



Best Practices for Shared Parishes

So That They May All Be One

Bilingual

Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

WASHINGTON, DC

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Msgr. Ronny Jenkins
General Secretary, USCCB

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Best Practices for Shared Parishes: So That They May All Be One

Acknowledgments: We thank the twenty pastors who contributed their time, knowledge, and experience to the elaboration of this resource for parish ministry. Their pastoral sensitivity and practical recommendations are the foundation for this guide. Moreover, their apostolic zeal and ability to bring people from different cultures and ethnicities together as one parish faith community is a true inspiration for pastors and parish leaders across the United States of America. We also thank Carmen Aguinaco for bringing together the experiences and contributions of the pastors, and Brett C. Hoover, PhD, for developing the working document that served as the foundation for this guide. In a special way we thank Rev. Stephen Dudek, Rev. Michael Johnson, OFM, and Rev. Hector Madrigal for accompanying the development of the guide from its beginning stages to its final articulation.

Background: In 2007, the Catholic bishops of the United States made cultural diversity in the Church one of the top five priorities of their strategic plan, in order to better respond to the growing reality across parishes and dioceses in the United States of America. The USCCB task group working on this priority recommended the development of a practical guide to assist pastors of culturally diverse parishes in the challenging task of building unity in diversity. Such a guide was considered important and urgent since the number of parishes shared by culturally diverse communities had grown dramatically in the previous decade, going from 22 percent in 2000 to 33 percent in 2010.

The Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church was asked to play a key role in developing the guide, through consultation with pastors who have successfully achieved a high level of ecclesial integration/inclusion among their culturally diverse parishioners. Twenty pastors from different ethnic backgrounds and regions of the country were consulted over a period of eighteen months. Final recommendations for the guide were made in December 2012, including the title *Best Practices for Shared Parishes: So That They May All Be One*.

The term “shared parishes” describes parish communities in which two or more languages or cultural contexts are present in the ministerial life of a parish. The term was coined by Brett Hoover and has been adopted for use in this guide.

Purpose: The purpose of the guide is to assist pastors of shared parishes and their teams in achieving a high level of ecclesial integration among their culturally diverse members. It is designed as a practical tool to (a) assess challenging ministerial situations in light of Catholic pastoral principles and values, (b) identify pastoral responses to address ministerial situations based on proven best practices, (c) apply intercultural competencies in the form of attitudes, knowledge, and skills, and (d) discern pastoral planning strategies based on a developmental process of ecclesial integration/inclusion and intercultural sensitivity, which lead to a higher level of stewardship.

Methodology: The guide has three parts. The first part describes the six stages of intercultural sensitivity developed by Milton Bennett and how they apply to a parish faced with the challenge of responding to demographic changes within its boundaries. Part I illustrates how a pastor and his staff may go through different stages of understanding their mission as they seek to respond to a new reality. Bennett’s stages of intercultural sensitivity describe how facing demographic changes may include going through a process of denial, defensiveness, and minimizing the emerging cultural diversity in our midst before moving into a process of accepting, adapting, and integrating that new reality. Part I also includes pastoral experiences that illustrate best practices from some of the shared parishes that participated in the consultation.

Part II articulates the Catholic understanding of the parish and the pastoral principles and values that guide the Catholic parish’s life and mission. This understanding moves our reflection from the sociological implications of cultural diversity into the mission of the Catholic Church framed in canon law and guided by the Church’s deepest identity, namely, its mission to evangelize.

It also reflects on the ministerial spirituality of the pastor and his team as they respond to the challenges of growing cultural diversity in the spirit of the New Evangelization. The Christian methodology of encounter with the living Jesus Christ as the way to conversion, communion, and solidarity, articulated in the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, provides the framework for Part II.

Part III offers a three-threshold roadmap that illustrates how parishes have been successful in building unity in diversity among their culturally diverse members. These thresholds are *welcoming*, *belonging*, and *ownership*. They describe the developmental process for ecclesial integration/inclusion we want to achieve in the growing number of shared parishes “so that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). The three thresholds for ecclesial integration/inclusion are described through nine movements or indicators. Then the movements are illustrated in real ministerial situations that have been successfully addressed by pastors and their teams. The pastors who participated in the consultation agreed that a higher level of ecclesial integration/inclusion among all parishioners results in a higher level of stewardship and mission.

Developmental Movements or Indicators: The guide offers nine developmental indicators or movements as keys to measure the level of ecclesial integration/inclusion in a particular shared parish and to discern next steps. They include pastoral principles and intercultural competencies relevant to the level of ecclesial integration/inclusion called forth in each movement. The first three movements are integral to the threshold of the sense of *welcoming*. Movements 4, 5, and 6 are the fruit of the sense of *belonging*. Movements 7, 8, and 9 are an expression of the sense of *ownership*.

Welcoming

- Mission
- Homecoming
- Ministerial Growth

Belonging

- Build Relationships Across Cultures
- Intercultural Leadership Development and Formation
- Decision-Making Process

Ownership

- Sharing Resources
- Achieving Stewardship
- Communion in Mission

How to Use This Guide: This guide can be used as a tool to train parish staff and leaders in the process of ecclesial integration/inclusion.

Part I focuses on the stages of intercultural sensitivity. It aims at helping parish staff and leaders assess their level of intercultural sensitivity and how can they move forward in such a process. It may be helpful to provide data on the demographics of the parish as a good starting point for the session. Part II can be conducted in a retreat fashion in order to maximize the benefits of such rich spiritual content. The spirituality of hospitality and reconciliation are quite central to Part II, as it touches on matters of personal encounter, conversion, communion, and solidarity in Christ.

Part III can be presented as a developmental process to assess two different realities. One is the level of ecclesial integration/inclusion that the parish has achieved so far. Another is the level of intercultural competency that each staff member and parish leader has mastered in terms of attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

The training can be done in multiple forms. For example, it can be done as a one-day in-service or in a series of three evenings, dedicating one evening to each part of the guide.

The guide can also be used as a pastoral planning tool to help discern the next steps a particular parish should take on its way to becoming more inter-culturally competent and better integrated, in the Catholic sense of the word.



Shared Parishes and Intercultural Sensitivity

What are shared parishes and how do they become so? The term “shared parishes” describes parish communities in which two or more languages or cultural contexts are an integral part of the ministerial life and mission of a particular parish. An example of a shared parish is St. Camillus Parish in Silver Spring, Maryland, where the Sunday Liturgy is celebrated in English, French, and Spanish, as well as in the cultural and spiritual context of the African American community. These four distinct ethnic/cultural communities share together in the life and mission of one parish community. Religious education, youth ministry, and other ministries are also offered in different languages, but they are organized and coordinated under one vision for religious education, youth ministry, and so on. St. Camillus Parish has been a shared parish for a number of years and has achieved a high degree of ecclesial integration through

a commonly shared Catholic identity. However, that was not always the case. For many years St. Camillus served a rather homogeneous community of mostly well-established Catholics of European heritage. It was a change in demographics that challenged St. Camillus’s pastor and his team to respond to the growing culturally diverse groups living within the parish boundaries.

Today, 33 percent of parishes in the United States are shared parishes compared with 22 percent in the year 2000. The number of shared parishes is expected to grow significantly in the foreseeable future as demographic changes continue to take place, mostly due to the influx of new Catholic immigrants from the Southern Hemisphere. The consolidation of parishes is another factor behind the growing number of shared parishes.

Transitioning from a culturally homogeneous parish to a shared parish is not an easy task. A sense of uncertainty, fear of the

unknown, a sense of scarcity, limited intercultural competence, and a certain tendency to want to assimilate people into being “like us” are some of the factors that keep parishioners from embracing fellow Catholics from different cultures and ethnicities. The tendency to view the parish as a congregation rather than a territory, as defined in canon law, is also a hindrance.

Six Stages of Intercultural Sensitivity

A number of pastors who participated in the consultation to develop this guide referred to Milton Bennett’s six stages of intercultural sensitivity as a helpful tool to understand what pastors and their teams may go through as they struggle to respond to demographic changes. The six stages are denial, defense, minimizing, acceptance, adaptation, and integration, and they describe how a person or an organization goes from resisting engaging people from a different culture to being open and able to work, relate, and collaborate with culturally diverse populations. The stages are also helpful for pastors and staff already ministering in shared parishes who may find themselves stuck at one point or another in the developmental process of ecclesial integration/inclusion.

The following is an example of a traditionally culturally homogeneous parish going through the above mentioned stages of intercultural sensitivity. The example shows a neighborhood where the number of new Haitian immigrants has grown significantly

within the geographical boundaries of the parish. The pastor/administrator and the staff are not aware of this growing presence and have no experience working with Haitian immigrants.

Stage 1. Denial

The pastor is asked about the presence of new Haitian immigrants in his parish. The pastor answers by saying: *We don’t have Haitians in the parish.* He adds that there are a few Haitian families but *they are just like everybody else and have been parishioners for a long time.* The pastor and his staff are very surprised when they hear that data from the 2010 Census show more than three hundred Haitian families living within the parish boundaries. Denial may persist on the part of the pastor and/or staff, who may argue that these people are just passing through, that they are not necessarily Catholic, or that they may be “illegals.” In the denial stage people tend not to see the “other” or to consider the “other” as somebody else’s responsibility.

Stage 2. Defense

Once the pastor and his staff have become aware of the presence of a community of Catholics who are not being reached out to or included, there is a tendency to rationalize why “these people” are not included. Reasons given may include some of the following arguments: *We have no more room in this parish. Can they be trusted? They are going to take over! They are not like us, my grandparents built this parish. They should go to the next parish.* These reasons are often motivated by

fear of the unknown. They are not necessarily intended to be harmful or racist, but they are often motivated by stereotypes and can come across as discriminatory.

Stage 3. Minimizing

The pastor and his team are aware of the significant number of Haitian families living within the parish boundaries, and they recognize it is the parish's responsibility to respond. However, there is a move to minimize differences in order not to change the way things are done in the parish. For instance, arguments in this stage usually go something like this: *They can participate if they want to, the door is wide open;* or *They live in America now and should learn English and assimilate like everybody else.* This response begins to show a degree of openness to welcoming people, but only as long as things don't change in "our parish" and they leave their language, culture, traditions, and expectations at the door. The expression "color-blind" fits here in the literal sense, as people choose not to see the differences with the other. However, the intent is to justify not having to do anything different, but waiting for the other to fit into "our" way of thinking and "our" way of doing things. Establishing the Sunday Liturgy in Creole is considered unnecessary and can even be considered divisive. This stage is particularly difficult to overcome when it comes to faith formation of children and young people of new immigrant populations. The fact that children of immigrants know English, or are in the process of learning it, leaves significant

differences out of the equation such as culture, race, educational attainment, economic and social status, and immigration status, among others.

Stage 4. Acceptance

In this stage the pastor and the staff recognize differences as quite real and know that the same behavior may mean different things for people of different cultures. There is a willingness to shift perspective while still maintaining a commitment to "our own values." Establishing the Sunday Liturgy in Creole may be fine if they don't disturb others and take good care of "our things." In this stage the well-established community and the new Haitian community may share the same buildings, parking lot, and church building, but at different times, avoiding each other. A sacramental minister from another parish is likely to preside at the Sunday Liturgy in Creole with very little contact with the pastor and his staff. There is a sense of treating each other politely, but the "us"/"them" language prevails.

Stage 5. Adaptation

In the adaptation stage, the pastor and his staff are able to understand and empathize with different perspectives, and adapt their behavior accordingly. The pastor, his staff, and the leadership of the immigrant community have developed significant intercultural competencies such as the ability to communicate in two languages, establishing interpersonal relationships across cultures, and openness to new ideas and projects originating in either community. There is a sense

that both communities belong together in the parish and that people are more willing to relate, work, and collaborate with one another. The “we” language is used among the leadership in both communities. There are a variety of programs and projects available in both languages, and changes have been made to accommodate the needs of the Haitian community within certain limits. Moving the Sunday Liturgy in Creole to a better time or allowing fund-raising activities for specific Haitian programs and activities are significant changes in parish life. However, at this stage there is still not a great deal of participation by the immigrant community in decision-making bodies like the parish council, the financial council, or the staff.

