

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF JACKSON

237 AMITE STREET • P.O. BOX 2248
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39225-2248

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

601-969-1880
FAX 601-960-8455
joseph.latin@jacksondiocese.org

October 11, 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I want to thank all those who participated in the September 30th workshop, "Mission and Ministry in Mississippi: Facing the Future." The attendance was impressive, and the discussion was lively. The commitment to work together as we face the challenges of our diocese is obvious.

Some have asked, "What's next?" Each parish and mission is asked to seriously look at the issue of viability. Is this parish/mission a viable faith community? Is it a vibrant faith community? The Response Form addresses these issues. You are asked to complete and return the form to Msgr. Elvin Sunds by November 20th.

Once the Response Forms have been returned, parishes and missions will be asked to conduct area meetings and assess the seven Recommendations suggested by the Task Force. Parishes and missions may also develop additional recommendations. Materials will be sent to pastors and lay ecclesial ministers in the next few weeks in preparation for these area meetings.

Attached to this email are the following materials to assist in your parish/mission meetings.

- PowerPoint – Mission & Ministry. Please feel free to use this with your Pastoral Council and general meetings with members of your parish/mission. It may be helpful to show it to the entire congregation.
- M & M Criteria for Viability. This is intended as a discussion guide and can be used with small groups, pastoral councils, finance councils, etc. Obviously all the questions listed do not need to be addressed. However, each criteria of viability needs to be seriously discussed. This document is provided in English and Spanish.
- Recommendations. These are the recommendations suggested by the Mission and Ministry Task Force. This is provided in English and Spanish. At the September 30th workshop we were encouraged to look at the issues facing our diocese from different or new perspectives. Think "outside the box" and look beyond your own parish/mission. There may be other solutions and recommendations you would like to make. We invite you to share those.
- Response Form. After discussing this with your Pastoral Council and Finance Council, as a parish/mission leader you are asked to very candidly answer the questions posed in the Response Form. Please return the form to Msgr. Elvin Sunds by November 20, 2010.

I am aware every parish/mission wants to think it is viable and vibrant, but we need to challenge ourselves to be very honest in our perceptions. The fact is we are no longer able to keep the

commitments made in 2005. One commitment specifically said we will try to serve every faith community. Given our present reality, that may not be possible. The questions may be, "Is this community viable now?" "How long can this faith community remain viable?" "What do we need to do to become more viable in the days and years ahead?" "Can the members of this faith community be served in other ways?"

- Comments from September 30th Workshop. Several people asked for a copy of the comments made at the workshop. A brief summary is included for your information.
- Comments from June 9 Meeting with Religious Superiors. On June 9, 2010 a meeting was held with the superiors, or their representatives, of all religious communities with priests in the Diocese of Jackson. A brief summary of the comments from that meeting is enclosed for your information.
- Comments from June 29 Meeting with Religious Superiors. On June 29, 2010 a meeting was held with the superiors, or their representatives, of all religious communities with religious sisters or brothers serving in the Diocese of Jackson. A brief summary of the comments from that meeting is enclosed for your information.

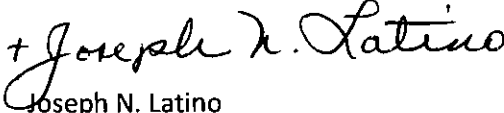
Several have asked about borrowing the DVD, "Everyday Creativity." You can contact Msgr. Elvin Sunds to reserve the DVD. It will be on a "first-come-first-serve" basis with a guarantee to return the DVD within a week.

I want to thank all of you for your ministry in the Diocese of Jackson. We are living in a unique moment in history. We are gifted with the unique opportunity to shape the future of the Church in our diocese. As I said before,

"This is not about a funeral, but about resurrection and new life; this is not about the demise of our Church, but about the growth of our Church. This is about the privilege to participate in this significant moment in our Church's history."

With prayerful best wishes and gratitude for your ministry, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Joseph N. Latino
Bishop of Jackson

A vibrant faith community is much more than a group of people coming together to fulfill their Sunday obligation to attend Mass.

A vibrant faith community is ever conscious of its common Commitment to help one another live their Baptismal promise to become grace-filled sons and daughters of God.

We invite each parish/mission to come together to reflect on its vitality

What does your parish/mission look like now?

In light of the priest shortage, what might it look like in 5 years?

PRAYER OPTION I

Dear God, keep those of us who find change very difficult close to your heart. Surround them with the love that casts out fear and doubt. Have compassion on all of us, Lord, as we experience the moments of fear and doubt that come with change and transition. Grant that we may reach out to each other in community so that no one is left outside the circle of your caring and compassionate support. Make us all a living example of the welcome we proclaim as our mission so that it becomes the center of our thoughts, decisions and actions. Amen.

—Kate Bishop

PRAYER OPTION II

Jesus, as we gather, we are mindful of your promise to never leave us orphans. In the midst of these changing times, we are so grateful to count this parish family among our many blessings.

We pray that you hold this community close during this time of change. When we are scared, embolden us. When we are complacent, arouse us. When we falter, help us find truth. When we slip apart, remind us of what draws us together. When we are frantic, show us your peace.

As we spend these sessions looking inward and evaluating ourselves, keep us mindful of the world around us and the work there you have given us to do.

