



Diocesan Planning Document

Active as Presented: September 28, 2004

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

The Most Rev. Joseph V. Adamec, D.D., S.T.L. is Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown, a diocese that serves more than 108,000 Catholics with nearly 44,000 registered households in the counties of Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clinton, Fulton, Huntingdon and Somerset in central Pennsylvania. There are 100 parishes, five missions, three diocesan high schools and 24 parish elementary schools.

The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown is a community of believers in Jesus Christ. As Catholic Christians, we believe in the covenant relationship resulting from God's love for us and our response to that great love. We are called to love God and to love one another.



The context for planning

The Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown embarked more than 10 years ago on an extensive process of strategic planning. In November 1992, Bishop Joseph Adamec published his response to the process and implementation began of many of the recommendations. Several significant areas of ministry received particular attention:

- : Liturgy and Worship
- : Adult Formation and Lay Ministry
- : Christian Initiation
- : Formation of the Permanent Diaconate
- : Continuing Education of the Clergy
- : Youth and Campus Ministry
- : Comprehensive Family Ministry
- : Stewardship
- : Development
- : Evangelization
- : Communications

A task force was created to address some of the critical needs of our Diocesan high schools. Additionally, each parish conducted a self-study that was followed by the restructuring of many parishes and redistribution of priests. In 1998, the Diocese entered into a twinning relationship with the Diocese of Mandeville, Jamaica. That relationship continues today with numerous parishes in our diocese partnering with parishes in Jamaica. During Lent 2000, the three-year *Disciples in Mission* process began and helped to renew many parishes and emphasized the Church's mission of evangelization.

In September 2003, Bishop Adamec authorized the creation of a committee of clergy, religious, lay administrators and lay volunteers to review the current status of Diocesan-sponsored ministries. The committee was charged with suggesting areas of service that could require new or renewed emphasis. Gathering input from a 24-person lay leadership group representing each deanery of the diocese, the committee also received comments for other constituencies. Through this process and collaborations, the committee identified 10 priority areas for attention and development of goals and objectives:

Parish Pastoral Life and Worship/Liturgy

Parish Administration

Spiritual Life and Ministry of Clergy and Religious

Protecting Children and Adults from Sexual Abuse

Religious Education and Youth Ministry

Catholic Schools – Elementary and Secondary

Family Ministry

Communications and Public Relations

Diocesan Leadership and Management

Diocesan Administration and Finances

Those goals and objectives were circulated across the diocese and, after a comment period and process, were edited for final submission to the Bishop by April 1, 2004. Bishop Adamec shall consult again with the Presbyteral Council (of Clergy) for final review before the Bishop presents the document for distribution and implementation across the diocese. The plan is written to assist Diocesan-sponsored ministries in focusing their efforts and is meant for ongoing review, analysis and editing. It does not represent the entire reach of ministry and service in the Diocesan Church of Altoona-Johnstown. For example, although not directly addressed in the document, the diocese remains committed to continual support to the missions and outreach to the poor through activities in a number of different ministries.

PARISH PASTORAL LIFE AND WORSHIP/LITURGY

Goal

Enhance parish pastoral life and worship through efforts to deepen the personal spiritual life of parishioners and build healthy faith communities utilizing effective evangelization and stewardship processes.

Objectives

- A. Identify activities and processes to promote evangelization to parishes as options for a formal follow up, for example to the successful *Disciples in Mission* process undertaken by the Diocese in recent years.

By September 30, 2004 – Recommendation to Bishop through Vicar General by Education, Family Life and Adult Formation and Lay Ministry Offices in consultation with Evangelization leadership

- B. Continue to encourage parishes to undertake ongoing stewardship activities and to provide support for parishes that wish to utilize *Stewardship A Way of Life*.

By June 30, 2005 – A minimum of 35 parishes with active stewardship processes [being completed at a parish annually] as identified by the Stewardship and Development Office

- C. Develop a means to deepen the spiritual life of parishes through support of prayer and liturgical practices and by encouraging a greater participation in the sacraments, particularly Reconciliation.

By December 31, 2004 – The Liturgy Office will develop an assessment tool to assist parishes in reviewing their liturgical and spiritual life

PARISH ADMINISTRATION

Goal

Explore opportunities to better assist parishes with issues related to business management, day-to-day office operations, planning, financial and general administration.

