Shaping the Parish

Developmental Initiative Report

Project: Shaping the Parish through Spiritual Practice

Level: A

# YOUR NAME

E-MAIL

DESCRIPTION

This initiative is to set in motion and sustain the parish’s work on the primary task of formation though training, guiding and coaching members in spiritual practices. The work is one of establishing a “demand system” and critical mass that supports that focus.

In this initiative the assumption is that the “map” being used is the one in In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice, Robert A. Gallagher 2011, Ascension Press

**In the short-term** (this is the work of 2 -3 months between weekend sessions or a period between summers in the national program))

1. Do an assessment with parish leaders using “Assessing the Parish’s Spiritual Practices,” pages 155 - 162

* Discuss. Note strengths and weaknesses

2. Identify 2 or 3 things that could be improved in the next few months and would be relatively easy to accomplish.

3. Action-plan how to implement.

4. Do some initial thinking about how you will deal with the long-term objectives (below). What needs to happen in #3 above that furthers that? This needs to include being clear about the setting in which the objectives will be engaged each year; who will do that?

It may be useful to also provide settings in which members assess, explore, and experiment with their own spiritual practices. See Michelle Heyne’s book, In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today’s Christian Life, Michelle Heyne, Ascension Press, 2011. Also the Developmental Initiative: Spiritual Practices.

This initiative assumes other developmental initiatives being done that are congruent in nature. That would certainly include several as part of the program. It would probably also include additional interventions and projects.

Developmental Initiatives that seem to especially complement this are:

* Eucharistic Competence
* Rule of Life
* Public Daily Office
* Daily Office – Equipping the Individual
* Listening Processes
* Spiritual Practices

**In the long-term**

1. Establish a new “demand system” that is centered on the spiritual practices of Eucharist, Office, Reflection, Community, and Service.

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| In organization development there is an assumption that all organizations have a “demand system.” That demand system is the web of expectations and pressures calling for energy, time and money. The demands may be external or internal. All parishes have the regular flow of work they must attend to. There’s the occasional crisis, problems to solve and deadlines to meet. We also get caught up in work that just isn’t very important to what we exist to do and be. Some meetings, phone calls and e-mail are like that. Most of us also have routines that are in fact either busy-work or time wasters. All those things, the important and the unimportant, consume most parishes and most of our individual lives. The activities that transform parish and personal life can take a back seat to the routine business that must be done and to the unimportant interruptions and trivia of life. What renews life and develops the parish waits for when there’s time. This means relationships don’t get built, people don’t receive training and coaching in spiritual practices, strategic issues aren’t addressed, and so opportunities are missed and crises not foreseen and prevented. We can turn all that around by adding elements to the demand system. We need to add activities and resources into parish life that keep the important, transformative matters in front of us. p.17 In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice |

2. Have a critical mass of members competently using the same “map” in shaping their own spiritual discipline.

**Resources**

In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice, Robert A. Gallagher 2011, Ascension Press

Below is from “The Process of Change”—In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice

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| Two assertions and two related questions:    **1.** **The primary task of the parish church is to form Christians.**  The gifts of the church are “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.” (Ephesians 4.12-13)  **2.** **How can the parish be a place that helps that happen?**  The parish can help in the development of Christian character by offering direction, methods, and an understanding of how virtue and productive spiritual practices become habitual.  **3.** **We are to build Christian proficiency.**  It’s not a new idea. Aristotle said, “Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”  In part, Christian proficiency and formation is also developed through intentional training, guiding, and coaching. The parish can assist its members become more competent for participation in the Eucharist and Daily Office, sharing in the common life of a community, engaging in reflection, and offering service in the places they find themselves.  4.  **How can we shape such a parish?**  I’ll address that in the remainder of this chapter and point the reader to my earlier books: *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church* and *Power from on High: A*  *Model for Parish Life and Development.*  **Shaping a healthy community**  I’m going to highlight just a few considerations about the process of change:   * Understand and use a critical mass strategy. * Begin with what’s easy to do. * Understand what’s involved in the “Use of Self”. * Understand the behaviors and assumptions that are barriers to change. * Parish clergy engage parishioners around their spiritual life * Place the parish in a context of support, competency building, and accountability |

Participant’s additions & changes to the description

If you are revising the above in some manner, note that here. Offer a rationale for the change. Changes may not be so extreme as to change the basic thrust of the project description above --

ACTION PLANNING

1. Considerations

In each of the areas below you are to comment on how the particular consideration is likely to work in your situation.