Through this all, help us feel your presence in our hearts and help us bring your presence to one another. Amen.

—Tom Beecher

Dimension 1 -- Evangelization

Evangelization is a measure of viability because it shows whether the community is viewed as attractive enough for people to consider joining it (or staying in it.) It also indicates whether this parish/mission truly lives the Mission of Jesus who “went to the highways and the byways” to welcome everyone to His table.

We invite you to address some measurable and some not so measurable aspects of Evangelization:

- How diverse is this parish/mission in age, ethnic background, cultures, economic status? When you look around the church, does everyone look like you?
- How many people have been invited/welcome into this parish/mission in the past 5 years?
- How many Baptisms of adults or children have taken place here in the past 5 years?
- How active are the youth in this parish/mission? What are the programs initiated here within the past 5 years which have focused on passing the precious gift of faith from one generation to another?
- Are the Children’s/Youth/On-going Religious Education Programs for Adults well attended? If not, can you name reasons why they might not be?
- Is this parish/mission a place where the spiritual life of the members can be enriched and nourished?
- Would joining a larger, more vibrant Catholic community help members renew their personal and communal faith?

Dimension 2 -- Good Liturgies

The Eucharist is our Center. Mass is what makes us unique among Christians. It is the life giving force. When the Eucharistic Minister says “Body of Christ”, he/she is not *only* telling us Whom we are receiving, he/she is also naming who we are. We are the Body of Christ.

We invite you to address some measurable and some not so measurable aspects of Liturgy:

- Has the Mass in this parish/mission become a rote, routine gathering seen by many as merely fulfilling an obligation? “Glad that’s over. Now let’s get on with life!”
- Is there a process in place which allows members to plan creative Liturgies where “meeting God” at every Liturgy becomes possible?
- Do the faithful gather as a true Community or simply as a group of individuals?
- It is true that the celebrant is very important to the Liturgy, but the people also have a responsibility to participate. How is the congregation invited/prepared to participate?
- Is there a variety of rituals and music to speak to each generation?
- Is there a process where members can help one another make a conscious connection between Sunday Liturgy and everyday living?
- Would Mass be a more life-giving experience if members could gather with a larger community with greater resources to enliven the community?
- Could maintaining the status quo unintentionally keep members from experiencing more newness, life, greater diversity and renewal?

Dimension 3 – Community

Community gives people a sense of belonging. But often definitions for Faith-based communities are elusive and confusing.

We invite you to address some measurable and some not so measurable aspects of Community:

- How does this parish/mission community see itself? How would *you* define *your* community?
- Do you have a Mission Statement? What is it? Is this publicized so every member knows it?
- If you had to grade yourselves from A to F for how the Mission Statement is lived in this parish/mission, what would be your honest assessment?
- What opportunities are provided for this faith community to gather at times other than Mass?
- What is the sense of shared responsibility in this community? Are all members encouraged to actively participate in the life of the parish or do a few do all the work? If you were to guess, what percentage of members would you estimate see their sole responsibility to this faith community as simply “showing up” for their Sunday obligation?
- If a few end up doing all the work, can this parish/mission identify the reasons why? Are the gifts of all encouraged, invited and appreciated or have a few taken “ownership” of the church letting others feel as if they are not welcome to share their gifts?
- If a few end up doing all the work, how long can they continue doing this? Is this reality alone enough to drive some hard decisions?
- Is this faith community seen as a presence within the broader ecumenical community? Do members show leadership in Ministerial Alliances, etc?
- Is this faith community seen as a presence within the civic community? Are members actively involved in those issues which affect the whole community, sharing their leadership skills and values?
- Are there signs that the people are spiritually fed by this community or have the numbers consistently dwindled?
- If numbers have consistently dwindled so that now – on an average – very few attend Liturgy, and if this community lives in proximity to another Catholic Church (within 30 miles) can this community realistically continue to expect one of our few priests to come to them vs. their going to a neighboring Catholic Church for Mass?
- Who makes this decision? Does this community want to set its own direction or is it waiting for the Bishop to step in?

Dimension 4 – Spiritual and Social Outreach

Jesus was never a passive minister. He did not sit back as an observer. Jesus was very active, reaching out and touching those who were vulnerable, those who were broken, those in need of healing and support of every kind.

We invite you to address some measurable and some not so measurable aspects of your
Spiritual and Social Outreach:

- Name those ways within the past 2 years in which this parish/mission could have been perceived by outsiders as an extension of Jesus' Mission?
- Name the ways this Church is recognized as a "presence" in the city/town because of its concern for those less fortunate?
- Does this parish/mission let other faith traditions reach out to serve the vulnerable while our Catholic people seem content to gather for Sunday Liturgy, receive Jesus and then go home -- forgetting that the very purpose of receiving Him is to share Him with one another and to bring His healing presence to a broken world?
- How does this parish/mission care for its own members? Who visits the sick? Who brings Eucharist to those who can't come to Mass? Who reaches out to those who haven't been to church for a while and lets them know they are missed? Who ministers to inactive Catholics and the unchurched?
- If this parish/mission were combined with a nearby parish/mission, how would outreach to the sick, home-bound, and inactive Catholics continue?
- If you were to grade this parish/mission from A to F for how you move beyond mere maintenance of the parish to truly inspiring one another to deeper holiness, what would be your honest assessment?

