

This background document and questionnaire is intended to be distributed to all parishes and the replies collated by each diocese until a picture emerges of the national situation regarding the old Pastoral Plan and the present situation. As many people as possible, members of sodalities, organizations, PPCs and individual parishioners should be contacted and responses elicited. The final collated replies should be sent to Khanya House. This will form Stage One of our Inter-diocesan Consultation.

2 THE PASTORAL PLAN

The Church is now 15 years into democracy. It came out of fifty years under an apartheid government which did not look kindly on the Church or its pastoral policies. During those years the Church depended heavily on overseas missionaries. She also depended greatly on overseas funding. Schools, hospitals and clinics were favoured missionary strategies. Churches were built in many instances with the help of Catholics in other countries. But firstly let us review the history of the Pastoral Plan.

2.1 History of the Pastoral Plan.

In 1965-1968 the Second Vatican Council took place and the Church in Southern Africa undertook to do a great national consultation among the laity to bring the local Church into line with the thinking and goals of the Vatican Council. They carried out the Consultation in the 1980's and produced a document called "Community Serving Humanity" in 1989. This document was called the "Pastoral Plan" for this region and it pointed the way for the pastoral renewal of the communities in the Church moving into the 1990's. The purpose of the Pastoral Plan was to give cohesion and a unified vision of action to the whole local Church as far as possible and to be in tune with the vision of the Universal Church. The Pastoral Plan aimed at building community within the parish in such a way that the parish becomes a change agent for the transformation of the whole of life.

The Pastoral Plan enjoyed great support in the beginning and it is important to understand the thinking behind the title "Community Serving Humanity". The pastoral Plan was divided into four sections.

2.1.1 The nature of the Pastoral Plan

2.1.2 Building community according to the mind of Christ

2.1.3 Serving humanity according to the mind of Christ

2.1.4 Practical applications; methods for implementation.

2.2 The nature of the Pastoral Plan.

The plan is based on God's plan as revealed in Jesus Christ: that we may be one (Jn 17:22) and that we serve one another as Jesus served us (Mt 20:28, Jn 13:1-15, Phil 2:6-7). We are called to bring the Good News into all strata of society and through the process of inculturation and the influence of the gospel to transform humanity from within and make it new. In this way we renew the society in which we as Catholics have to live and witness to the Gospel. With this in mind we build on the work of the past in the areas of education, care of the sick, married and family life and prepare our people to be witnesses of their catholic faith in the market places of the world.

2.3 Building Community according to the mind of Christ

The Blessed Trinity is a community of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus established a community around himself which in time became the Church with its distinctive mark of mutual love and acceptance. Community life and a sense of community is at the heart of Christian living. This is supported by the examples and teaching of the New Testament (cf Acts 2). Baptism brings us all into a relationship with Jesus and the Father through the giving of the Spirit and we become God's adopted children (cf Rom 8:14-15). Every community, every parish should strive to live this ideal. Sunday Mass should be the great visible expression of the community, the parish as family of God, worshipping together. We become a witness to Christian living to the world. In the process of building community,

ministries were to be developed. Clergy, religious and laity were to come closer together in the service of the community. New styles of leadership were to be developed and discrimination removed.

2.4 Serving Humanity according to the mind of Christ

"The Son of Man came to serve, not to be served" (Mt 20:28). These words of Jesus, by which he describes his own mission, are a guideline for all Christians. Jesus said to his apostles at the last supper after he had washed their feet, "if I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:14). Serving one another is at the heart of Christian living. This is the practical way of witnessing. Service aims at making the world more human. Parishes were expected to detect local human needs in their area and try to respond to these needs even if it involved developing new strategies. In this sense in many areas "development" became a new word for evangelization.

2.5 Methods for renewal proposed by the Pastoral Plan.

In the document of the Pastoral Plan three main methods are proposed by the Bishops in order to implement the vision of Vatican II.

2.5.1 Small Christian Communities (SCCs).

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are also known as Neighbourhood Gospel Groups or Home Cell Groups but they are different in form and purpose. The SCC envisioned by the Bishops was modelled on the South American Model. It was intended to be a group of Catholics, living in close proximity who would reflect on the realities of their life, their concrete situation and difficulties in the light of the Gospel. Deriving support, strength and inspiration from their faith they would initiate action to alleviate and solve their problems in a practical way. They followed the method of the pastoral circle. In this way they were transforming their world. On the other hand, Neighbourhood Gospel Groups and Home Cell Groups were more inclined towards gospel sharing and bible study without the practical follow-up that was a feature of the SCCs.

2.5.2 The RENEW programme.

The RENEW programme was designed in America as a method of Parish revitalization. It is a three year programme. It is intended to lead to a renewed parish community and in the end the groups which emerge from it (akin to the Neighbourhood Gospel Groups) are intended to continue indefinitely after the three year cycle comes to an end. The members of the group are expected to bond and be mutually supportive and involved in Church life. RENEW is a spiritual renewal process aimed at helping parishioners develop a closer relationship with Christ and to make an adult commitment to Jesus as central to their lives and to open them to the power of the Spirit so that they became more authentic witnesses of the Gospel.

2.5.3 Task Teams

This is another way of building community. This method is centred on people who want to be involved in a particular project or task, for example, building a hall, painting the Church. They usually begin by being work- orientated not relational. The aim would be to eventually engage the members in a more structured involvement in the community. The task team is well equipped to attract members of the parish who are reluctant to join other groups.

3 THE MORE RECENT PAST

Three events of the recent past are highlighted. Firstly the African Synods of 1994 and 2009 and secondly the Forums which were convened by the Bishops' Conference in South Africa.

3.1 1st African Synod. "The Church in Africa" (1994)