Objectives

- A. Educate clergy and parish volunteer leadership groups about the need to delegate more responsibility and authority to lay staff and volunteers, and the opportunities to share resources (i.e. personnel, office space and event planning) with neighboring parishes.

Continue the work of the Office of Ongoing Formation and

By June 30, 2005 – The Finance Office will have completed workshops in each deanery

- B. Identify and market educational opportunities for lay persons to receive formalized training in church administration, pastoral ministry and other related areas of study.

By September 30, 2005 – Recommendation to Bishop through Vicar General by Education, Family Life, Religious Education, and Adult Formation and Lay Ministry Offices

- C. Provide direct plans of action/assistance for parishes with financial difficulties and parishes under ACA goal for three or more consecutive years.

Continue activities of the Commission on Parish Finances and

By December 31, 2004 – The Stewardship and Development Office will make specific recommendations to assist select parishes with Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) activities and strategies

PARISH ADMINISTRATION

Objectives continued

- D. Form a Task Force to create standards for parish financial reporting to be used at all parishes and parochial schools, and to define a set of required internal control practices.

By June 30, 2005 –

The Finance Office will have provided the new standards with explanations to all parishes and elementary schools

- E. Conduct a parish financial review at least once every four years and immediately after new parish pastor or administrator assignments to provide support to parishes in the implementation of internal controls.

By June 30, 2004 –

The Finance Office will be prepared to assist all parishes with a newly assigned pastor or administrator

By June 30, 2005 –

The Finance Office will have assembled the personnel (volunteers, contracted services and/or staff) and funds (reallocation of budgeted resources) to meet this objective

SPIRITUAL LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CLERGY & RELIGIOUS

Goal

Intensify efforts to identify and implement processes and strategies to nurture the spiritual life and ministry of priests, deacons and religious.

Objectives

- A. Implement a Personnel Policies Task Force to review current personnel policies related to priests, deacons and religious and to make recommendations for consideration by the Bishop.

By August 15, 2004 – Bishop appoints the Task Force based upon recommendations from the Vicars General

By June 30, 2005 – Bishop is presented policy considerations to be reviewed by appropriate councils

By June 30, 2006 – Amended or Reviewed/Approved Policies fully implemented

- B. Strengthen the relationship between clergy and Bishop by increased communication and interaction among clergy from across the diocese.

The Bishop will continue to meet with priests & deacons through attendance at two annual clergy conferences

By June 30, 2005 – All clergy attend at least one deanery meeting annually

By June 30, 2006 – Bishop attends at least one meeting in each deanery every three years

- C. Increase and improve vocation efforts through formalized planning and goal-setting cooperation between the Offices of Vocations and the Diaconal Formation.

By December 31, 2004 – Recommendation through Vicar General from the Secretariat for Liturgy

PROTECTING CHILDREN & ADULTS FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

Goal

Maintain a climate within Diocesan parishes, schools and ministries that respect the dignity of children, teenagers and adults through the ongoing implementation of Protecting God's Children and supporting policies.

Objectives

- A. Continue to implement policies that ensure ongoing compliance with national guidelines from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops related to clergy abuse issues and the protection of children and adults.

Ongoing activities by the Office of Protecting God's Children and the Victims' Advocate

Consider potential objectives in related concentration areas, i.e. sexual harassment and safe environments

- B. Improve ongoing communications between the Diocese and parishes with priests on administrative leave due to abuse allegations or other circumstances while maintaining high standards of confidentiality and compassion for alleged perpetrators and victims, their families, friends and loved ones.

Periodically – The Bishop through the Vicars General should send appropriate written correspondence to Parish Administrators and, if appropriate on a case-by-case basis, correspondence may be distributed and/or read at weekend Masses at affected parishes.

PROTECTING CHILDREN & ADULTS FROM SEXUAL ABUSE

Objectives continued

- C. Establish a Diocesan Pastoral Response Team to make personal contact [i.e. speak at weekend Masses] with all parishes immediately after the removal of any clergy or lay administrators or volunteers due to allegations of improper conduct [including sexual abuse of minors].

By August 15, 2004 –

Director of Office of Protecting God's Children shall recommend to the Bishop through the Vicars General plans and staff/volunteers to activate the Team by no later than September 30, 2004

PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND YOUTH MINISTRY

Goal

Assist parishes in the ongoing lifelong call to conversion and faith through implementation of a comprehensive process of catechesis.