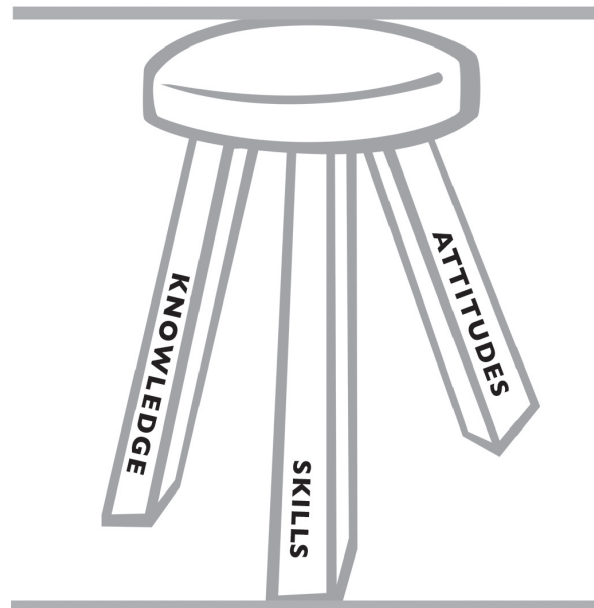
Stage 6. Integration

At this stage the pastor, his team, and the leadership of the Haitian community move quite naturally from one cultural framework to the other, adapting to different situations with ease and cultural accuracy. The leadership in both cultural communities has a sense of ownership in the parish. There is a good representation of both cultures in all decision-making bodies and in the parish staff, and resources are generated and shared according to the needs and aspirations of both communities in the parish.

The Three Areas of Intercultural Competence

Developing intercultural sensitivity requires the acquisition of intercultural competence for ministry. Intercultural competence is the capacity to communicate, relate, and work

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES



across cultural boundaries. It involves developing capacity in three areas: *knowledge*, *skills*, and *attitudes*.

Knowledge involves the capacity to understand more than one perspective on how things are done. Knowing how different cultural communities make decisions, how they use time during their meetings, how far ahead they plan, how they raise funds for the parish, how they go about preparing and celebrating the liturgy, etc., allows the intercultural minister to facilitate communication, organization, and implementation of common parish activities. *Knowledge* favors the “both-and” approach over the “one-size-fits-all” approach.

Skills include the ability to communicate in more than one language, to empathize with parishioners from different cultures and lived realities, to be a good listener, and to motivate people to actively engage in the various ministries of the parish. They also include

the capacity to facilitate meetings, conduct trainings, coordinate volunteers, deal with conflict, and provide support to leaders from different cultures. *Skills* make of the minister an “intercultural mentor” who knows how to “plan with people, not for people.”

Attitudes include openness to engage parishioners from different cultures with a sense of gratitude and curiosity. It makes people feel at home and is effective in building relationships across cultures that lead to mutual acceptance, appreciation, and collaboration. *Attitudes* describe a minister as a “bridge-builder” who brings people together and invites their unique gifts for the good of all and the common mission of the parish.

Consider the following questions to see where you and the leadership in your parish are on the continuum of intercultural sensitivity and in the area of intercultural competence:

- a) Has your parish experienced a significant demographic shift in the past few years?
- b) How has your parish responded to this population shift?
- c) What stage of intercultural sensitivity best describes where you and members of your staff are at on this continuum?
- d) What intercultural competencies—knowledge, attitudes, and skills—are in use by the pastor, staff, and parish leaders?
- e) What aspects are keeping the leadership in the parish from achieving the next stage of intercultural sensitivity or greater intercultural competence?

Stories from the Trenches

The six stages of intercultural sensitivity and the three areas of intercultural competence are quite useful in understanding the process of achieving unity in diversity. The stages are also helpful in identifying benchmarks and competencies as we go through the process. However, when we talk about ministry, both spirituality and a commitment to the good of the human person call for an added dimension of responsibility to one another. Such a dimension comes from the fact that the Church’s mission is precisely to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to every human situation. It also calls us to welcome one another and be custodians of the dignity of every human person, particularly the most vulnerable among us.

The following are stories of shared parishes that have embraced the call to reach out to diverse ethnic/cultural populations living within their boundaries. In some cases the pastors and their teams were aware of the stages of intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence, and used them to navigate the ambiguous waters of intercultural relations. In some cases they just followed their pastoral intuition and a good degree of common sense and solidarity. However, the ingredient that is very much present in every case is the apostolic zeal on the part of the pastor and his team to fulfill their ecclesial mandate to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all ethnic/cultural communities under their pastoral care. After consultation with the pastors of twenty shared parishes, we offer the following snapshots of several well-functioning shared parishes around the country.

St. Francis de Sales Parish sits in a suburban community west of Grand Rapids, Michigan, in a town called Holland. Hispanic, Vietnamese, and American parishioners of European descent all share St. Francis as a spiritual home. In 1995, a fire erupted within the parish church on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The worship space was largely destroyed. Before it was to be demolished, the parish engaged in a period of communal mourning. They “waked the church,” as then-pastor Fr. Stephen Dudek called it. He remembers, “People came into the burnt space to offer flowers, light candles, and share memories.” Next, people from all three communities worked together, side by side, with hammers and chisels to salvage about 10,000 bricks from the ruins, bricks that were eventually incorporated into the rebuilt church. “Reactor groups” were formed from each of the three communities, and they all contributed their ideas to the new design. The rebuilt church contained sacred art from all three of these cultural traditions, and it was constructed in the round to emphasize the equality of all of them.

The parish of St. Joseph in Amarillo, Texas, combines an older, middle-class Mexican American and European American community with younger Hispanic immigrants and refugees from Sudan and Bosnia. When a new pastor, Fr. Hector Madrigal, arrived in 2007, he conducted listening sessions and learned firsthand about many of the divisions within the parish, mostly centered on competition between different local schools, Catholic and public. The listening sessions led to a *covenant* or pact in which all the community groups committed to working toward unity

in Christ. They celebrated this covenant with a healing service and then with the parish’s first unity Mass outside under a tent. All the different parties of the parish entered the tent in procession and signed the covenant in the presence of the diocesan bishop. Each year, the parish hosts a renewal ceremony with another multilingual unity Mass outdoors. They also honor a “unity in Christ” stone placed near the church entrance to remind everyone of their commitment to one another in God’s sight.

St. Camillus in Silver Spring, Maryland, is the kind of shared parish that staggers the imagination of most Catholics. Run by Franciscan friars, the parish is located in the culturally and socioeconomically diverse northern suburbs of the Washington, D.C., metro area. It hosts almost five thousand people each weekend for Mass. The largest group in the parish is the Central American community, mostly from El Salvador and Guatemala. Twenty-five percent of the parishioners are English- and French-speaking new immigrants from Africa, and one fifth are European Americans; there is also an African American community and a community of Bengali people (originally from Bangladesh). Under the leadership of Fr. Michael Johnson, OFM, the parish staff represents all these groups, and Mass is celebrated every Sunday in three languages (Spanish, English, and French). There are trilingual liturgies on six holidays, plus on Christmas and during the Easter Triduum. The Rosary is prayed in five languages every morning. A host of lay ecclesial movements (such as the charismatic renewal movement and the SEARCH retreat movement) have a home at St. Camillus. Parishioners are

involved (often together) in seventy-two different ministries including catechesis, evangelization, liturgical and youth ministries, social service and justice organizations, and more. A committee of people also promotes “Care for Creation,” or ecological concerns, on Spanish-language radio.

Yuba City is a small city in the agriculturally rich Sacramento Valley of Northern California. Therein is **St. Isidore Parish**. At St. Isidore’s, as in much of California, European American people are not the majority group. The parish has four Masses in English and three in Spanish, but those attending in Spanish form a slight majority. Religious education is taught in both languages, using a bilingual book under the direction of a bilingual director of religious education. The parish’s St. Francis of Assisi Fund helps poor and homeless people of any background. Twice a year, a hundred or more volunteers from the Hispanic, European American, and Filipino communities join forces to host grand dinners for local homeless people, making it one of many expressions of unity in diversity according to Fr. Francisco Hernandez, pastor of the parish.

Schaumburg, Illinois, is a socioeconomically and culturally diverse outer ring suburb of the Chicago area. **The Church of the Holy Spirit** there welcomes a multicultural community of European Americans, Hispanics (mostly Mexicans), and Filipinos, with a smattering of other immigrants. The parish council conducts open meetings five times a year to ensure all parishioners have a voice in parish affairs. The pastor, Fr. William Tkachuk, attributes the success of the parish to “a willingness on the part of parish leaders

among the different ethnic groups to continue to develop and enhance the structures and activities that nourish the parish vision of one Body of Christ with many diverse members,” a vision rooted in the unity-in-diversity of the Holy Trinity. The parish actively works for immigrant rights. Yet, Fr. Bill admits that some people do not appreciate the bilingual liturgies that occur on Holy Thursday and other feast days. He recalls a parishioner expressing, “Why do we have to do this in two languages? I just don’t like it.” The pastor answered, “It is okay not to like it.” He frankly acknowledges the difficulty for those who are not bilingual. “But [including the languages of all] is the demand of gospel justice,” he adds. “We are not attempting to be politically correct, but to live the Gospel. We do not have to like it to be committed to doing it.”

On the other hand, parishioners at **Our Lady of Lourdes** seem to enjoy their occasional bilingual liturgies. Located in Montclair, in the Inland Empire County east of Los Angeles, California, the parish is split into almost equal quarters—Mexican and Central American, South American, European American, and Asian. A year of education around bilingual celebrations helped form a common ethos, summarized in the mission statement: “We embrace the mission of Jesus and seek to build up the body of Christ and to bring all people, all races, and all ethnic groups into full union with Him. We journey together in faith and strive to be a prayerful and Eucharistic family.” The pastor, Fr. Anthony Dao, says that regularly inviting different communities to serve one another at various events helps cement the relationships

between cultural communities. But he notes that everyone should be cautious about expecting too much too soon.

Finally, as Fr. Stephen Dudek points out, there are issues of diversity and inclusion not just between and among cultures—Latino, Vietnamese, Sudanese, etc.—but also within the broader categories and/or cultural families themselves. He uses as an example the diversity of Latino or Hispanic cultures present within his current parish. At **St. Joseph the Worker**, they have begun celebrating a novena in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary—the title under which the Guatemalan people honor Mary—to go along with the novena

in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This, in turn, inspired the Puerto Rican community to breathe new life into their novena to Our Lady Mother of Divine Providence. Also, for the growing Guatemalan portion of the community, a novena was added in January in honor of the *Cristo Negro de Esquipulas*. For the feast of Our Lady of Charity of Cobre—the title by which Cubans honor Mary—they had a Cuban dinner after Mass, and it was the first time most of the Guatemalan parishioners ever had eaten Cuban food. These kinds of interactions within the diverse communities themselves are also important to keep in mind.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- 1) What are some commonalities you find in these shared parishes?
- 2) What gospel values do you see lifted up?
- 3) What challenges and opportunities can you identify?
- 4) In what ways do they inspire you in your ministry?
- 5) What stage of intercultural sensitivity do you think has been achieved in each parish?



The Catholic Understanding of the Parish Life and Mission

The Catholic Parish

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Based on the feedback received from the pastors involved in the consultation, a significant number of parish staff and leaders view the parish more as a congregation, that is, a group of registered Catholics who are involved to various degrees in the life the parish. Such an understanding of the parish is often based on the experience of well-established Catholic faithful who have known each other for a long time. This congregational view of the parish is more reflective of a uniquely American Protestant faith community that centers Christian life on those who *voluntarily* gather for worship. In contrast, the Catholic Church defines the parish in several different ways that are not mutually exclusive. For example, canon 515 §1 reads, “A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church,” and canon 518 establishes that “as a general rule a parish is to be

territorial, that is, one which includes all the Christian faithful of a certain territory.” The latter definition views the parish as a territory with clearly marked geographical boundaries.

According to canon law, the pastor is responsible for the spiritual well-being of all those living within the defined parish boundaries, not only the ones who are “registered.” As such, the pastor and his team are called to a constant ministry of mission that strives to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to every human situation present in the parish. The evangelizing role of the pastor is held up in canon law, as is the missionary nature of the Church. The spiritual welfare of the faithful is an essential element. The call to a New Evangelization makes much more sense when we think of the parish as a territory. All kinds of possibilities and opportunities can be generated by the pastor and his team as they seek new and creative ways to reach out

to all baptized Catholics and to others living within the parish boundaries, not only those already gathered.