Dimension 5 -- Financial Stability

As we address priest shortage and the future of our Church, it seems obvious the times rely on lay leadership. These leaders need to be trained in at least basic Theology and if they are hired by the parish/mission, will need to be paid a living wage. (Many believe the diocese should pay these expenses; but with so few Catholics -- 2.3% of the population -- the Diocese itself is considered a "Home Mission" meaning it does not have the money from the people in the pews to be totally self supporting.)

We invite you to address some measurable and some not so measurable aspects of your present and projected future financial stability. **We encourage you to be as realistic as possible.**

- Can this parish/mission afford to maintain its buildings AND pay the salary of lay leaders?
- What choices around prioritizing financial resources need to be made?
- What options must this parish/mission address?
- What financial resources might be needed now to train members as the next parish leader?
- Is it time to partner with another Catholic Church in the area?
- Is it feasible to pool resources with other surrounding parishes/missions?

Support of a LEM (Religious or Lay)

Includes Stipend, Retirement, Auto Allowance
Health Insurance, Dental & Vision Insurance

\$36,646 + housing and mileage

Support of a Priest

Includes Salary, Retirement, Social Security
Auto Allowance, Health Insurance, Dental
& Vision Ins, Life insurance,

\$28,172 + housing, meals and mileage

Present Financial Norm for Training

1/3 paid by Diocese
1/3 paid by Parish (with understanding
person will spend time in service to
that parish)
1/3 paid by Individual

una comunidad de fe viva es mucho más que un grupo de personas que se reúne para cumplir su obligación Dominical de asistir a misa.

una comunidad de fe viva es siempre consciente de su compromiso común de ayudar uno al otro a vivir su promesa bautismal de ser hijos e hijas de Dios llenos de gracia.

Invitamos a cada parroquia/misión a reunirse para reflexionar en su vitalidad.

¿Cómo se ve su parroquia/misión ahora?

¿A la luz de escases de sacerdotes, cómo se verá en 5 años?

ORACION OPCION I

Querido Dios, guardo cerca de tu corazón a nosotros los que encontramos el cambio muy difícil. Envuélvenos con el amor que aleja el miedo y la duda. Ten compasión de todos nosotros, Señor, al experimentar momentos de miedo y duda que vienen con el cambio y transición. Concédenos que podamos salir al encuentro del uno al otro en comunidad para que ninguno se quede fuera de tu círculo de apoyo amoroso y compasivo. Haznos a todos un testimonio vivo de la bienvenida que proclamamos como nuestra misión para que se convierta el centro de nuestros pensamientos, decisiones y acciones. Amen.

—Kate Bishop

ORACION OPCION II

Jesús, al reunirnos, somos conscientes de tu promesa de nunca dejarnos huérfanos. En medio de estos tiempos de cambio, somos muy agradecidos en ver a esta familia parroquial como una de las muchas bendiciones.

Oramos para que mantengas a esta comunidad unidad durante este tiempo de cambio. Cuando tengamos miedo danos valentía. Cuando seamos nos sintamos satisfechos, avívanos. Cuando desfallezcamos, ayúdanos a encontrar la verdad. Cuando nos separemos, recuérdanos lo que nos une. Cuando tengamos ansiedad, muéstranos tu paz.

Al pasar estas sesiones mirándonos hacia dentro y evaluándonos, tennos consciente del mundo que nos rodea y el trabajo que nos has dado para hacer.

A través de todo esto, ayúdanos a sentir tu presencia en nuestros corazones y ayúdanos a llevar tu presencia el uno al otro.

—Tom Beecher

Dimensión 1: Evangelización

Evangelización es una medida de viabilidad porque demuestra si la comunidad es vista como suficientemente atractiva para que las personas consideren unirse (o permanecer en ella). También indica si esta parroquia/misión verdaderamente vive la misión de Jesús quien “fue a las carreteras y los caminos” para dar la bienvenida a todos a su mesa.

Los invitamos a tratar unos aspectos medibles y no medibles de la Evangelización:

- ¿Qué tan diversa es esta parroquia/misión en edad, origen étnico, culturas, y estatus económico? ¿Cuándo ves alrededor de la iglesia, todos se parecen a ti?
- ¿Cuántas personas fueron invitadas/bienvenidas a esta parroquia/misión en los últimos 5 años?
- ¿Cuántos bautizos de adultos o niños/as se han realizado en los últimos 5 años?
- ¿Qué tan activos son los jóvenes en esta parroquia/misión? ¿Qué programas se han iniciado aquí en los últimos 5 años, los cuales se han enfocado en pasar el precioso regalo de la fe de una generación a otra?
- ¿Están los niños/jóvenes/ programas de educación religiosa para adultos bien atendidos/participación? Si no, pudieras nombrar algunas razones por que no lo están.
- ¿Es esta parroquia/misión un lugar donde la vida espiritual de los miembros puede enriquecerse y nustrase?
- ¿El unirse a una comunidad católica más grande, más vibrante ayudaría a los miembros renovar su fe personal y comunitaria?

Dimensión 2 – Buenas Liturgias

La Eucaristía es nuestro centro. La misa es lo que nos hace únicos entre los cristianos. Es la fuerza que da vida. Cuando el ministro de la eucaristía dice “Cuerpo de Cristo”, el/ella no solamente nos está diciendo Quien recibimos, el/ella está también diciendo quienes somos. Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo.