To understand each item review Interventions: Methods and Processes for Building Healthier Parishes, Vol. 1, Michelle Heyne & Robert Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2011

Outcome Considerations

a. Long Term and Important Improvement: Working on what’s truly important -

b. Critical Mass: developing enough weight around what’s important –

c. Internal Commitment: developing ownership around what’s important –

d. A Parish Culture: Grounded, Integrated, Resilient -

Process Considerations

e. Your influence -

f. Readiness (give special attention to Schein’s understandings about learning and survival anxiety) -

g. Intervention Choices -

h. Your stance –

i. Self-awareness & Self management -

j. Be Safe Out There -

k. Phony Interventions -

2. Theoretical base and strategic assumptions for the project

a. Theoretical Base (connect related theory to the project and the particulars of your parish) -

b. Strategic Assumptions (In your parish as it is now – what are you assuming will happen that allows the project to move forward? A strategic assumption has enough significance that if it turns out to not be true, the project will fail) -

3. Action Plan

a. What are the major steps you need to take to implement the project? -

b. What will the project require of you as a leader and a person? -

RESULTS & LEARNINGS

1. Results (in terms of the initiative as described above, especially its specific goal and objectives and longer-term development goals) -

2. Reflection

This reflection is in relationship to your initial considerations under “Action Planning.” Comment on any item where what you had assumed turned out differently.

Outcome Considerations

a. Long Term and Important Improvement: Working on what’s truly important -

b. Critical Mass: developing enough weight around what’s important –

c. Internal Commitment: developing ownership around what’s important -

Process Considerations

d. Your influence -

e. Readiness -

f. Intervention Choices -

g. Your stance –

h. Self-awareness & Self management -

3. Learnings

a. About change theory and methods -

b. About spiritual practices in shaping the parish -

c. About emotional & social intelligence in shaping the parish -

d. About yourself as a person and leader

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| **Each Developmental Initiative has a sequence:**  1) Design and Action-plan the initiative, 2) Implement, 3) Report on Results & Learnings  **Pace of implementation:**  You may move along with the implementation of the initiatives at a faster pace than provided below. For example, it’s possible you’d want to be working on two initiatives in the same time period.  **Diocesan program:**  ***If the Diocesan program begins early in the year*** *(January, February)*  *The Action-planning* segment:  -For Initiatives 1 and 2 – due by March 20  -For Initiatives 3 and 4 – due by August 20  -For Initiatives 5 and 6 -- due by January 20  Send that segment of the report to the designated trainer/facilitator and others as assigned.  *Implementation:*  -For Initiatives 1 and 2 – March - July  -For Initiatives 3 and 4 – August - December  -For Initiative 5 -- January - April  -For Initiative 6 – May - October  *Results and Learnings* segment of the reports:  -For Initiatives 1 and 2 – due by August 1  -For Initiatives 3 and 4 – due by January 10  -For Initiative 5 -- due by May 1  - For Initiative 6 – no report due  Send the complete report with the Action-planning and the Results & Learnings to the designated trainer/facilitator and others as assigned.  ***If the Diocesan program begins early in the fall.***  *The Action-planning* segment:  -For Initiatives 1 and 2 – due by November 20  -For Initiatives 3 and 4 – due by April 20  -For Initiatives 5 and 6 -- due by October 20  Send that segment of the report to the designated trainer/facilitator and others as assigned.  *Implementation:*  -For Initiatives 1 and 2 – November through March  -For Initiatives 3 and 4 – May through mid October  -For Initiative 5 – October through mid January  -For Initiative 6 – February through June  *Results and Learnings* segment of the reports:  -For Initiatives 1 and 2 – due by April 1  -For Initiatives 3 and 4 – due by October 20  -For Initiative 5 -- due by February 1  - For Initiative 6 – no report due  Send the complete report with the Action-planning and the Results & Learnings to the designated trainer/facilitator and others as assigned.  **National program:**  *The Action-planning* segment:  -For Initiatives 1, 2 and 3 – due by August 20.  -For Initiatives 4, 5, and 6 due by February 20  Send that segment of the report to the designated trainer/facilitator and others as assigned.  *Implementation:*  -For Initiatives 1, 2 and 3 -- August through December  -For Initiatives 4 and 5-- January through May  -For Initiative 6 – June through October  *Results and Learnings* segment of the reports:  -For Initiatives 1, 2 and 3 – due by January 15  -For Initiatives 4 and 5 -- due by May 15  - For Initiative 6 – no report due  Send the complete report with the Action-planning and the Results & Learnings to the designated trainer/facilitator and others as assigned.  **Team and individual work on the Reports**  If you are part of a parish team:  1) In the *Action-Planning segment* of the report  -The common work (the parts the team needs agreement on) -- Description and additions and changes to the description, theoretical base and strategic assumptions, and 3 a. What is written in these sections needs to be the same language by all team members.  The team needs agreement in all these areas if it is to be effective in implementation.  -To be done by each individual - Outcome Considerations and Process Considerations and 3 b.  This has to do with each person’s learning process.  By the time you complete the program our hope is that you’ll have integrated what needs to be considered in a parish intervention. While the team needs to explore the considerations it doesn’t have to have 100% agreement.  2) The *Results & Learnings segment* of the report is not a team effort. Each participant does his/her Results and Learnings section. Members of the team will see things differently and will have different learnings. |