seminary and similar Catholic institutions to develop programs that would continue the education and formation process for adult Catholics.
  - iv. Engage in dialogue with young adults in parishes and college campuses to strengthen their resolve to meet the moral and ethical challenges of the day.
4. **Service** – To reach out in love and service to those in need.

Service to those in need has always been integral to the mission of the Church. The Archdiocese needs to continue and expand its special concern for the poor and the vulnerable through public advocacy, direct service, allocation of resources, education and liturgy. Therefore, we recommend the following action imperatives:

- i. Educate Catholics on the essential nature of service as a component of an authentic expression of faith.
- ii. Commission a study of service efforts offered through parishes, other Catholic organizations and Catholic Charities, to develop a comprehensive profile of services rendered by the Church and a blueprint for the future to determine areas where the poor and vulnerable are not being served.
- iii. Expand service programs in schools and religious education programs.

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5. **Stewardship** – To develop the material, financial and human resources of the Church and to manage them wisely.

God entrusted us with responsibility for the stewardship of His gifts. We must foster an understanding of and a responsibility for sacrificial giving among all persons throughout the Archdiocese. Our future effectiveness will depend on the development and management of our resources. The Archdiocese should assist members of the Church to be wise stewards of all resources in order to pursue its mission. Therefore, we recommend the following action imperatives:

- i. Train priests, other parish and school staff and lay leaders in resource development and management of financial and human resources.
- ii. Make available to parishes effective tools that enhance and promote the development and management of resources (e.g. computers and software).
- iii. Conduct a study of innovative ways to share resources (human, technological and financial) among schools, parishes and regions.
- iv. Consult with experts in the reallocation of both human and financial resources to accomplish these recommendations on stewardship as well as on liturgy, evangelization, education and service.
- v. Promote the role of volunteers and provide programs, criteria, role definition and affirmation of volunteers and donors at all levels of stewardship in the Church.
- vi. Collaborate with religious institutions and Institutes of Apostolic Life to determine how to share resources in furthering the mission of the Church.
- vii. Establish a Church Leadership Institute to:
  - Provide clergy and pastoral leaders with training in leadership and management skills;
  - Provide basic training and an orientation to new Church staff and volunteers;
  - Provide advanced training in specific ministry and service areas of the Church.