It is important to note that it is quite acceptable for Catholics to be members of a parish even if they live outside the boundaries of that particular parish. This practice is widely used in the United States and with very good pastoral results. However, this practice does not exempt the responsibility of the pastor and his team from responding to the pastoral needs and aspirations of people living within the boundaries of that parish. We must also remember that some parishes are non-territorial, such as those affiliated with colleges and universities, military facilities, and some ethnic parishes.

Shared parishes present significant challenges, but they offer even greater opportunities to engage in profound conversations about life and faith—opportunities

to worship and pray together, to learn from each other, to be there for one another, to forgive one another and be reconciled, to acknowledge our unique histories, and to discover ways in which we can be one Catholic parish, yet come from diverse cultures and ethnicities.

The Call to Ongoing Mission

Today, more than ever, it is paramount for parishes to reclaim their missionary roots and vocation. The growing cultural diversity in thousands of parishes across the United States requires that pastors and their teams go out and meet the newcomers where they are at in their lives. In some cases, it is long-time Catholic residents in a neighborhood that need to be visited with the Good News and invited to active participation in the life and mission of the parish community. The

MISSION



mission of the parish also extends to non-Catholics, particularly the most vulnerable. The work of Catholic Charities and other social ministry Catholic agencies is very important to the mission of the Church. However, each parish benefits from practicing works of mercy directly to people living in the neighborhood. Moreover, the celebration of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, the ongoing learning of our Catholic faith, the need for a nurturing prayer life, the call to build up the Church as the beloved community, and the consistent ministry of solidarity with the most vulnerable are all essential dimensions Christian life. All baptized Catholics living in a particular parish need access to the practice of every dimension of their Catholic faith.

How can pastors and their teams reach out to diverse cultural groups present in the parish? How do they know that they are doing things the right way? What should the ultimate goal be in welcoming these communities? How do you achieve unity in diversity among parishioners from different cultures and ethnicities? How do you promote the healthy interaction of new Catholic immigrants in the life of the Church and in U.S. society? Our own history and previous pastoral practices can help us address these and other questions that emerge in the context of shared parishes.

Shared Parishes and the Principle of Ecclesial Integration/Inclusion

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In 1999, Blessed Pope John Paul II wrote to the culturally distinct churches of North

America and Latin America about the call to unity in diversity in the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*:

The Church is the sign of communion because her members, like branches, share the life of Christ, the true vine (cf. Jn 15:5). Through communion with Christ, Head of the Mystical Body, we enter into living communion with all believers. This communion, present in the Church and essential to her nature, must be made visible in concrete signs. (no. 33)

The Holy Father saw Catholics in the Americas finding unity through a process of spiritual conversion, followed by concrete signs of communion, and then solidarity with all human beings. Such communion and solidarity are also extended to every culture in the universal Church that embraces the entire human family. In other words, we are concretely changed by the relationships we have with one another in Christ, as we build, in Christ, the beloved community. We call this process of being changed and growing in love *ecclesial integration/inclusion*. In it, we strengthen the bonds of communion in Christ, which are animated by the Holy Spirit and made manifest in Baptism and the Eucharist. The principle of ecclesial integration/inclusion is particularly important when we seek to strengthen the bonds of communion in Christ among faithful from diverse cultures, races, and ethnicities, and in welcoming new immigrants.

More concretely, the principle of ecclesial integration/inclusion seeks to welcome new immigrants into our parishes and institutions by developing culturally specific ministries that affirm their Gospel-reflecting cultural values and religious traditions. Beyond that, it calls for mutual enrichment through interaction among all cultural groups present in parishes and other Catholic institutions. Ecclesial integration/inclusion is not to be confused with assimilation. A policy of assimilation expects new immigrants to give up their language, culture, values, and traditions, in order to be accepted as parish members. History shows that a policy of assimilation alienates new Catholic immigrants from the Church, thus making them more vulnerable to proselytizing religious groups and to secularization. More than two hundred years of Catholic history in the United States shows that the Church is at its best when it embraces cultural diversity through the principle of ecclesial integration/inclusion—that is, when it takes into account the cultural values, traditions, and faith expressions of new immigrants as an integral part of their being.

Ecclesial Integration/Inclusion in the United States

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The principle of ecclesial integration/inclusion was the foundation of the *national parish model*. National parishes were designed as a pastoral response to provide new European Catholic immigrants with the ecclesial space they needed to live their faith, to pray, and to worship in the context of their own culture,

language, and traditions. The national parishes were very successful in helping new European immigrants and their children strengthen their Catholic identity while adapting to life in the United States over time. Much of the U.S. Catholic school system stemmed out of the national parishes as a way to make sure that future generations would inherit the Catholic faith.

The success of the *national parish model* in welcoming Catholic immigrants from Europe through a process of ecclesial integration/inclusion is a major reason for having more than seventy million Catholics living in the United States today. The Church's success among African American and Native American Catholics over two centuries has also hinged on the degree to which the Church was able to inculturate gospel values into the very heart of these cultures.

The years following World War II saw the *national parish model* fade away due to the end of massive immigration from Europe. A few years later, the end of segregation and the massive wave of immigrants from the Southern Hemisphere contributed to the cultural diversity we experience today in our neighborhoods and parishes. These historical factors, combined with the limited number of priests and financial resources, are the context in which the shared parish emerges as a pastoral response that gives new life to the Church today.

The principle of ecclesial integration/inclusion that made the *national parish model* so successful is also at the very heart of the *shared parish model*. The difference between the two models is that each national parish

served Catholics from a particular European country, normally under the leadership of a priest from that country, and at a time when the Catholic Church was growing significantly, while a shared parish serves people from different cultures and ethnicities, all sharing one pastor, buildings, schedules, and other resources. Often these parishes are put under the leadership of a new immigrant pastor. Such sharing of space and resources can be very challenging at times, but it also makes room for God's grace to fashion the beloved community he calls us to be.

The Scriptural Model for Unity in Diversity

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The Scriptures and Christian tradition inspire and guide the Church in understanding and building ecclesial unity amid human diversity. In the Old Testament, Isaiah preaches

about God gathering not just Israel but all the nations to his holy mountain in peace (Is 2:2–4). In the New Testament, we hear St. Peter proclaim that “God shows no partiality,” as he relates how the Holy Spirit has chosen Gentiles, people from a totally different culture, to be baptized without their needing to embrace Jewish customs (Acts 10). The image of the one body is perhaps the most significant expression of honoring diversity while affirming the unity of the one body in Christ. St. Paul spoke to the Church in Corinth about the diversity of spiritual gifts, and how all of these gifts find their source in the Holy Spirit. Such diversity centers on the actual members of the body, emphasizing their particular cultural identities and/or walk of life. “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13). This

UNITY IN DIVERSITY



emphasis to embrace human diversity, particularly in regards to Jews and Greeks, is found throughout the letters of Paul. In the letter to the Galatians, Paul teaches that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). A similar statement is found in the letter to the Romans: “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For ‘everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved’” (Rom 10:12–13). St. Paul requests that Christian leaders “become all things to all” (1 Cor 9:22), and he emphatically argues for a Gospel that does not require Gentiles to become Jews, for in Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek” (Gal 3:28).

The most famous Christian story about unity in diversity is that of Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles, sometimes referred to as the “birthday of the Church.” In the second chapter of Acts, the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a driving wind and flames of fire, settling upon the heads of the disciples gathered in the upper room. They immediately begin to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ to the culturally diverse crowd of people gathered nearby for the Jewish feast of Pentecost. All of the Apostles were speaking in their own language of Aramaic, yet each person present heard them in his or her own language. Thus, people retain their own language and culture, yet all are able to share in the Good News.

Chapter 15 in Acts also refers to the equality of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. The statement comes from Peter, but it responds

to the inclusivity Paul had preached rendering Jews and Greeks on equal footing before Christ and before God. “My brothers, you are well aware that from early days God made his choice among you that through my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness by granting them the holy Spirit just as he did us. He made no distinction between us and them, for by faith he purified their hearts.” (Acts 15:7–9)

The example from Acts 6:1–7 is also certainly pertinent as a model of unity in diversity. In this story, the deacons were chosen because the widows of the Hellenists were being neglected. The issue was one of language and therefore nationality and culture, and the goal was inclusion.

The Scriptures and Christian tradition are quite consistent in proclaiming the Gospel to all nations and cultures. They are also clear in presenting a model of ministers capable and willing to “become all things to all.” Such a model of ministry is particularly necessary in shared parishes, where pastors may be pulled in different directions by the faithful. The pastor’s ministry of unity is paramount in fashioning the beloved community in his parish. All the pastors involved in the consultation agreed that the most important factor for achieving a high degree of ecclesial integration/inclusion in shared parishes is a pastor who has embraced all culturally diverse parishioners as his own. Whether the pastor is U.S.-born or foreign-born, and regardless of what racial/ethnic/cultural group he comes from, the pastor is the primary sign of unity and pastoral love

in the parish along with the diocesan bishop. It is quite improbable for a shared parish to achieve a high level of ecclesial integration/inclusion if the pastor does not model such pastoral solicitude for all the parishioners.

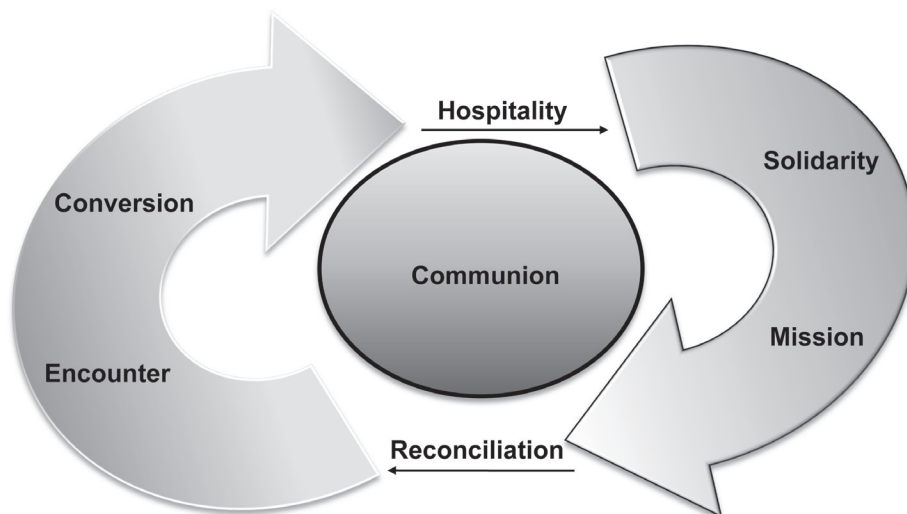
The Ministry and Spirituality of the Pastor

The Catholic Church is, at its very heart, a eucharistic community. It is in the celebration of the Sunday Liturgy that Catholics grow ever closer to Christ as his disciples and as members of his Church. Christ left us the gift of himself in the Eucharist, which is actualized in the liturgical ministry of the Apostles and their successors. As the number of the baptized grew over time, the bishops ordained priests as an extension of their apostolic ministry so that every baptized person could share in the Sacrament of the Eucharist and in the entire life and mission

of the Church. When a priest is appointed as pastor of a parish by his bishop, that priest becomes responsible for the well-being of all the people living within the parish boundaries. As pastor, the priest becomes a symbol of unity for the faithful entrusted to his care, not only *in persona Christi* during the celebration of the Eucharist, but also as a person who mediates God's love for everyone, regardless of cultural, racial, or ethnic differences. Staff and parish leaders look to their pastor for leadership as they find effective ways for ministering among culturally diverse communities in a spirit of unity in diversity.

The spirituality described by John Paul II in *Ecclesia in America* speaks eloquently about the spirituality that sustains the pastor and his ministry. Such spirituality has a missionary character that constantly seeks an encounter with the living Jesus Christ as the way to conversion, communion, and solidarity. Parish staff and leaders ministering among diverse

SPIRITUALITY FOR ECCLESIAL INTEGRATION/INCLUSION



populations are also inspired and moved by the Holy Spirit to create an environment of spiritual intimacy where parishioners from different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities can experience a personal encounter with Christ that leads them to conversion, communion, and solidarity with one another.