Los invitamos a tratar unos aspectos medibles y no medibles de la Liturgia.

- ¿La misa en esta parroquia/misión se ha convertido en un juntarse por rutina, visto por muchos como simplemente cumpliendo la obligación? “Que bueno que ya se acaba. ¡Ahora a continuar con la vida!”
- ¿Se está llevando un proceso en donde permite que los miembros planeen creativamente la liturgias donde “encontrarse con Dios” en cada Liturgia se hace posible?
- ¿Los fieles se reúnen como una verdadera Comunidad o simplemente como un grupo de individuos?
- Es verdad que el celebrante es una parte muy importante para la Liturgia, pero también las personas tienen una responsabilidad de participar. ¿Cómo está la congregación invitada/preparada para participar?
- ¿Hay una variedad de rituales y música que habla a cada generación?
- ¿Hay un proceso en donde los miembros pueden ayudar unos a otros a hacer una conexión consciente entre Liturgia Dominical y el diario vivir?
- ¿Sería la misa una experiencia más generadora de vida si sus miembros se juntaran con una comunidad más grande con más recursos para reavivar la comunidad?
- ¿Podría el mantener el statu quo sin intención impedir a los miembros de experimentar más novedad, vida, mayor diversidad y renovación?

Dimensión 3 – Comunidad

La comunidad da a las personas un sentido de pertenencia. Pero frecuentemente las definiciones para comunidades basadas en la fe son difícil de localizar y confusas.

Los invitamos a tratar unos aspectos medibles y no medibles de la Comunidad:

- ¿Cómo esta comunidad parroquia/misión se ve a si misma? ¿Cómo tú definirías tu comunidad?
- ¿Tienen una declaración de misión? ¿Cuál es? ¿Esta publicada para que todo miembro la conozca?
- ¿Si tuvieran que calificarse del A a la F por como se vive la declaración de misión en esta parroquia/misión, cuál sería su evaluación honestamente?
- ¿Qué oportunidades son ofrecidas para esta comunidad de fe para reunirse en otros tiempos aparte de la misa?
- ¿Cuál es el sentido de la responsabilidad compartida en esta comunidad? ¿Están todos los miembros animados para participar activamente en la vida de la parroquia o solo algunos pocos hacen todo el trabajo? ¿Si tuvieras que adivinar cuál porcentaje de los miembros estimas que ven su única responsabilidad a esta comunidad de fe el simplemente “presentarse nada más” para su obligación Dominical?
- ¿Si solamente algunos pocos terminan haciendo todo el trabajo, puede esta parroquia/misión identificar las razones por que? ¿Están los dones de todos animados, invitados y apreciados o solamente algunos pocos han tomado “pertenencia” de la iglesia, haciendo que otros se sientan como si ellos no son bienvenidos para compartir sus dones?
- ¿Si solo unos pocos terminan haciendo todo el trabajo, cuánto tiempo mas pueden continuar haciendo esto? ¿Solamente esta realidad seria suficientemente para llevar a ser unas duras decisiones?
- ¿Es esta comunidad de fe vista como presencia dentro de la vasta comunidad ecuménica? ¿Los miembros demuestran liderazgo en la Alianzas Ministeriales, etc.?
- ¿Es esta comunidad de fe vista como presencia dentro de la comunidad cívica? ¿Están los miembros activamente involucrados en los asuntos que afectan toda la comunidad, compartiendo sus capacidades de liderazgo y valores?
- ¿Hay signos de que las personas están alimentadas espiritualmente por esta comunidad o los números se han disminuido constantemente?
- ¿Si los números han disminuido constantemente para que ahora por lo general muy pocos asisten a la Liturgia, y si esta comunidad está cercas de otra Iglesia Católica (dentro de 30 millas) puede esta comunidad realísticamente continuar a esperar que uno de los pocos sacerdotes venga a ellos en vez de ellos ir a una Iglesia Católica vecina para la Misa?
- ¿Quién hace esta decisión? ¿Esta comunidad quiere poner su propia dirección o esta esperando que el Obispo intervenga?

Dimensión 4 – Alcance espiritual y social

Jesús nunca fue un ministro pasivo. Él no se sentó para atrás como un observador. Jesús era muy activo, saliendo al encuentro y tocando aquellos que eran vulnerables, aquellos que estaban quebrantados, aquellos en necesidad de sanación y apoyo de todo tipo.

Los invitamos a tratar unos aspectos medibles y no medibles del alcance espiritual y social.