Objectives

- A. Provide an assessment tool that will help parishes perform a self-evaluation of the diocesan religious education curriculum, diocesan sacramental preparation guidelines and diocesan policy for programs [found in the Guidebook for Catechetical Faith Formation] for religious education/youth ministry (Coordinated by the Religious Education Office).
 - By September 1, 2004 – Pastors will be informed of the plan
 - By November 1, 2004 – Parish DRE/CREs will be given the assessment tool
 - By February 1, 2004 – Parishes who do not respond to the assessment will be contacted (a projected 40%)
 - By July 1, 2005 – Religious Education Office will assess the responses and report the number of parish programs in poor, partial or total compliance
 - By November 1, 2005 – Present a plan to raise the level of compliance for those programs that rate poor or partial
- B. Continue to provide educational opportunities to assist parishes in ongoing training of DRE/CRE/Youth Ministers and catechetical personnel.
 - By September 30, 2004 – Develop a plan that would help pastors understand and support the catechetical ministry
 - By September 1, 2004 – Implement educational meetings for new DRE/CRE/Youth Ministers
 - Provide 2-3 annual educational opportunities for DRE/CRE/Youth Ministers and catechetical personnel
 - By September 1, 2005 – offer catechist formation classes online (possibly through the University of Dayton)

PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND YOUTH MINISTRY

Objectives continued

- C. Integrate stewardship components into all parish life and grade levels of the religious education/youth ministry curriculum.

By December 1, 2004 – In collaboration with the Stewardship and Development Office, provide a plan to accomplish the objective

- D. Encourage continuing collaboration among Family Life, Religious Education, Catholic Schools, Youth Ministry, Christian Initiation, Disciples in Mission, Adult Formation and Lay Ministry and Stewardship offices to provide parish educational and faith formational activities.

By June 1, 2004 – A lead office named by the Vicar General – [Note: Youth Ministry has been selected]

By June 30, 2004 – Identified offices should gather to discuss a parish plan for ongoing intergenerational catechesis

By September 30, 2004 – Provide the Vicar General a written strategy for increased collaboration among these areas and potential new cooperative ventures

- E. Complete planning for fundraising and a construction timetable for the proposed off-campus Catholic Center to serve the Penn State (University Park) Catholic Campus Ministry (Coordinated by Stewardship and Development and Finance Offices in consultation with Education Office).

By December 31, 2004 – Plan of Action determined in conjunction with diocesan-wide evaluation of capital needs

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS – ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY

Goal

Examine the state of Catholic education in the Diocese and explore strategies and opportunities to enhance and shape the future of this ministry, its role in parish faith communities, consider changes and identify ways to increase financial stability.

Objectives

A. Reactivate the Diocesan Education Task Force to begin work and present a formal five-year plan for Catholic schools in the Diocese.

By June 1, 2004 –

- Each school selects their representative to serve on the Regional School Board
- Each school begins to discern their own five year plan/prognosis
- Formational meeting of the Regional Board
- Identification of the Regional Board members who will represent that Region on the Diocesan Board

By September 1, 2004 –

- Submission of names of the Regional Board members who will serve on the Diocesan Board to Bishop
- Regional Board meeting dates distributed
- Individual school plans compiled and shared

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS – ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY

Objectives continued

By September 30, 2004 – Bishop Joseph, through the Vicar General, appoints membership and chair for the Diocesan School Board that would serve initially as the Diocesan Task Force to evaluate Catholic education and produce a five-year plan for the Diocese.

By April 23, 2005 – Interim Report presented to Bishop Joseph and associated advisory groups

By July 1, 2005 – Final draft presented to Bishop Joseph for formal consultations

By December 31, 2005 – Plan approved for implementation

- B. Increase charitable contributions for Diocesan High Schools and expand the efforts to secure corporate contributions for elementary schools to the Second Century Scholarship Fund through the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (Coordinated by Office of Stewardship and Development).

Annually and Ongoing –

Increase total gifts contributed to the Second Century Fund in each fiscal year while maintaining or increasing total unrestricted and scholarship dollars given to support the three diocesan high schools

- C. In connection to recommendations from previous planning processes and expected recommendations from the Diocesan Education Task Force, the maximum level of the diocese's total revenue made available to fund educational ministries should be reviewed and a target range identified (Coordinated by Education and Finance Offices).