The following reflections are based on the comments shared by the pastors participating in the consultation. They apply not only to the pastors themselves but also to their staff and to key leaders in the parish. The consensus of the pastors indicated that the best way to know that you are being effective in bringing people closer to Christ is when you feel closer to Christ when you are interacting with them.

Encounter: Pastors and their teams are ready and capable to relate at a personal level with parishioners from different cultures and backgrounds. Feeling welcomed and comfortable with one another is the key to experiencing God's love, whether in the liturgy, in the classroom, in social events, carrying out works of mercy, in significant family events, or responding to someone who asks for help. We are indeed the voice, the arms, the feet, and the love of Christ when we relate to others as ministers of the Body of Christ.

Conversion: Our hearts and minds are constantly changing as we experience God's grace in our lives and share it with others. Celebrating the Sunday Liturgy with a cultural community other than your own,

hearing the stories of people different from yourself, enjoying the hospitality of an immigrant family that shares with you from their poverty, visiting people at a hospital or in prison, seeing the generosity of a longtime parishioner toward new immigrant families, witnessing the relentless faith in God's love by those who live in poverty in your parish . . . all these experiences lead pastors and their teams to say, "they did more for me than I did for them."

Communion: Many shared parishes experience a sense of community during bicultural or multicultural liturgies that are well planned and celebrated in harmony—at parish picnics and other social events where food, music, art, and service are shared and celebrated by all parishioners and when culturally diverse members of the parish work together, in social services like the St. Vincent de Paul ministry, in lobbying days, painting the church building, gathering for a procession on Good Friday, participating in prayer groups, making decisions as parish council members, managing resources as financial council members, organizing fund-raising activities, serving one another as staff members, and learning together during an in-service on the mission and function of the parish council.

Solidarity: Supporting a just and humane immigration reform under the principles of Catholic social

teaching, reaching out to the elderly and the sick, actively supporting ministries serving unwed mothers and broken families, promoting a culture of life and the dignity of the human person from conception to natural death, helping families achieve a higher educational attainment, particularly young people of new immigrant families, and developing a sister parish relationship with another parish in the diocese or in another country are all examples of how solidarity is lived in an intercultural parish.

According to the pastors involved in the consultation, two of the most important spiritual dimensions in shared parishes are hospitality and

reconciliation. These two scriptural catalysts of Christian life are like hinges of ministry in shared parishes, and in any family, parish, or Catholic institution for that matter.

Hospitality: In the context of shared parishes, we are called to welcome one another, particularly the stranger among us. Hospitality is not an isolated action or gesture to welcome others. Being hospitable tells the other person “there is room for you.” In Scripture, hospitality is a value and a principle; it is a way of being in the world with God and with one another. God is the gracious host. God gathers us around his table. It is Jesus who washes the feet of the

HOSPITALITY



disciples and prepares breakfast for the disciples by the seashore. God models for us a transforming hospitality with a passion for service to others, especially those in most need. In a biblical sense, a hospitable parish is one that knows how to welcome others and does so because that is what the Gospel calls us to do. That is what the Church calls us to do. The great mandate to make disciples of all nations implies welcoming people of all nations so that they will know we are Christian in the way we love one another. The prophet Isaiah speaks of this call to hospitality:

I will give them, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name. Better than sons and daughters; an eternal name, which shall not be cut off, will I give them. . . . For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. (Is 56:5–7)

The pastors who participated in the consultation for the elaboration of this guide excel at making people from different cultures and ethnicities feel welcome in God's house. Such an attitude of welcome is also present in their staff and parish leadership, as they see in all the faithful the inheritance God has commended to their care. Dr. Timothy Matovina speaks of "homecoming" as the kind of hospitality parishes need to offer to newcomers. Homecoming

welcomes Catholic immigrants not as guests but as full members of the Catholic Church by virtue of their Baptism. In Scripture, mission and hospitality are intertwined. God seeks us and welcomes us all the time as a loving Shepherd. We are called to be the same with one another so every Catholic feels at home.

Just as a welcoming smile can be the beginning of a friendship, a welcoming parish seeks to make people feel at home and develop a sense of belonging to the faith community. A sense of belonging can in turn lead to a sense of ownership, as newcomers embrace fully their call to discipleship as members of a particular parish. It is important to note that a spirituality of hospitality transforms not only those doing the welcoming, but also those being welcomed. Welcoming the stranger means loving the stranger. In a sense, we are all strangers until we get to know one another and relate to one another in God's love for us.

Reconciliation: Along with hospitality, reconciliation is the other hinge that supports the process of ecclesial integration/inclusion. The pastors who participated in the consultation were emphatic about the importance of listening deeply to the concerns often raised by longtime parishioners regarding newcomers. Demographic shifts in towns and neighborhoods can be unsettling for longtime residents used to a certain

way of doing things—hearing a certain language, seeing familiar faces, and interacting with people they know. Change is particularly challenging when longtime parishioners from a culturally homogeneous community learn that they need to welcome new Catholic immigrants of different cultural/ethnic background as members of the parish. The prospect of sharing the facilities and resources of the parish with people they don't know can generate a sense of loss of their own space and a fear that the newcomers may not take good care of things, or may even take over the parish that has been such an important part of their lives. Words like *my grandparents built this parish*, or, *it was so difficult for us to finally have a parish we can call our own and now they may take over*, express feelings of uncertainty, loss, and even mourning that are quite real and need to be taken seriously. These experiences often lead many in the receiving community to play the role of a *hesitant host*.

Just as important is the need to be attentive to the struggles and traumatic experiences that may bring newcomers to our towns and neighborhoods. Most immigrants were forced to leave their home and families because of poverty, violence, or persecution, and live in a different country with a different language and culture. For those who are Catholic, in many instances the Catholic Church, particularly the

parish, is the one place where they may look for some degree of safety and trust, for a “home away from home.” Often times, however, they find structures that may not operate in the familiar ways of the Catholic parishes they used to know back home. They may feel ignored, experience rejection, and even suffer discrimination in their new environment. Often, these experiences also make them feel or act as *reluctant guests*.

Bringing together these two realities of *hesitant host* and *reluctant guest* call for a true ministry of reconciliation that can bridge the gap between well-established parishioners and newcomers. Such a ministry of reconciliation can only be inspired by the Holy Spirit and modeled by Christ. The Scriptures and our Catholic tradition are a living witness to the work of the Spirit, bridging the gap between rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, landlord and stranger. It is up to each generation and each particular parish to continue this ministry of reconciliation as the way to build the beloved community in our shared parishes and in all our Catholic institutions. Listening deeply to the concerns and fears of both the longtime parishioners and the newcomers, and accompanying them as they grieve the loss of what was familiar to them, is at the heart of a ministry of reconciliation in shared parishes.



The Developmental Process of Ecclesial Integration/Inclusion and Stewardship in Shared Parishes

The Nine Movements for Ecclesial Integration/Inclusion

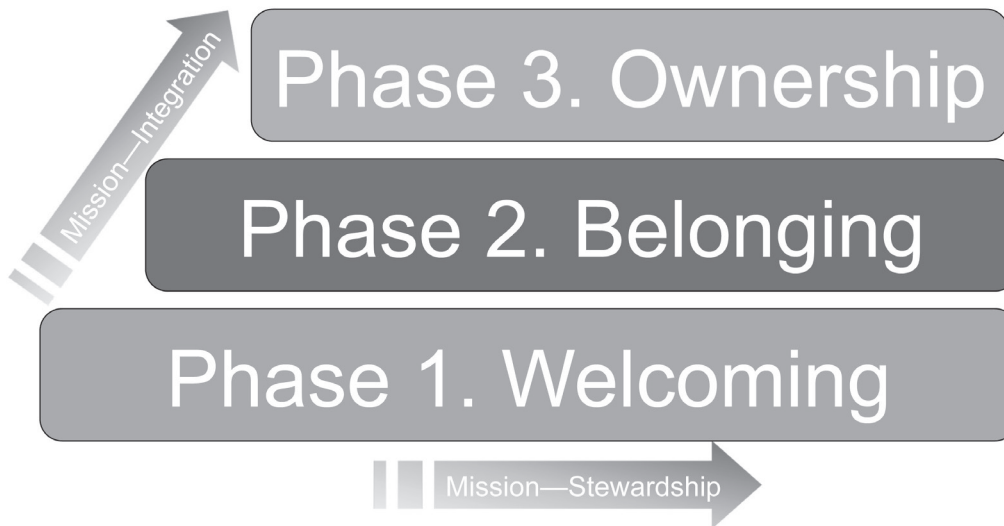
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The third part of this guide focuses on how ecclesial integration/inclusion is actually achieved in shared parishes. The pastors participating in the consultation agreed that ecclesial integration/inclusion is a developmental process that takes place over time and is guided by the unifying love of the Holy Spirit. The pastors affirmed that it follows a process that moves people from *welcoming* to *belonging* to *ownership*. The pastors also emphasized that the higher the level of ecclesial integration/inclusion, the higher the level of stewardship in shared parishes.

The benchmarks of *welcoming*, *belonging*, and *ownership* resonate with Fr. Robert Schreiter's goals for ministry in multicultural

settings. *Welcoming* relates to the goal of *recognition of the other as different*. It involves acknowledging their presence and showing hospitality in a way the other understands. *Belonging* relates to the goal of *respecting cultural differences* and describes how relationships across cultural boundaries take shape. *Ownership* relates to the goal of *healthy interaction*, described as a kind of communion in which neither group loses its own identity but has taken to itself elements of the other group. There is a sense of joint ownership and trust that allows for generous interaction with one another. The developmental aspect of this process is also based on a common sense approach: welcoming leads to a sense of belonging, which in turn leads to a

FROM NEWCOMERS TO STEWARDS OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY



sense of ownership and healthier intercultural relationships.

In order to provide a roadmap for achieving the benchmarks of *welcome*, *belonging*, and *ownership*, this guide presents nine movements or indicators that describe how ecclesial integration/inclusion is actually achieved. It is important to note that the nine movements don't describe a program or a rigid method. Rather, the nine movements illustrate a dynamic human process of *welcome*, *belonging*, and *ownership* that involves the pastoral accompaniment of the faithful by the pastor and his team. This pastoral process echoes the words expressed by Pope Francis during his first homily as Pope:

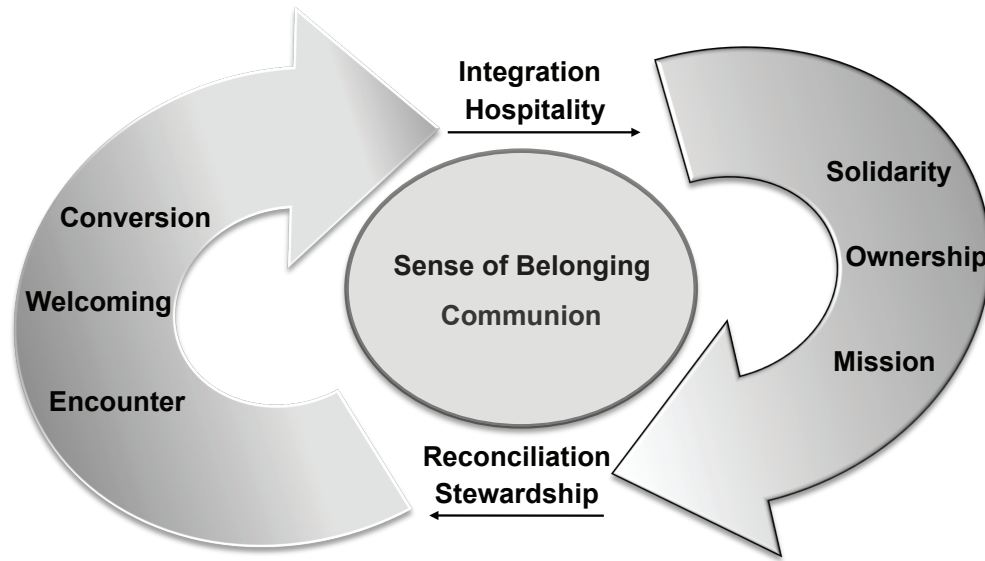
My wish is that all of us, after these days of grace, will have the courage, yes, the courage, to walk in the presence of the Lord, with the Lord's Cross; to

build the Church on the Lord's blood, which was poured out on the Cross; and to profess the one glory: Christ crucified. And in this way, the Church will go forward. (Pope Francis, Homily, March 14, 2013)

The dynamic process of ecclesial integration/inclusion calls us to the ongoing process of walking with the faithful entrusted to our care, building the beloved community among them, and professing Christ's Death and Resurrection as the primary reason for our hope and our mission.