- Nombra aquellas maneras, en las que en estos dos años pasados, en la cual la parroquia/misión pudo haber sido percibida por los de afuera como una extensión de la Misión de Jesús.
- Nombra las maneras que esta Iglesia es reconocida como “presencia” en la ciudad/pueblo por su preocupación por los menos afortunados.
- ¿Esta parroquia/misión permite a otras tradiciones de fe salir al encuentro para servir a las personas vulnerables, mientras nuestras personas Católicas solamente se contentan con reunirse para la Liturgia del Domingo, recibir a Jesús y después irse a casa – olvidando que el principal propósito de recibirlo es compartirlo el uno con el otro y traer su presencia sanadora a este mundo quebrantado?
- ¿Cómo esta parroquia/misión se preocupa por sus propios miembros? ¿Quién visita los enfermos? ¿Quién lleva la Eucaristía a aquellos que no pueden venir a Misa? ¿Quién sale al encuentro a aquellos que no han venido a la Iglesia por un tiempo y les da a conocer que son extrañados? ¿Quién sirve a los católicos inactivos y los que no van a la Iglesia?
- ¿Si esta parroquia/misión se combinara con una parroquia/misión cercana, cómo pudiera continuar el salir al encuentro de los enfermos, los que no pueden salir de casa, y los inactivos?
- ¿Si tuvieras que calificar esta parroquia/misión de la A a la F de como vas a ir de ir mas allá de simplemente mantener la parroquia a verdaderamente inspirar uno al otro a una santidad mas profunda, cual seria tu evaluación honestamente?

Dimensión 5 – Estabilidad financiera

Al enfrentar la escases de sacerdotes y el futuro de nuestra Iglesia, parece obvio que los tiempos dependen de un liderazgo laical. Estos líderes necesitan estar entrenados de menos en la teología básica y si son empleados por una parroquia/misión, van a necesitar que se les pague un sueldo que alcance para vivir. (Muchos creen que la diócesis debería pagar sus gastos; pero con tan pocos Católicos – 2.3% de la población -- la Diócesis misma es considerada una “Casa Misión” queriendo decir que no tiene el dinero de las personas en las bancas para ser totalmente sostenida por si misma.)

Los invitamos a tratar unos aspectos medibles y no medibles de su estabilidad financiera presente y proyección futura. **Los animamos que sean los mas realistas posibles.**

- ¿Puede esta parroquia/misión solventar el mantenimiento de sus edificios Y pagar un salario a líderes laicos?
- ¿Qué opciones alrededor de darle prioridad a los recursos financieros necesitan hacerse?
- ¿Qué opciones tiene esta parroquia/misión que tratar?
- ¿Qué recursos financieros pudieran necesitar ahora para entrenar miembros como el líder parroquial siguiente?
- ¿Es hora de asociarse con otra Iglesia Católica del área?
- ¿Es posible reunir recursos con otras parroquias/misiones de alrededor?

Manutención un Ministro Laico Eclesial (Religioso/a o Laico/a)

Incluye estipendio, retiro, auto, seguro de salud, a seguridad dental y de visión.

\$36,646 + casa y millage

Manutención de un Sacerdote

Incluye estipendio, retiro, seguro social, auto, seguro de salud, a seguridad dental, de visión y a seguridad de vida.

\$28,172 + casa, comida y millage

Norma financiera actual para formación

1/3 pagado por la Diócesis
1/3 pagado por la parroquia (con el acuerdo de que la persona dará un tiempo de servicio en esta parroquia)
1/3 pagado por la persona

MISSION AND MINISTRY TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1

- That all faith communities – large and small -- address their viability. This is the time for recommitment, renewal and a deepening of our personal faith and our Catholic presence in our communities.

What will put our members more in touch with our Baptismal commitments?

A faith community which is not truly alive and well must address whether it *should* continue.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Faith communities in an Area join together to put energy into developing an exciting, vibrant

“Central Church”

where the faithful gather for life-giving Liturgies on Sunday and to share resources in areas such as

- Evangelization
- Adult/Youth Faith Formation
- Community Building
- Outreach
- Catholic Presence in each community, etc.

or

RECOMMENDATION #3

Faith communities in an Area join together to put energy into developing an exciting, vibrant

“Partner Parish”

1. By sharing a priest at least once a month so both large and small communities have the opportunity to experience Word and Communion services and Mass in their parish homes
2. By finding mutual blessings in one another as they share resources, volunteers, activities, etc.
3. By parishes with greater financial resources sharing their finances esp. as smaller parishes/missions in the area need to train and hire laity.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Those faith communities whose average Sunday attendance at Liturgy is very small and who are within a 30 mile radius of a larger Catholic Church, take initiative in shaping their own future.

- Merge
- Participate in a Central Church
- Be a Partner Parish/Mission

It seems unrealistic to expect the few priests we have to continue traveling to so many places.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Large faith communities consider how they can respond immediately to this crisis perhaps by

- Giving up one of its presently scheduled Masses so a priest can be shared within an Area
- Changing its Mass schedule to accommodate people who may need to travel greater distances

RECOMMENDATION #6

When Recommendation #4 and #5 are addressed, larger faith communities must address their willingness to experience conversion. They are not to simply absorb people into their existing communities; rather they must develop

- Processes of welcoming and initiation
- Processes for developing avenues for new leadership to emerge
- Processes for new ways of doing things
- Processes for building communities where there is not a prevailing perception of winners/losers

It is unrealistic to think any one person or any one faith community has the luxury of the status quo

RECOMMENDATION #7

That each faith community realistically examine its finances and set priorities according to new needs which may be facing its members.

- Overhead expenses
- Programs/Services
- Salaries

This might include an honest assessment of a faith community's ability to hire a LEM or Pastoral Minister, its need to consider providing transportation so members could participate in a vibrant Central Church, etc.