Example of potential target for consideration –

A range of 20-25 percent annually with no more than 85 percent of that total used in support of the three diocesan high schools

FAMILY MINISTRY

Goal

Seek to foster and implement new processes to respond to the diverse needs of today's family.

Objectives

- A. The Family Life Office staff will meet with Parish Pastoral Councils to offer ideas and resources for developing family ministry in their parishes.

By December 31, 2004 – Strategies and Action Steps developed for implementation at interested parishes

- B. Better assist parishes in reaching out to families with special concerns [i.e. hurting marriages, members with a disability, bereavement, etc.] (Coordinated by the Family Life Office).

By December 31, 2004 – Strategies and Action Steps developed for implementation no later than FY2005-06

- C. Identify possible ways in which parishes can involve parents more directly in the faith formation of their children from birth to adulthood (Coordinated by the Family Life Office in collaboration with interested clergy, Catholic Schools, and Religious Education, Youth and Campus Ministry, Christian Initiation, Adult Formation and Lay Ministry and Stewardship and Development Offices).

By September 30, 2005 – Strategies offered to parishes for optional implementation

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Goal

Improve communications among Diocesan offices, between the Chancery and parishes, and with the Chancery and general public.

Objectives

- A. Complete strategies and action steps to take full advantage of electronic mail and other technology for services to parishes, schools and ministries.

Coordinated by ongoing efforts of the Finance Office and Information Technology Office

- B. Continue to explore marketing strategies to increase usage and cost-reduction opportunities of the Internet and Diocesan web site.

Coordinated by ongoing efforts of the Secretary for Communications and Finance Office

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Objectives continued

- C. Develop a comprehensive Diocesan Communications Plan to deal with internal and external audiences and provide additional strategies for communications regarding ministries [i.e. Diocesan Television Ministries], services and issues [i.e. Clergy abuse and litigation] (Coordinated by Secretary for Communications).

By September 30, 2004 – Interim recommendations to Vicar General

By December 31, 2004 – Final plan announced to appropriate constituencies with implementation to begin no later than January 2005

- D. Increase strategic release of local diocesan news and more effectively publicize the activities of diocesan offices, ministries and parishes in the *Catholic Register*.

By September 30, 2004 –

Brief Report from the Secretary for Communications and the Editor of the *Catholic Register* to the Vicar General for Administration to identify action steps that address the objective

DIOCESAN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Goal

Evaluate and increase the effectiveness of Diocesan administrative leadership and management structure and activities.

Objectives

- A. Develop a Diocesan Pastoral Council to meet regularly as a recognized volunteer leadership group to study issues as presented by the Bishop.

Note: This group has been recruited and activated as of early 2004.

- B. Annually review the administrative structure of the Diocese and consider opportunities or adjustments to meet the priorities identified through this planning process and ongoing consideration of goals and objectives (Coordinated by the Vicar General for Administration).

DIOCESAN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Objectives continued

- C. Encourage at least one deanery meeting each year to include chairs of pastoral and finance councils from individual parishes and feature a brief diocesan update presented at the meeting by a representative of the Diocesan Administration (Coordinated by the Vicar General for Pastoral Life).

By December 31, 2005 –

At least five of seven deaneries have held one such meeting

- D. In association with objective B, a subcommittee of the 2003-04 planning committee should be identified by the Bishop for ongoing review of the planning document to work in conjunction with diocesan administration and councils.

By September 1, 2004 –

The group is named and prepared to meet in fall 2004 and identify a process of ongoing review, assessment and updating of the plan

DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCES

Goal

Consider alternative means of providing revenue for the Diocesan budget and continue to seek opportunities to streamline expenses.

Objectives

- A. Establish a sub-committee of the Diocesan Finance Council and ACA Advisory Sub-Committee to examine the Annual Catholic Appeal goal setting formula and other parish assessments and determine the feasibility of changes in those policies.
 - By June 30, 2005 – Preliminary report to Bishop and Presbyteral Council
 - By June 30, 2006 – Final report & recommendations received from councils by Bishop
 - By October 1, 2006 – Announcement of any changes in policies for implementation no later than FY 2006-07

- B. Encourage parishes with perpetual care funds and other long-range savings accounts to consider establishing or further supporting endowments held by the independent Foundation for the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, which provides annual distributions to many parishes, schools and ministries (Coordinated by Stewardship and Development and Finance Offices).

DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCES

Objectives continued

- C. Conduct an evaluation of the capital needs of the Diocese (Cathedrals, diocesan schools, administrative buildings, etc.) to determine financial needs for the next 10 years. This evaluation should be used as a key to continuing work by the Planning Committee, planning for the upcoming 3-5 years and consideration of a capital fundraising campaign.

By December 31, 2004 –

Finance Office presents report to Bishop and appropriate councils

- D. Annual comprehensive Diocesan budget review that examines options for potentially increasing revenues and decreasing expenses, as appropriate (Coordinated by Finance Office and Vicar General for Administration).
- E. Continue to seek out charitable financial contributions in the form of individual gifts and foundation/corporate grants to support Diocesan ministries, services, schools and initiatives, and increase total giving annually (Coordinated by Stewardship and Development Office).

Implementation of the planning principles

For successful implementation, this plan depends upon thoughtful consideration of the things we do and the ways that we do them. The plan is not a task list but a way of guiding many kinds of work across the Diocese. Based on ideas and suggestions from many people, it is designed to mesh with the initiatives and action plans of parishes and primarily Diocesan ministries and services and to clarify the priorities for planning by the many constituencies in the diocese.

Each of the goals requires us to reconsider our current practices, to clarify what these principles mean, and to synchronize activities in a timely way. They reflect an effort to continue thinking about what we do and why we do it, and implementing these goals and objectives will require the kind of engagement, flexibility, and creativity that have been evident throughout this most recent planning process. Implementation will also require us to define performance measures and to use these as a way to assess the effectiveness of our efforts together.

As noted in an earlier section, this document is a work in progress as all planning must be. There is a commitment to continued review, discussion and revision. An overriding theme of the effort is for the Diocesan Administration to provide service to the wide range of Catholics and non-Catholics who are touched by Catholic life in these Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania.

Guiding Principles – For the Review and Planning Process

Diocesan Fiscal Year 2003-04

The Church, birthed from the side of Christ and quickened by the outpouring of the Spirit, is called into holiness with the manifold gifts and graces from the Father to continue the work of redemption of humanity and establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

“When Jesus rose up again after suffering death on the cross for mankind, He manifested that He had been appointed Lord, Messiah, and Priest forever (cf. Acts 2:36; Heb. 5:6; 7:17-21), and He poured out on His disciples the Spirit promised by the Father (cf. Acts 2:33). The Church, consequently, equipped with the gifts of her Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility, and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and to establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God. She becomes on earth the initial budding forth of that kingdom. While she slowly grows, the Church strains toward the consummation of the kingdom and, with all her strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with her King” (*Lumen Gentium*, para. 5).

The New Testament, as the queen of the Catholic Tradition, describes clearly the work of Christ that is to be continued by the Church especially under the Master’s chosen leadership, the apostles. The apostolic leadership reflects Christ’s concern for His work to continue. He calls us to be people of service and to be good stewards of his blessings, to be people who witness and share the good news (gospel), to be a people who have a spirit of unity and common life, a people of prayer and worship and to be a people who carry on the truth of who He is and the wisdom He taught. The book, the Acts of the Apostles, gives to us snapshots, so to speak, of the daily life of the Church. In this book we see the elements of the Church’s mission in this infant community. An example of this is seen in the following:

“He (Peter) testified with many arguments, and was exhorting them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day. They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2: 40-47).”

Therefore we see our fathers and mothers in the faith doing the work of stewardship and service (*diakonia*), the work of worship and prayer (*liturgia*), the work of witness and evangelization (*evangelion*), the work of formation and instruction in the faith (*didache*), and the work of developing and living the common life of fellowship (*koinonia*). These five ecclesial works from our tradition are to be alive in our Church life today. These five represent one lens through which we view our Church.

However, following the exhortation of the Vatican Council we, the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown under the apostolic guidance of our bishop, Joseph Adamec, see the important need to read the signs of the times for our local church. The reading of the signs of the times provides a second lens of viewing present challenges for our Church. Using these two poles, our tradition and the reading the signs of the times, and under the guidance of the Spirit, whom Jesus assures us is with us, we present these goals and objectives in a spirit of collaboration and prayer as a plan for the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.