The following example unfolds the nine movements for ecclesial integration/inclusion in the context of a shared parish. The example presents a parish where a significant number of Vietnamese and Hispanic families have recently arrived. The threefold goal of the pastor and his team is to achieve a high

PROCESS FOR ECCLESIAL INTEGRATION/INCLUSION



level of *welcoming, belonging, and ownership* among the culturally diverse Catholic groups living within the parish boundaries. Besides working as a roadmap, the benchmarks can also be used to assess the level of stewardship among new immigrants, which grows in direct proportion to the level of ecclesial integration/inclusion achieved.

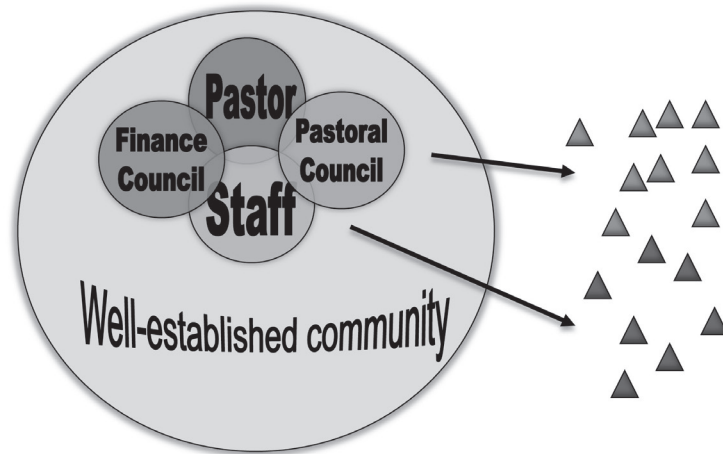
The example uses the basic structure present in many parishes—pastor, staff, parish council, and financial council—to illustrate how this structure shifts as the process of ecclesial integration/inclusion moves forward. It highlights the kind of leadership style most needed from the pastor to move the process forward. The example also includes three moments of crisis often faced in shared parishes. The first crisis has to do with the resistance to change, the second with the resistance to sharing, and the third with the resistance to mutual ownership.

Welcoming

Movement 1: Mission

After becoming aware of the significant presence of Vietnamese and Hispanic Catholics living within the parish boundaries, the pastor makes the decision to reach out to them. A group of parish leaders is organized to conduct a census in areas where a significant number of new Vietnamese and Hispanic immigrants live. The census is conducted in a spirit of mission, bringing greetings from the pastor to those visited, along with an invitation to take part in the life and mission of the parish as their home. The pastor’s leadership style in the first movement is proactive, with an emphasis on the mission to reach out to all peoples residing within the parish boundaries.

MOVEMENT 1—MISSION



Parish Territory

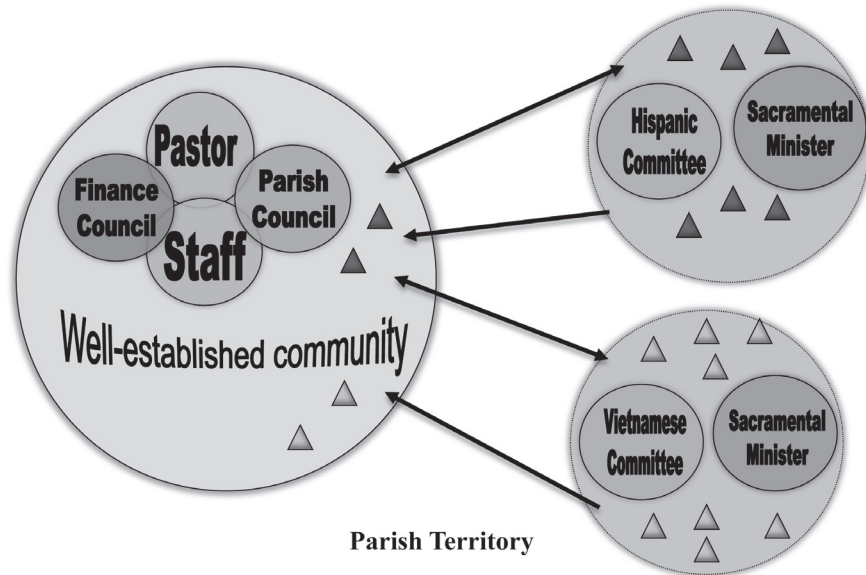
Movement 2: Homecoming

A few Vietnamese and Hispanic families respond to the invitation of the pastor right away and begin attending the Sunday Liturgy in English. However, the vast majority do not feel comfortable taking part in the Mass or other parish activities in English and with people they do not know. Realizing the importance of language, culture, and religious traditions of new Catholic immigrants, the pastor decides to create an *ecclesial space* for Vietnamese and Hispanics in his parish by providing culturally specific ministries for these new communities. Creating an *ecclesial space* begins by establishing the Sunday Liturgy in Vietnamese and Spanish. Such a decision is the sign *par excellence* that Vietnamese and Hispanics, in this case, have been welcomed not only as individuals but also as communities with specific needs and aspirations as baptized Catholics. The decision made by the pastor to establish the Mass in a language other than English often leads to a *crisis*. Staff and other parish leaders may be

concerned about the implications this change may have. It is common to think that having the Mass offered in different languages will divide the parish. However, the pastor knows that the parish is already divided between those baptized Catholics who are already gathered and those who are scattered.

The experience in more than seven thousand parishes across the United States shows that offering the Sunday Liturgy in the language and cultural context of new Catholic immigrants creates the initial conditions for interaction and unity. It provides new immigrants with the ecclesial space they need to strengthen their Catholic identity and adapt to life in the United States from a position of strength. It also gives them the opportunity to develop a ministerial capacity, beginning with liturgical ministries and the formation of a leadership team to coordinate ministries. The establishment of the Sunday Liturgy in Vietnamese or Spanish often requires the assistance of priests who can celebrate the Mass in those languages while the pastor develops

MOVEMENT 2—HOMECOMING: MAKE PEOPLE FEEL AT HOME



the skill of doing so himself. However, *ecclesial clarity* is of essence in recognizing that the pastoral responsibility for all parishioners belongs to the pastor. A clear understanding on the part of the sacramental minister that he is assisting the pastor in his ministry, not taking over as “*de facto* pastor” of the Vietnamese or the Hispanic community, has proven to be extremely helpful in avoiding confusion and potential conflict. Establishing the Sunday Liturgy in Vietnamese and Spanish is a necessary step toward achieving unity in diversity in the future. The practice of stewardship takes place in the form of time and talent offered by newcomers, particularly within their respective communities. The sharing of treasure is often quite limited at this point.

Movement 3: Ministerial Growth

Once the Sunday Liturgy is in place, both the Vietnamese and the Hispanic communities begin to develop ministries and ministers. First, liturgical ministries are developed, then

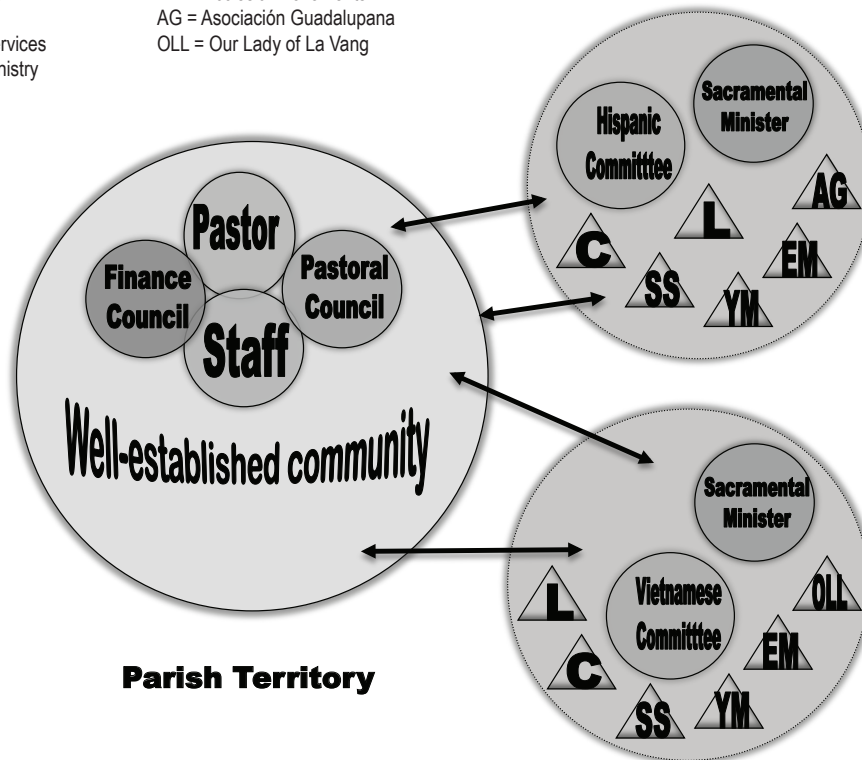
catechetical formation for the reception of the sacraments takes place. Other ministries follow in the area of prayer, social services, youth ministry, community building, stewardship, and others. In some cases, particularly with the Latino community, this process is aided by the establishment and strong presence of lay ecclesial movements and small ecclesial communities. The successful development of ministries leads to the growing size and participation of the new communities and to their need for more resources.

This growth results in a *second crisis* that calls for a change in the way resources are used, which is often expressed through complaining. On the one hand, the newcomers develop a sense of belonging to the parish that enables them to expect more resources on the way, such as a better schedule for their Sunday Liturgy, the use of the new hall, a catechetical program that allows parents to teach the faith to their own children, the celebration of traditions particular to their culture,

MOVEMENT 3—MINISTERIAL GROWTH: ORGANIZE AND DEVELOP MINISTRIES AND MINISTERS

C = Catechesis
L = Liturgy
SS = Social Services
YM = Youth Ministry

EM = Ecclesial Movements
AG = Asociación Guadalupana
OLL = Our Lady of La Vang



and so forth. On the other hand, longtime parishioners begin to complain about the constant demand of the newcomers for more access in terms of time, space, and programs, or that the pastors spend too much time with them. Hearing people's complaints is not very pleasant. However, it is a sign of the leadership's success, because it shows that the newcomers have developed a sense of belonging to the parish. It also signals the need to focus on building relationships across cultures so people can move from "us-them" language to "we" language.

It is not unusual for shared parishes to get stuck in this movement as people from the various communities work hard at "tolerating" each other and avoiding conflict. This

kind of tolerance of the other is not enough to continue on the path toward a healthy interaction between the culturally diverse members of the parish. Only when people are willing to develop relationships across cultures and ministries can the parish community, as a whole, advance on the path toward ecclesial integration/inclusion. The pastor's leadership style at this point warrants very good listening skills and creates an environment of safety and trust where the leaders of the different communities can share their concerns and begin a process of intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. The level of stewardship increases significantly in terms of time and talent. Treasure can also be significant, depending on the freedom

the Vietnamese and Hispanic communities have to develop ministries and ministers and to practice forms of fund raising relevant to each community. The offering during Mass may still be limited since practices such as using the envelope or committing to giving a fixed weekly amount may be foreign to them.

Belonging

Movement 4: Building Relationships Across Cultures

This movement is perhaps the most difficult to achieve. One of the reasons is that it requires leaders from the culturally different communities to go beyond their cultural boundaries in order to meet and get to know

one another on a more personal level. Sharing stories and perspectives and having common experiences lead to the development of interpersonal relationships that move people from “us–them” language to “we” language. The celebration of multicultural liturgies on key feast days, annual picnics where the entire community comes together for fun and food, annual festivals planned and implemented with involvement from different groups and organizations, and retreats focusing on sharing and listening to one another’s stories in the context of the Scriptures, among others, are all effective ways for building relationships and a greater sense of community.