RECOMENDACIONES DEL EQUIPO DE TRABAJO MISION Y MINISTERIO

RECOMENDACION #1

- Que todas las comunidades de fe – grandes y pequeñas - dialoguen sobre su viabilidad. Este es un tiempo de comprometernos de nuevo, de renovación y una profundización de nuestra fe personal y nuestra presencia Católica en nuestras comunidades.

¿Qué va a poner a nuestros miembros más en contacto con nuestros compromisos Bautismales?

Una comunidad de fe que realmente no esta viva y bien, debe tocar el punto de si *debería* continuar.

RECOMENDACION #2

Reunir las comunidades de fe de un área para poner su energía en desarrollar una entusiasmada y viva

“Iglesia Central”

donde los feligreses se reúnen para Liturgias Dominicales que dan vida y para compartir recursos en las áreas como

- Evangelización
- Formación de Fe para Adultos/Jóvenes
- Crear comunidad
- Salir al encuentro de los que no vienen a la Iglesia “*outreach*”
- Presencia católica en cada comunidad, etc.

O

RECOMENDACION #3

Reunir las comunidades de fe de un área para poner su energía en desarrollar una entusiasmada y viva

“Asociación de Parroquias”

1. Compartiendo un sacerdote por lo menos una vez al mes para que ambas comunidades grandes y pequeñas tengan la oportunidad de tener la experiencia de servicios de Liturgia de la Palabra con Comunión en sus propias parroquias.
2. Encontrando bendiciones mutuas en ambas al compartir sus recursos, voluntarios/as, actividades, etc.
3. La parroquias con mayor recursos financieros compartir sus finanzas especialmente a pequeñas parroquias/misiones en el área que necesitan formar y emplear a laicos/as.

RECOMENDACION #4

Esas comunidades de fe que su *promedio* de asistencia Dominical en las liturgias sea muy pequeña y que esta a unas 30 millas de una Iglesia Católica grande, tome la iniciativa en formando su propio futuro.

- Unirse
- Participar en la Parroquia Central
- Asociarse a una parroquia/misión

No es realista esperar que los pocos sacerdotes que tenemos continúen viajando a tantos lugares.

RECOMENDACION #5

Consideren las comunidades de fe grandes como ellos pueden responder inmediatamente a esta crisis, tal vez al

- Ceder una de sus misas que actualmente tienen para que el sacerdote pueda ser compartido dentro del Área.
- Cambiando su horario de misas para tener en cuenta a las personas que tienen que viajar mas grandes distancias.

RECOMENDACION #6

Cuando la recomendación #4 y #5 se dialoguen, las comunidades de fe grandes deben tocar el punto de su deseo de experimentar la conversión. Ellas no están simplemente absorbiendo las personas a sus comunidades existentes; sino más bien ellas deben desarrollar

- Procesos de bienvenida y iniciación
- Procesos para desarrollar vías para el surgimiento de nuevo liderazgo
- Procesos para nuevas formas de hacer las cosas
- Procesos para crear comunidades donde no prevalezca una percepción de ganadores/perdedores

Es irreal pensar que una persona o una comunidad de fe tengan el lujo del status quo.

RECOMENDACION #7

Que cada comunidad de fe realísticamente examine sus finanzas y ponga sus prioridades de acuerdo con sus nuevas necesidades que puedan estar enfrentando sus miembros

- **Gastos generales**
- **Programas/servicios**
- **Salarios**

Esto puede incluir una evaluación honesta de la posibilidad de una comunidad de fe de emplear un Ministro Laico Eclesial o un asociado pastoral, debe considerar el proveer transportación a sus miembros para que participen en una Iglesia Central viva, etc.

RESPONSE FORM 9-9-10

Due to Chancery, c/o Msgr. Elvin Sunds by Saturday, Nov. 20, 2010

PARISH/MISSION _____ TOWN _____

CONTACT PERSON _____ PHONE _____

NUMBER OF FAMILIES _____ NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS _____

VIABILITY AND EVANGELIZATION

How many people have been welcomed into this parish/mission in the past 5 years? _____

How many Baptisms of adults or children have taken place here in the past 5 years? _____

What are the programs initiated here within the past 5 years which focus on Church?

How diverse is this parish/mission in age, ethnic background, cultures, economic status?

Share briefly your discussion as to how you see yourselves as an inviting and welcoming community?

When thinking of this parish/mission in the next 5 years, what kind of future do you foresee? We realize that by asking this question, we rely totally on your honesty, but do you see this parish/mission alive and well in the next 5 years or do you see it dying by attrition?

VIABILITY AND LITURGY

What is this parish's/mission's process which allows members to plan creative Liturgies where "meeting God" at every Liturgy becomes possible?

How are the special needs of various age and interest groups addressed in parish/mission liturgies? Is there enough variety? Something for everyone?

Do/how do the liturgies and homilies touch people's everyday lives and experience?

If there are two churches in your town with separate liturgies, what joint activities do you gather for to witness to others that you are in fact ONE Catholic Community? List them here

Name the various kinds of ministries the people in your parish/mission perform at Liturgy, ie Ushers, Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, Musicians, Praise Dancers, etc.

In total, about how many people would you say are involved in this way? _____

VIABILITY AND COMMUNITY

How does this parish/mission define itself as a community?

