

Appendix XII

Diocese of Brooklyn Christ Jesus, Our Hope

Planning Questionnaire

After the parish assembly, a meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council, Finance Council, trustees, parish staff and pastor is convened to consider the following questions. A suggested process for this meeting is available.

The purpose of this report is four-fold:

- To provide an opportunity for parish leaders to critical reflect on the future of the parish together
- To articulate the current state of the parish and draft a final bulletin insert for all parishioners on the life of the parish
- To provide a report to the Bishop on the current state and future of your parish
- To develop a new parish pastoral plan

Once the following questions have been answered with appropriate consensus, the responses are used to create a report back to the parish. A format for this report is included in the Christ Jesus, Our Hope Resource Manual.

This report should also be sent to the Vicar for Strategic Planning by **May 18, 2010.**

Reflection Questions:

1. What are the signs of growth in your parish?

- Our Lady of the Snows parishioners actively participated in several campaigns to successfully raise funds for and construct a new Church building that was completed and dedicated by Bishop DiMarzio on August 5, 2008.
- Despite an updated shortened Mass schedule, the new church allows for greatly increased seating capacity, which is nearly double that of our old church.
- Our average Mass attendance over the past five years has not decreased and has remained steady. Our weekday Mass attendance is very strong.
- Our Lady of the Snows boasts a very strong and committed Parish Pastoral Council (PPC). The PPC has worked very diligently to identify ways to keep or increase Mass attendance, and to enliven Mass participation while always remaining centrally focused on the Eucharist. As a result, a Special Events Mass Committee was formed to ensure continued effort in this area. A wonderful example of success in this area was our Multi-Cultural Mass event, which was held on Pentecost Sunday, and involved our diverse community. The most recent Multi-Cultural Mass was celebrated by over 600 parishioners and was followed by a reception.
- In a comparison and in contrast to Diocesan statistics, OLS shows increases in the sacraments of Confirmation and Marriage. In addition, we have experienced an upward trend in Baptisms, with First Holy Communions remaining at a constant level. The upward trend in Baptisms allows us to be optimistic and will hopefully correlate into an increase in parishioners.
- Construction of the new Church has allowed for the creation of a new parish gymnasium. This new gymnasium allows families that are involved in our CYO program to remain centralized and make our parish their focus.

2. What is the greatest strength of your parish?

- OLS boasts a tremendous variety of parish organizations and liturgical ministries, all of which receive the support of our parish leadership, our Pastor and our Parish Staff. There is an overwhelming and altruistic willingness of parish members to contribute their time, talent and treasure to parish activities and causes.
- Cultural diversity is one of our greatest strengths and is ever expanding. Our culturally diverse membership works together closely to respectfully blend activities, talents, openness and contributions of all parishioners, focused around our faith.
- Over the past year the Human Concerns Center has expanded its membership by adding over 25 new members. This has resulted in an increase in outreach programs to members of the community.
- Our parish has provided pastoral care to the patients and staff at Long Island Jewish Medical Center and two nursing homes. This ministry will continue to be a priority.

3. What are the greatest concerns or challenges facing your parish now and in the projected future?

- To utilize parishioner and financial resources, to implement programs that would welcome, encourage inclusion and active Mass participation for families and all people within our parish community.
- As parish demographics vary, we continually face the challenge of identifying, welcoming and inviting new and potential parishioners
- To continually increase parishioner contributions and revenues, in an effort to increase our reserve fund balance, and to address naturally occurring increases in ordinary expenses.
- To be able to attend to our aging population, provide them with services and with proper referral information to address their needs and concerns.
- To create programs that will actively involve our youth in the life of the parish.

4. Which of these challenges do you feel the parish can address or has been addressing? How?

We feel that our parish has been addressing and will continue to address the following challenges:

- Identifying, mentoring, training and renewing parishioners for Lay Leadership positions, specifically seeking diversity and representation of all cultural/demographic groups. Having a strong and culturally/demographically diverse leadership assists parishioners in identifying with our leadership, and motivates and ensures the involvement of all members of our parish.
- We will continue to seek new and creative programs to maximize parishioner involvement, demonstrating at the same time the need for continuing parishioner financial support, and the need to increase our parish reserve fund balance. This can be accomplished by educating our parishioners to the need for financial reserves.
- With the increase of over 25 members in our Human Concerns Center, we have been able to provide additional outreach programs towards the specific needs of our parishioners, especially our homebound elderly. In this ongoing effort, we provide assistance and appropriate referral for our aging population.
- We have had difficulty maintaining continuous young adult and youth involvement. As a result of this Parish Self Study, we have identified that we need to create very specific and directed programs towards these groups. It is not enough to ask them to be involved, we must provide additional, specific programs that will attract and interest these groups while focusing them on faith.