There was consensus among the pastors participating in the consultation that the

MOVEMENT 4—BUILD RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS CULTURES AND MINISTRIES



Parish Territory

pastor's love for parishioners of all cultural groups is one of the most, if not the most, important indicators that a shared parish has reached the fourth movement on the process of ecclesial integration/inclusion. Such pastoral love is reflected in the fact that the pastor knows the leadership of the different cultural communities on a personal level, and he is actively and regularly present at the liturgical and social celebrations of the different cultural communities. The pastor is trusted by all the faithful and models unity in diversity to his staff and leaders, thus becoming a symbol of unity for all. At this stage of the integration process, the visiting sacramental minister is usually no longer needed, as the pastor and/or a parish vicar are able to preside at the Sunday Liturgies in English, Vietnamese, and Spanish. (Pastoral realities, however, may dictate otherwise.) Time and talent continue to grow at a fast rate as the communities expand. The question of the weekly contribution may come up as an issue as the various communities in the parish get to know each other more. This movement also presents a good opportunity for exploring creative ways of fund raising.

Movement 5: Intercultural Leadership Development and Formation

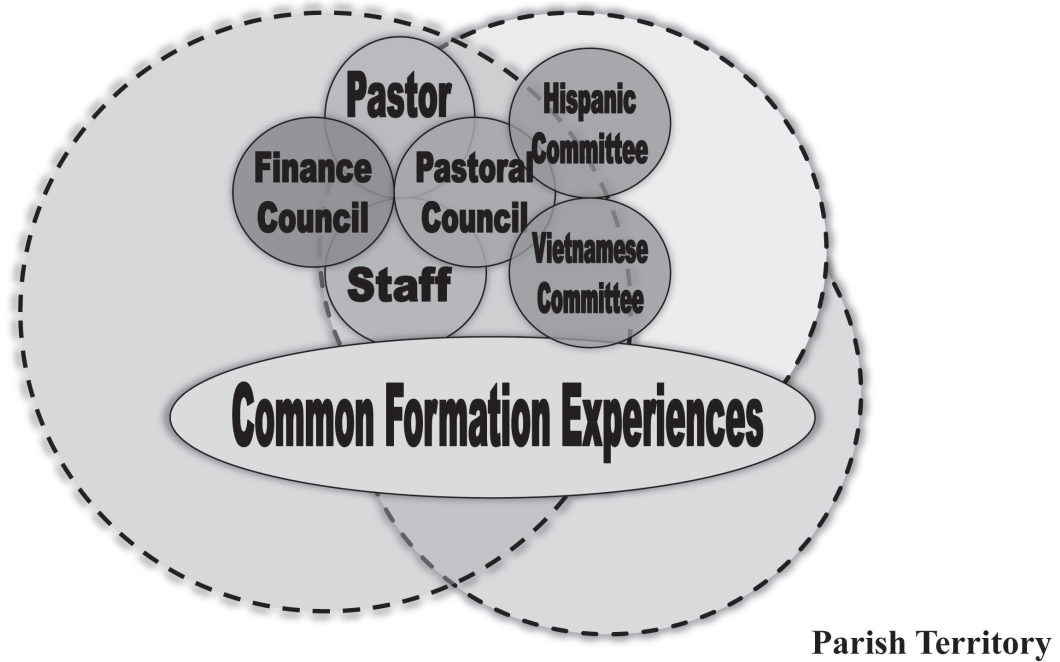
This movement emphasizes the need to mentor and form parish leaders to be interculturally competent. Members of the parish and financial councils and parish staff are aware of the cultural differences present in the parish and know how to communicate, work, and relate across cultural boundaries. There is a commitment to the ongoing

development of intercultural competency in the form of attitudes, knowledge, and skills that better serve a culturally diverse parish. The ongoing development of intercultural competence requires financial support for staff and parish leaders to participate in trainings, in-services, classes, and workshops that help leaders achieve a high level of intercultural competency. The overall ministerial development of leaders from the Vietnamese and Hispanic community is also essential in order for them to be hireable as parish staff in the future. The pastor is a mentor and a coach to the emerging leadership within the various communities as they become more interculturally competent. Stewardship becomes a subject of study and skill development, as the diverse cultural/ethnic communities learn from one another and collaborate more closely. It also prepares the parish leadership to be more inclusive in the decision-making process.

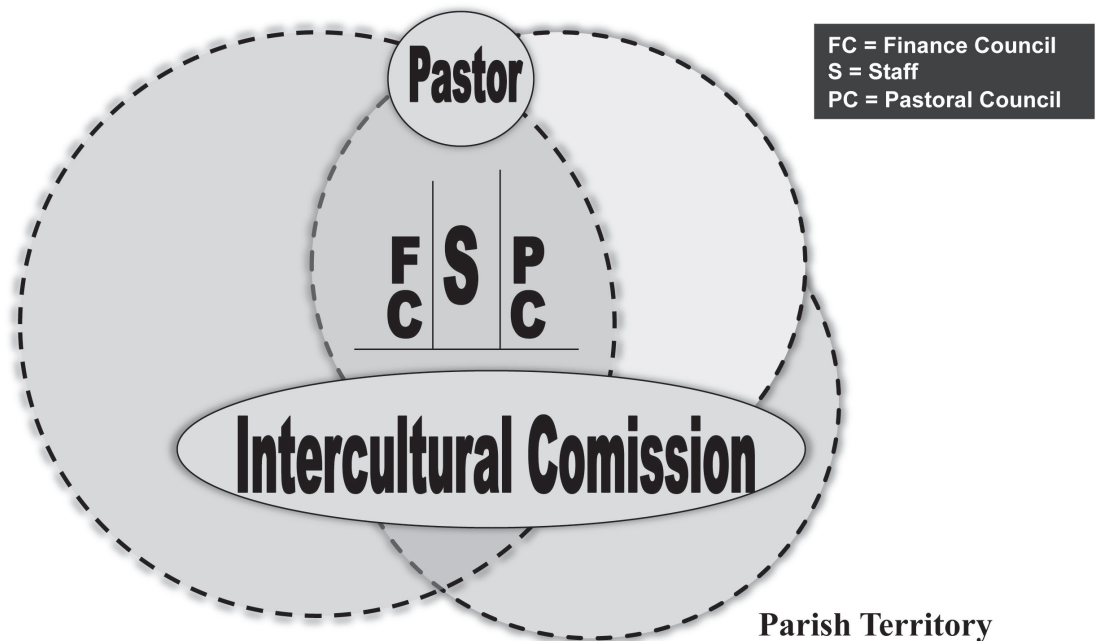
Movement 6: Decision-Making Process

This movement triggers the *third* common crisis: going from the dynamic *hosts-guests* to a common sense of ownership. A shared parish that has reached this level of ecclesial integration/inclusion shows members of the different cultural communities as having a place at the table where decisions are made, such as the parish council, the finance council, and even the staff. The movement highlights the desire of leaders from the Vietnamese and Hispanic communities to work for the well-being of the entire parish, not only members of their particular cultural group. At the same time, the leadership of the

MOVEMENT 5—CHAMPION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND FORMATION



MOVEMENT 6—OPEN WIDE THE DOORS TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS



longstanding community is ready to embrace the new leaders as cohosts and as partners on equal footing.

At this point of development, the structure and leadership of the parish community is representative of the culturally diverse members and is equipped with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to better serve the entire parish community. The principle of “having to do things yourself, but not alone” applies to staff that may not have a particular language skill, like Vietnamese, but know how to involve leaders from the Vietnamese community to work with them in order to accomplish the desired outcomes of a particular program or activity. The pastor’s leadership emphasizes his role as a facilitator who knows how to encourage a high level of participation and collaboration, and how to handle difficult situations through prayerful discernment. There is a significant development in the sharing of treasure on the part of the Vietnamese and Hispanic communities since they are included in the decision-making process of the parish as a whole. Leaders from these two communities are no longer concerned only with the well-being of their particular community.

Ownership

Movement 7: Sharing Resources

A sense of ownership is achieved with this movement as a direct result of an inclusive decision-making process. Shared parishes achieving this level of ecclesial integration present a culturally diverse leadership directly involved in the development of the

parish budget. Decisions on the use of facilities, the scheduling of activities (including Masses in different languages), and the selection of particular programs take into consideration the needs and aspirations of the diverse communities present in the parish. It is very likely for shared parishes at this level of ecclesial integration to have mission statements that describe the parish as a culturally diverse community. The following are some examples:

“We are a multicultural and diverse community united by our faith in God.”

(ST. PHILIP BENIZI, JONESBORO, GA)

“We believe that the various cultures within our community are gifts from God, and rather than assimilate them, we seek to be enriched by them.”

(ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, HOLLAND, MI)

“Bring all people, all races, all ethnic groups, into full union with Christ.”

(OUR LADY OF LOURDES, MONTCLAIR, CA)

“Multicultural community that strives to proclaim the Gospel in our neighborhoods and beyond.”

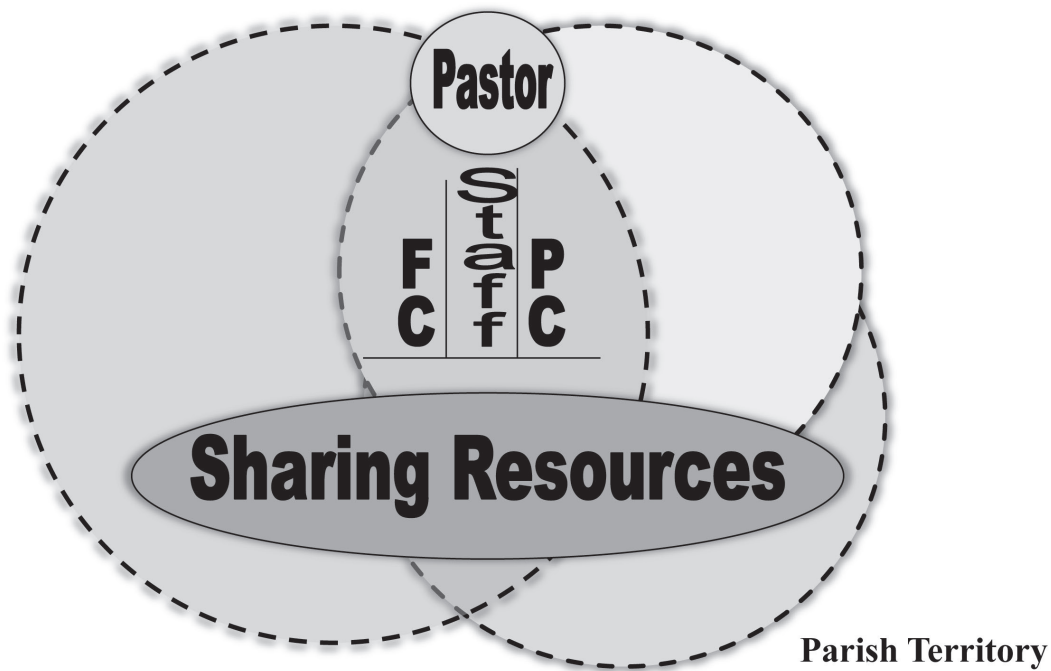
(ST. CAMILLUS, SILVER SPRING, MD)

“Accepting God’s gifts of love calls us to share our gifts with others, including the poor, the refugees, the immigrants.”

(ST. JOSEPH’S PARISH, AMARILLO, TX)

The pastor’s leadership style provides strategic thinking, good administration of spiritual, human, and material resources,

MOVEMENT 7—SHARING RESOURCES: STRENGTHEN A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP



and guidance for the leadership to achieve a clear vision and mission for the parish as a whole. The leaders of the different cultural communities know the overall resources and needs of the entire parish and sit at the table where decisions are made regarding the use of all resources. They know how the different cultural communities benefit and how the overall mission of the parish is fulfilled.

This results in a significantly more generous share of their treasure, and all are more receptive to the practice of increasing and regularizing their weekly offering.