The question was asked about a Mission Statement? Were those who gathered to review these criteria aware that there might even be a Mission Statement? _____

Is the Mission Statement in a prominent place so members know it? Where? _____

You were asked “If you had to grade yourselves from A to F for how the Mission Statement is lived in this parish/mission, what would be your honest assessment?” State briefly in outline form some of the highlights of that conversation.

What opportunities are provided for this faith community to gather at times other than Mass?

VIABILITY AND SPIRITUAL/ SOCIAL OUTREACH

Name those ways **within the past 2 years** in which this parish/mission could have been perceived by outsiders as an extension of Jesus' Mission?

Name the ways this Church is recognized as a "presence" in the city/town because of its consistent concern for those less fortunate?

How does this parish/mission care for its own members, i.e. the sick, the homebound, the inactive Catholic?

Is the social mission of your parish/mission done by a few generous hearts or are there many people involved in a variety of activities? Name some activities and approximately how many folks are involved in each.

ACTIVITIES	NUMBERS

VIABILITY AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY

As you review your books, what is your honest assessment of whether or not this parish/mission can afford to maintain its buildings AND pay the salary of lay leaders?

What are some of the possible ways you see this parish/mission re-prioritizing its needs and finances?

What financial resources might be needed now to train a member as the next parish leader?

In all honesty, would the most financially feasible thing for this parish/mission to do be to partner with another Catholic Church in the area and/or to pool resources?

MISSION & MINISTRY: FACING THE FUTURE

September 30, 2010

Summary of Comments from the Question & Observation Time

1. The moment to look at is now, not the future
2. For most of my life I have been denied the Eucharist (for lack of priests). God is calling the lay people. Install extraordinary 'celebrants' to celebrate the Eucharist. (Bishop Latino, please represent us at the NCCB).
3. Age of smaller parishes (older parishes, small). Many older people - they can financially help to support small places. That will help those in the 'boonies.'
4. This is a great presentation. Lots of lay people are getting an education. The people are willing to be a part of what is needed.
5. I watched Mass on TV when hospitalized. Can small parishes come together to see Mass on TV at the time it is on TV live. I experienced it myself.
6. Look at other cultures for possibilities. The people of Shelby (not all) are mixing with the Anglos. That is great for new life.
7. Problem: Clergy shortage is a world-wide problem. Maybe God is calling us in a different direction. We need an honest dialogue about priesthood (incl. women priests, married clergy) so that we can say we have talked about it.
8. Ministry - Mission. Vatican 11 spoke of 'missionary' as being of the very nature of the Church. Are we missionary. We say we are missionary because of lack of money. Why not say we are missionary because we are 'church'.
9. People are walking to church in the rural area. But there is a mileage problem. How do people join another parish? How join if you can't get to a bigger church. For example traveling from Bruce to Oxford. How do we get them there. We need to maintain our little churches. Maybe we can consider the Mass on TV in the small churches. In Bruce, we are the working poor, vibrant, active.
10. Mass or SCAP: If a priest can show up once a month. Can we be creative in the spirit of our forebears.
11. Canon 785: Many can serve but can't get Master's degrees. Can we accommodate them?
12. The institution is failing to provide for our church. The laity have a right to reasonable access to the Eucharist. The people who have the power can do it. Where is the balance?
My position: I learned to know that doing the right things looks like irresponsibility. E.g. I should have said something about the IRAQ war. The pope a delegate to G.W. Bush to advise against the war.
13. The recommendations here are great. I am not in a position to merge or close a parish. My churches - and a school - don't have enough money. We need to have bishop merge or create a 'central' church. I can use my inspiration so that with those communities we can be creative.
14. Things that make our parish viable: I found other Christian church very welcoming. There is a spirit of acceptance in our parish.

15. We have a discernment process in our Church (St. Ignatius).
 - set out all possibilities
 - looking at aversions or attractions to each
 - Go to prayer and look for holy indifference, so that each option is held in equilibrium
 - Put it aside and do what the Holy Spirit leads us to do in Peace.
16. Fr. Elvin Sunds covers weekends for parishes. Could a pool of priests in Deanery 1 help so that Elvin does not have to go all of the time.
17. Creating a viable faith community is imperative.
18. The problem is more than priest shortage: it's finality. The lense for me is "its a redistribution of all our resources (personnel and resources). People are recruited to come for volunteer work in Ark. Why not recruit for Ackerman and Eupora.
19. We have to do a better job promoting vocations for priesthood and sisterhood. Put that in our diocesan plan also.
20. In the 50s I remember 9 guys from H.S. joining the brother's. Novitiate went from 72 down to 1. Spend more time reflecting on priesthood, Eucharist, community. We may discover things that the Holy Spirit wants to tell us.

WRAP UP

21. The Hispanic community is very determined to grow in faith. We have Guatemalan priests who in their places have multiple communities. In Guatemala they make the community grow. We can learn from them.
22. As we look at clergy and sisters here, we build the US church to what it is. Now we have to build a new church. It is more than mergers, etc. **We have to build a new a new church to make the gospel attractive to people.** Have a wide lense, asking "how can we build a Spirit filled Church." **Maybe the crisis we are in can help us move to a new church.**

Notes taken after the Power Point presentations.

NOTES FROM MEETING WITH RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS OF MEN

June 9, 2010

WELCOME by Bishop Latino and input from Mission & Ministry task-force.