5. Which challenges seem beyond the ability of the parish to adequately address with your current resources?

Although we attempt to address each of our identified issues, we are realistic in understanding that there are circumstances that sometimes are beyond our local control. Therefore, some issues that will make it more difficult for us to be immediately successful are listed below:

- Economic downturns – with the advent of a slowed economy, unemployment and parishioners living on fixed incomes, the goal of increasing the parish reserve fund will take longer than expected. Nonetheless, we will continue efforts and attempt to accomplish this goal.
- Demographic/cultural neighborhood changes – this has been an ongoing issue for our parish. Over the last ten years, we have experienced significant changes, conversely, we have been successful in outreach programs and we have consistently received feedback from new parishioners that we are a warm, welcoming and inclusive parish. This is also evidenced by the amounts of new parishioners we identify and celebrate with during our New Parishioner Masses, which are held twice a year.
- In responding to this question, even though this has not been identified as a challenge for our parish, we cannot put aside the affects of the clergy sex abuse scandal and the impact it has had on the Church overall.

6. What are your pastoral priorities for the next 5 years?

- Evangelization is a priority. We attempt this through living, believing and practicing our Parish Mission Statement:
 - *“We the people of Our Lady of the Snows Parish are a Catholic Christian community who reach out to one another and to all people by teaching and giving witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our mission is to invite all to hear, share, and live the Word of God. We try to inspire an awareness of our faith and to encourage others to renew and energize that faith in Jesus and His Church. We want to welcome the entire community to enjoy the warmth and love of our parish by participating fully in the sacramental life of the Church.”*
- To spiritually nourish and remain relevant to all groups within the parish, and to keep them involved from Baptism through their senior years.
- Focused outreach and marketing to Catholics and the un-churched, to invite them to share in the sacramental life of the church and of our parish.

7. What ministries need to develop or be strengthened in the next 5 years?

- Activities and programs that provide youth involvement.
- Develop a new ministry to keep parishioners involved and active in parish life during the intervals between receiving the sacraments. To provide opportunities for their active participation, and to always welcome and encourage them in the practicing of their faith.

8. Based on your review of the parish financials, do you believe that the parish is financially sound and sustainable for the next 5 years? What factors lead you to this determination?

- Yes, based on a review of the parish financials, we believe that OLS will be financially sound and sustainable over the next 5 years.
- Since the opening of the new church, we have experienced an increase of 10-15% in weekly contributions from our parishioners.
- At the present time, expenses are paid up-to-date. We are able to meet all our expenses, including our Diocesan assessments.
- Historically parishioners have been exceedingly generous in meeting extraordinary expenses. We have met the challenges of increased expenses, both ordinary and extraordinary i.e. building restoration funding and new church construction.

9. How does the parish plan to address any financial challenges that exist or may emerge?

- As a result of our extraordinary revenue programs, we have been able to rapidly decrease the new church debt. We remain hopeful that this financial commitment to our parish will continue even upon completion of paying off the new church.
- We will continually try to increase the number of contributing parishioners and to seek increases in weekly contributions. Our goal is to create an excess of ordinary revenue with the objective of being able to supplement the parish reserve fund balance.
- Excess revenue (CYO fees) generated from the new parish gymnasium can be utilized to increase the parish reserve fund balance.

10. What is the status of all parish buildings? Are there any capital repairs to any buildings that you anticipate in the next 5 years? Do you have any buildings which have the potential to be rented or used in an adaptive manner?

- Our Lady of the Snows has a new church building.
- We have a newly renovated gymnasium.
- We have recently completed extensive work on the OLS School building
- We anticipate potential work for the school annex building, to include brick pointing and windows.
- At this time, all buildings are almost fully utilized. Therefore, the potential for deriving income from any of these buildings is not feasible.

11. How do you see your parish collaborating with other parishes in the future?

- Increase communication with neighboring parishes, identify shared needs, and cultivate and develop a plan for the pooling or sharing of needed resources.
- Attempt to break down barriers to parish collaboration by focusing on our commonalities rather than on parish differences.

12. What is your hope for your faith community in the coming years?

- To live our promise of Evangelization through our Parish Mission Statement
- Remain welcoming to returning Catholics and the un-churched.
- That our parishioners remain spiritually nourished and that our parish remains relevant and vibrant.
- Continue and improve our economic viability.
- Encourage vital parish participation to families of children moving towards the sacraments.
- Respond as a Catholic community to the spiritual life and development of our young people and to share and utilize their talents within our parish.
- Involve families of all levels into full, conscious and active parish life through continual preparation and training.
- Increase interfaith cooperation to foster a sense of community.
- Improve the number of vocations from within our parish.