Movement 8: Achieving Stewardship

The high level of ownership leads to a generous and responsible sharing of time, talent, and treasure on the part of all ethnic/cultural

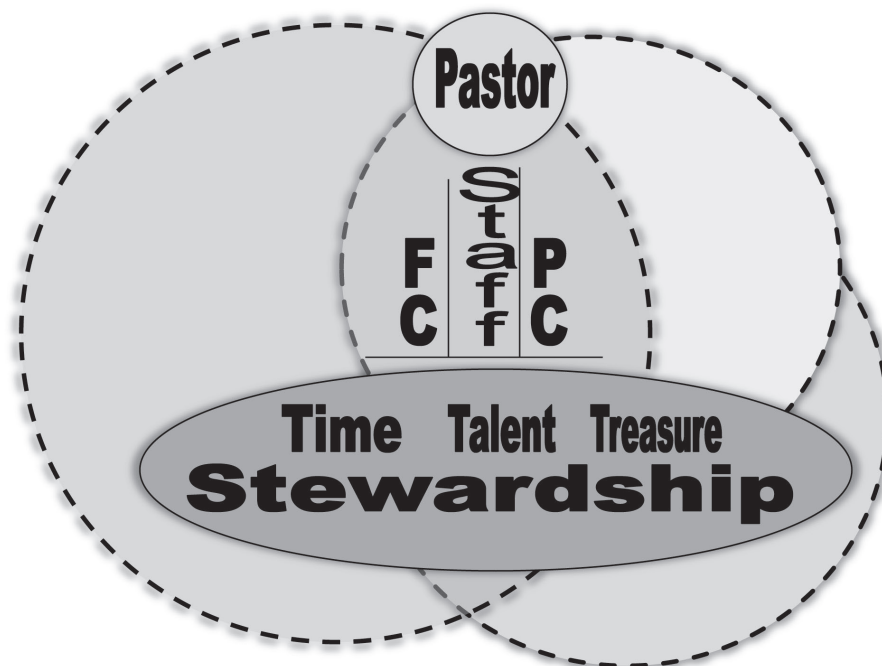
communities engaged in the life and mission of the shared parish. There is an appreciation of the different styles and means by which the different ethnic/cultural communities contribute to the life of and do fund raising for the parish. Collaboration is quite high across cultures, ministries, and activities, and personal relationships are strong among the members of the finance council, parish council, and staff. The pastor's role is more supportive in this movement since the vision, structure, and leadership of the parish are in place and working well. Pastors consulted for the elaboration for this guide identified the following ideas as helpful for achieving a high level of stewardship in shared parishes:

- Allow the communities of a parish to be different communities together
- Develop close relationships with key leaders from each ethnic community
- Be open to different styles and means of stewardship
- Plan with people, not for people
- Find ways for different communities to support each other in their struggles
- Emphasize the positive by affirming people already engaged in stewardship
- Acknowledge need
- Explain simply and regularly how resources are used
- Avoid comparing one cultural group to another
- Avoid either/or thinking by embracing a both/and mentality
- Find ways for people to symbolize and ritualize their stewardship
- Come up with a catchphrase all can recite
- Develop and empower leadership instead of doing things for them
- Find ways for people to contribute their hard work and sweat
- Bury the dead and pay attention to grief
- Dine with everyone
- Celebrate successes

Movement 9: Communion in Mission

This movement is less a point of arrival than a new beginning in the mission of the Church to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to every human situation. Growing human mobility and ongoing population shifts require that our parishes be welcoming communities of disciples in a constant state of mission. The movement also clarifies that the goal of shared parishes is to bring the

MOVEMENT 8—SOW AND REAP FULL OWNERSHIP AND STEWARDSHIP



Parish Territory

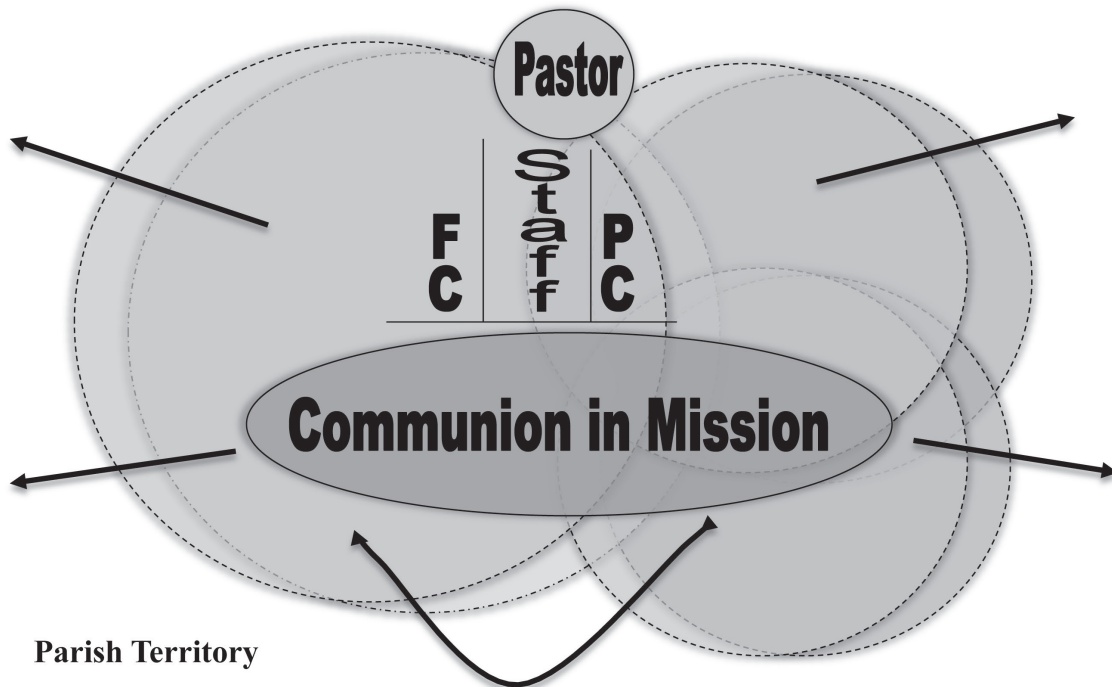
culturally diverse members of the parish to a high level of ecclesial integration/inclusion with one another as members of the one Body of Christ. The point of reference is the Gospel, lived out as disciples of Christ and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. All cultures in the shared parish are transformed in Christ and brought together in a more perfect union with one another and with God.

The following values and practices from Scripture were identified by the pastors as examples of what ministry should look like in shared parishes:

- Gn 18:2–8: Abraham and Sarah’s reception of the three mysterious strangers at the oak of Mamre.
- Gn 22:17: “I will bless you and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore.”

- Lv 19:33–34: “When an alien resides with you in your land . . .”
- Ruth: The entire book as it reflects upon salvation through a foreigner.
- Sir 2:5: “In fire gold is tested.”
- Is 55:1–11: “All you who are thirsty, come to the water . . .”
- Mt 8:20: “The Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.”
- Mt 25:35: “I was . . . a stranger and you welcomed me.”
- Acts 2:12: “What does this mean?”
- Acts 6:1–7: “Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task . . .”
- Rom 8:31b–39: “If God is for us, who can be against us?”
- 1 Cor 12:12–22: “As a body is one though it has many parts . . .”

MOVEMENT 9—ACHIEVE FULL COMMITMENT TO THE MISSION OF THE PARISH





QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- 1) In which of the nine movements do you place your shared parish at this point of its development?
- 2) What actions have helped move this development forward?
- 3) What is getting in the way of further development?
- 4) What are some pastoral actions you can take at this point to overcome the obstacles?
- 5) To what degree are the pastor and his team on the same page regarding the goals and process to achieve ecclesial integration/inclusion?
- 6) What can facilitate a conversation between the pastor and his team to bring intercultural relationships and collaboration to a higher level?

- Gal 3:27–29: “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek . . .”
- Rev 7:9–10: “from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne . . .”

In the box above are questions for reflection as you ponder the roadmap for achieving ecclesial integration/inclusion and stewardship in your own community.

A Shared Parish Illustration of the Nine Movements for Ecclesial Integration/Inclusion

The following responses come from St. Joseph’s Parish in Amarillo, Texas. They illustrate the application of the nine movements in the parish’s particular context. In addition

to the nine movements, the responses illustrate how the parish has managed conflict and achieved healing in particular situations. The experiences are included in the guide to generate ideas for possible pastoral action in shared parishes around the country. Similar experiences are found in the other parishes that participated in the consultation. St. Joseph’s was chosen for the rich variety of communities served by the parish and the creativity of its pastoral responses.

- a) **Meet people where they are in a spirit of mission:** The parish mission statement calls the parish to “welcome all God’s children.” Weekly Sunday Mass is celebrated in English, Spanish, and Dinka. One monthly Mass is bilingual (English and Dinka), and the majority of the catechists, kindergarten through high school, are bilingual (English and Spanish). The

Sudanese community provides their own bilingual catechists (English and Dinka).

b) Practice hospitality: Every three months, the parish leadership hosts a welcome dinner for all new parishioners. Coffee and donuts or *pan dulce* (sweet bread) are offered after all Sunday Masses on the first weekend of the month. The weekly bulletin has a Spanish-language section, and everything that is printed in the bulletin is in both languages even if the information pertains to only one language group. The staff is bilingual. Announcements in Mass are done in English, Spanish, and Dinka in common liturgical celebration, and the pastor is bilingual—English and Spanish—and is learning Dinka.

c) Provide culturally specific ministries:
In liturgy and prayer life: All liturgical celebrations are available in all three primary languages—English, Spanish, and Dinka. Each language group has liturgical ministers who speak their language and those who can lead the congregation in other non-sacramental liturgical or devotional celebrations in their native language, e.g. Rosaries, wake services, novenas, Stations of the Cross, etc.

In faith formation and leadership development: Adult faith formation is offered in each of the three primary languages with native leaders. Each group has their own faith formation program that reflects their reality and level of catechesis. The parish is in the process of selecting candidates for the permanent diaconate that reflect each of the three language groups.

In social services and social justice ministries: Any need of services for one group is communicated to the others groups. For example, during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays families from each of the language groups that are in need are sponsored by another family or parish organization that does not necessarily come from the same language group. Parishioners have offered money for funerals of the poor in the community and have “adopted” children of poor families to provide clothing during the winter months. ESL classes are offered in the parish.

In building community across cultures and ministries: The parish provides multicultural and trilingual celebrations for all major feast days and cultural celebrations; a trilingual choir provides all the liturgical music for the Holy Triduum and Christmas celebrations. Catechesis is provided at all cultural religious events to explain to the non-native participants the significance of the particular celebration (e.g., *Día de los Muertos*, *Acostamiento del Niño*, Thanksgiving, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Memorial Day, etc.). The parish is working toward integrating the three communities by intentionally hosting the other groups at native celebrations. For example, they have one *Posada* every year that is celebrated in English; the Sudanese community performs their native religious dances to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe; and the Thanksgiving Mass is in English and Spanish.

- d) **Foster a Catholic identity across cultures and ministries:** All three language groups are participating in the *Why Catholic?* program by Renew in their own language. The organizing committee has representation from all three communities to maintain a sense of unity. There is an emphasis on the fact that all are going through the same program that unites them as one Catholic Church.
- e) **Handle complaining, miscommunication, mistrust, and competition among communities:** Most of these situations are discussed openly at the pastoral council meeting. If it is a sensitive situation, then it is addressed directly by the pastor with input from the persons/groups involved.
- f) **Foster a sense of belonging to the parish among its culturally diverse communities:** Representatives/leaders from the three major language groups have keys to the Church and meeting rooms, which reflects the fact that all of them belong and have access to the church and meeting space. They are asked to call in to the office to schedule their events. Everyone has equal opportunity to use the meeting space.
- g) **Share stories, common projects, and programs:** In the beginning, the English-speaking community went through an extensive planning process that led to writing a mission statement and setting pastoral goals for the community. The mission statement states: “We are a family united in our Catholic faith that welcomes all God’s children to continue the ministry of Christ to love, serve and

educate.” This mission prepared the community to begin to receive the other groups that God sent to the parish.

Since this mission statement was written, the parish has opened its arms to a Mass in Spanish and to a Mass in Dinka. New infants have also been welcomed into the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism in English, Spanish, Dinka, Croatian, and Creole. Annually, they have a unity Mass that gives the leadership an opportunity to recommit to the original covenant that was written, along with the mission statement that calls them to “unity in Christ.” At this Mass, the diocesan bishop presides. The Mass is celebrated in English and Spanish; the Gospel is proclaimed by the pastor in Dinka; one choir sings in all three languages; and the petitions are said in Spanish, Dinka, Croatian, and Tagalog, with each native speaker repeating the petition in English. After the Mass, a community feast takes place that includes all the different cultural groups.