UPDATE & COMMITMENT STATEMENTS by Superiors/representatives of men religious congregations serving in Jackson Diocese.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Many of our parishes/missions are small, but the members do not want to give them up and attend a larger church. There is great attachment to the local church. Perhaps, small congregations would be open to having their sacramental experiences in a larger (and distant) congregation but would hold onto to fellowship and support of their local faith community.

1. The possibility of central/hub church providing sacramental ministry to surrounding smaller faith communities.
2. Priests from outside Mississippi might be more attracted to Mississippi if they are sure they can use their ministerial gifts and not have to give time/energy to maintenance of buildings.
3. Although there is agreement that priests spend much time and energy on parish administration and not primarily on 'priestly' ministry, might some priests be hesitant to let go of the administrative work and to be 'boxed into' sacramental ministry only?
4. Team ministry calls for maturity on the part of the participants and a shared vision.
5. The Diocese of Jackson is seen as open to and supportive of the ministry of women (Religious and lay). An ongoing effort to institutionalize the role of women in the church is desirable. An additional consideration is that religious communities of women are attracting associate members who might become available for staffing in some ministry situations.
6. Because working collaboratively and with women ministers appears to be the way of the future, consideration must be given to educating seminarians in seminaries where laity are trained, and internship in parishes for seminarians should include work in a parish under a lay ecclesial minister.
7. Experience of Community: Members of religious communities (men & women) working in Mississippi might be drawn to ministry in our diocese if they understood that every effort would be made to provide community living in a central location, and from said location they would travel to mission congregations.

Meeting with Women Religious
June 29, 2010
Comments

1. Small towns NEED the Catholic Church because of our social teaching. There is fear of having a Petrine church and Pauline Diocese. We cannot live around all the poverty, illiteracy, etc., without responding as Church.
2. We need education on the liturgy (proper and good liturgy). Liturgy, if vibrant and attractive, draws people -- and don't forget bi-lingual liturgies. We should talk about the meaning of Eucharist. When 2 communities come together, a new community is formed and that IS Eucharist.
3. Empower the laity so that they have ownership of Church. Work to help that evolve. A paradigm shift must be encouraged toward the people "owning" their Church. There needs to be education and facilitation to give people a SAY in their Parish.
4. We need to see the giftedness in the laity and encourage the use of those gifts. Prepare the people so that they can take care of their own communities. Their use of their gifts starts in small ways but with encouragement, their involvement grows.
5. We (religious communities) can best help each other (acknowledging a LOT of fear on everyone's part) with our experience of change. To see there is something new coming but also to help them to let go of what they are holding so tightly to. Remind them that we are "a people of hope."
6. Donna asked if there is something "kernel" in the process of change the different religious communities have experienced.
 - We learned to be faithful to our commitment to staying with the process. Also to ask questions differently and be about taking risks into the unknown.
 - The most important lesson learned was not to underestimate the differences in cultures and distinctions.
 - Whenever there is change there are always those who remain in the "old" along with those who move forward into the "new." We must be aware of everyone and their place on that spectrum and honor their journey.
 - Be attentive to grieving and honor that process.
7. As Catholics there is focus on Eucharist and not community. When it is not possible to have Eucharist, what does a community do? Maybe what the Spirit is calling us to is have a better balance.
8. Stress the role of Word – emphasize scripture, study, AND preaching. We need training for good "Lay" preaching.
9. Would the Diocese consider facilitating inter-congregational living together?

10. Re-imagining is important - We 1) name our fears; 2) have grieving ceremonies; 3) always stress “relationship” in the process; 4) define what our “mission” is. If our mission is Eucharist and community, we move our focus away from MY church to OUR church.
11. Consider parishes not necessarily having “Sunday” Mass as their weekly Mass.
12. Possibly have Mass once a month. The other weeks there would be weekly education, Word services, etc., which would all “lead up to” the monthly Mass. The community continues to grow and take ownership of the parish.
13. We are a Mission Diocese. We need to reinforce that idea so that we adapt to that reality, i.e., raising up catechetical leaders to call people together to read and reflect on scriptures, educate the youth, etc.
14. There needs to be a paradigm shift in how we view ourselves as “mission” diocese. Look for the positive aspects.
15. Being a mission diocese is a gift and asset. People experience a whole new gift coming here and serving in smaller communities. (Pam’s comment here – there was a comment from the religious order priests that they might send more priests but they had trouble getting guys to come here if the parishes weren’t 1,000 people. How do we bring these opposing views together?)
16. The book, “Homegrown Clergy,” was mentioned. That model has a person within a community being raised to the leadership and responsibility role. That person was empowered to celebrate Eucharist in that community. The dialogue on the traditional priesthood MUST continue. We have called forth “extra-ordinary” ministers of the Eucharist, why not “extra-ordinary” clergy.
17. If laity are to be encouraged, the clergy needs to be educated to work with them and encourage and empower them.
18. We need area “community organizers” who “listen” and then help develop leadership.
19. The Diocese was challenged to TRULY limit the number of weekend Masses each priest celebrates. This would challenge us to help develop community.
20. Eucharist is the source and summit and if we are called to live a Eucharistic life, it is all encompassing – a part of ALL we do.