The parish and its parochial school are working on establishing a cultural and language institute for the parishioners. For eleven weeks each summer, language classes will be provided: ESL, Spanish, and Dinka. These classes will be provided simultaneously—in the same building and with breaks taken together. Three to four classes will be provided to all the participants on ecclesial integration based on the bishops’ pastoral letter “One Church, Many Cultures.”

On Pentecost they have an annual celebration of the multicultural reality of the parish with a trilingual choir (English, Spanish, Dinka). The petitions are offered in these three main languages plus Croatian, Tagalog, and sometimes in Gaelic. The Gospel is proclaimed in English, Spanish, Dinka, and Tagalog. At the end, every reader together with the deacon says, "The Gospel of the Lord."

May Crowning is done every weekend in the month of May. Each language community has the opportunity to crown Mary on a given weekend. All of them follow the same format: representatives from the community join the presider in the entrance procession; a Marian hymn is sung in their native language for the entrance hymn; once they arrive in the sanctuary the singing finishes and someone selected from the community crowns Mary (sometimes a child, other times an elderly lady or a couple); the community leads the congregation in reciting the Hail Mary in their native language; and the presider continues with the Opening Prayer for the Sunday Liturgy. The various communities that participate in the crowning of Mary are English-speaking (of European American and Mexican American descent), Hispanic, Sudanese, Bosnian, Filipino, and Irish.

h) Invest in the faith formation and leadership development of its leaders and staff: A fund has been established that helps representatives from the community receive leadership development and training. Since it was just recently

established, the focus has been on training individuals in specific ministries that are needed. They have had parishioners trained in youth ministry focusing on "mainstream" teens and also in ministering among Latino/Hispanic immigrant teens through the Fe y Vida Institute. Other adults were trained in faith formation of children using bilingual books. Representatives from the English- and Spanish-speaking communities were sent to the International Catholic Stewardship Conference to begin a stewardship catechetical program in the parish.

i) Include culturally diverse representation in the parish's decision-making bodies: The pastoral council has representation from the main English-speaking groups of the parish (four European Americans; six Mexican Americans), as well as two Mexican immigrants and two Sudanese persons. The finance council is made up of one European American, three Mexican Americans, and two Mexican immigrants. The Sudanese community has their own leadership committee, elected by the Sudanese community. The Sudanese community catechists meet with the pastor on a regular basis.

j) Foster a sense of ownership and stewardship among all parishioners: All parishioners in their respective languages are invited and encouraged to participate in all aspects of the parish including the maintenance of the buildings and the use of offering envelopes. The pastor is consistent in welcoming all the parishioners in all these aspects of the parish. He also has set

up a stewardship committee (after receiving training at the International Catholic Stewardship Conference) to begin to address this area with all the parishioners.

k) Facilitate decision-making processes:

All groups are consulted in the parish pastoral council. The leadership of all the groups of the parish participates in the meetings to facilitate communications to and from each of the entities.

l) Facilitate problem solving and conflict resolution between diverse persons and communities:

The parish has become more intentional about ecclesial integration. A process of parish assemblies with the participation of the various communities/families or groups in the parish has begun. The first assembly included a reflection from each group on how they are living the parish mission statement: “We are a Catholic Faith Community that welcomes all God’s children to continue the mission of Christ, to love, serve, and educate.” The parish logo is “unity in Christ.” After each group reflected on how they are living the parish mission statement they each reported back to the entire parish assembly. The discussion and report included their vision for themselves within the stated Mission Statement.

The various groups consisted of lifetime parishioners (older parishioners), the Altar Society, catechists, the youth ministry team, teen leaders, *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*, school leaders, day care leaders, the RCIA team, the Spanish-speaking community leadership, the finance council, the Sudanese community leadership,

etc. A religious sister led with a spiritual reflection on “being Church” and the assembly ended with a ritual of commitment to “unity in Christ.” After a short prayer service, one representative from each group came up and placed one hand on the Unity Stone as a sign of their commitment to their mission statement and to unity. At the planned second parish assembly, each group will address the assembly about where they see themselves in the community, what has helped them in the process of integration, and what they still need from each other. The process will consist of a formal request, formal response, and an agreement (covenant) to each other. All of this will be done in a spirit of reflective prayer and celebration.

m) Handle grief and facilitate healing: (i.e., the well-established host community feeling that they are losing their parish, and the newcomers and guests dealing with the grief of leaving behind their country and family.)

The pastor has met with various groups separately, to listen to their concerns about the changes in the parish. Numerous meetings with parishioners on a one-to-one basis have also taken place. These have included meeting with some of the long-time European American and Mexican American parishioners that are uncomfortable with the pastor accommodating the newcomers, and also listening to the Sudanese refugees tell their stories and the needs they have from the parish. All of this has been done on an informal basis, as needed, and not necessarily planned.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- 1) Which of these ideas have you implemented in your shared parish?
- 2) What ideas do you find helpful to further the process of ecclesial integration/inclusion in your shared parish?
- 3) What will it take to implement them?

Questions for reflection and action on the experience of St. Joseph's Parish are in the box above.

Pastoral Situations and Best Practices in Shared Parishes

The final component of the guide presents pastoral situations that have challenged pastors and their teams. It describes how they have responded to them to achieve a positive outcome. In this sense, the following pastoral responses each exemplify certain best practices. Each pastoral situation includes the following elements to help unpack the pastoral wisdom and process used so that it may be replicated in future pastoral applications in shared parishes:

- a) Brief description of the pastoral situation
- b) Identification of roles
- c) Intercultural competencies utilized: knowledge, attitudes, and skills
- d) Insight for pastoral planning
- e) Pastoral principle

Pastors and their teams can use this process as a tool to assess a pastoral situation in their particular parish and look for key

elements to achieve positive results. The pastoral situations were identified by pastors participating in the consultation and by national leaders of different ethnic/cultural Catholic communities ministering in shared parishes in the United States.

First Pastoral Situation: "Mission and Welcome"

Brief Description of the Pastoral Situation

The pastoral situation takes place in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where a community from Guatemala that spoke Mam (a Mayan dialect) gathered for prayer at a home. The family providing the home came from an agricultural background and had a cornfield in its backyard. The leaders of the Mayan community invited the deacon of the parish to visit them, and he developed a relationship with the community. The deacon in turn invited the pastor. Within a few months the prayer group had grown so that they had to add a wing to the house to accommodate the growing congregation. Eventually, the parish extended an invitation to use the auditorium, but it took two years for the community to accept the invitation. Within a few years the group grew into two separate groups of one

hundred people each. The parish eventually purchased a larger church to accommodate the growing Guatemalan community.

Identification of Roles

A Catholic family decides to host a group of Mayan Catholics who want to gather for prayer. They become a bridge to the local parish, and the deacon is invited to meet the groups. The deacon accepts and invites the pastor, aware that he is the decision maker. The pastor asks the parish social committee to be available to the emerging Mayan community. Later on, the pastor consults with the parish council before making the decision to invite the Mayan community to be a part of the parish in a spirit of homecoming.

This pastoral experience describes a missionary action of visiting and welcoming based on Matthew 25. This allows the deacon and the pastor to listen to the story of the Catholic Mayan community living within the parish boundaries. This pastoral response became a ministry of the parish, coordinated with sensitivity, both cultural and social. As the Mayan community experienced being welcomed, they were willing to learn about the parish and began to feel a sense of connection and belonging.

Intercultural Competencies Utilized

Knowledge: Those involved on the receiving side of the community know of the parish responsibility to care for all the people living within the parish boundaries. The host family, the pastor, and the deacon learn about the situation of the Mayan community. The pastor uses the structures and processes in place at

the parish to decide on welcoming the Mayan community to share in the life and mission of the parish in a spirit of homecoming.

Skills: The power of persuasion—both on the part of the deacon who brought the situation to the attention of the pastor and on the part of the pastor who brought a response back to the Mayan community and to the larger community. Supervision.

Attitudes: Openness to new possibilities. Risk taking. Moving beyond comfort zones. Generosity, hospitality, and solidarity showed by all people involved.

Pastoral Planning Insight

Need is identified through listening and observing with pastoral sensitivity; through consultation with the pastoral team and decision-making bodies; through overseeing development of ministry; through placement of ministry in the parish context, analysis of resources and allocation, and supervision; and through team work.

Pastoral Principle

Meet people where they are at in a spirit of mission.

Second Pastoral Situation: “Two Parishes Sharing the Same Pastor”

Brief Description of the Pastoral Situation

The pastoral situation involves two predominantly black Catholic parishes within five miles of each other. They shared a common history and heritage but had never come together to do things in common. One parish is predominantly of Creole origin and the

other of African American background. Due to a priest shortage in the diocese, the two parishes were asked to share one pastor. The pastor from the Creole parish was assigned to the African American parish, while the pastor from the African American parish was assigned to a parish somewhere else in the diocese. Parishioners from the Creole parish were comfortable with the move since they would keep the same pastor. But parishioners from the African American parish rejected the whole idea of sharing a priest with the other parish.

The pastor assigned to both parishes saw the tension building due to the new arrangement and decided to form a ten-member reconciliation team with representatives of the two parishes to help him navigate the difficult waters of grief and change. The pastor facilitated a retreat on the topic of reconciliation with his newly formed team, followed by seminars on the universality of the Church as one Body of Christ, which was offered to members of both parishes. These two shared experiences on reconciliation and the mission of the Church prepared the ground for a meeting with members of both parishes to express their concerns and aspirations and discern the way forward. The process was brought to a close with the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The reconciliation process facilitated by the pastor allowed members of both parishes to listen to one another and share stories, perspectives, and concerns about the new pastoral situation. The process brought the two parishes closer together and put them on the same page regarding their future under the

one pastor. The parishes now share religious education programs, teachers, and a common pastoral team that assists the pastor in developing pastoral plans and programs for both parishes.

Identification of Roles

The bishop made the difficult decision to have one pastor assume responsibility for two different parishes due to a priest shortage situation. Despite geographical proximity to each other, the members of the two parishes in question didn't know one another and had never worked together, thus adding complexity to the situation. The assigned pastor provided timely leadership by listening to concerns from parishioners, appointing a representative team, and setting in motion an effective process of reconciliation. The ten-member reconciliation team worked well with the pastor and with their respective parish communities, thus setting the tone for a prayerful and successful reconciliation process. Learning more about Catholic identity and the mission of the Church gave them a renewed sense of unity in Christ. The leadership from both parishes is willing and ready to share a religious education program and collaborate in other pastoral activities.

Intercultural Competencies Utilized

Knowledge: The pastor understands very well his role as unifier and is able to help members of both parishes better understand the meaning of Catholic identity and the mission of the Church. The process of reconciliation promoted mutual knowledge and understanding

among all involved, thus moving beyond stereotypes and prejudice.

Attitudes: The pastor's sense of openness to engage the leadership of both parishes helps create a space of safety and trust among the ten-member reconciliation team. There is openness to new possibilities, risk taking, and moving beyond comfort zones with patience, perseverance, courage, and humility. Everyone has an opportunity to participate and bring ideas, opinions, recommendations, and solutions together. When everyone is involved, there are more chances of bringing an issue to a positive conclusion.

Skills: The ability to create a well-represented team that will develop a reconciliation process and to facilitate it successfully. Listening with openness to one another and making decisions in the context of prayer. The ability to discuss and dialogue, the power of negotiation, and the ability to compromise and to communicate the issues at play in simple terms make the processes of reconciliation and decision making successful.

Pastoral Planning Insight

Identify issues and form a representative team to work with the pastor from the beginning. Develop a process that guarantees high participation and opportunities for open sharing, analysis of issues, prayer, gaining new knowledge, and setting up an inclusive decision-making process that leads to unity and collaboration.

Pastoral Principle

Moving from “us–them” language to “we” language.

Third Pastoral Situation: “Sharing Resources Belonging to All”

Brief description of the pastoral situation

Under the leadership of the pastor, an urban parish made mostly of Americans and African Americans decided to welcome new Catholic Hispanic immigrants into the parish since they realized they were living within the parish boundaries. Once the Sunday Liturgy in Spanish was established, the number of Hispanics attending that Mass grew quite fast and demands for other pastoral services began to emerge, ranging from religious education and prayer groups to social services, among others. The attitude of welcome toward the new community came to a crisis point when complaints from longstanding parishioners about the care of the facilities began to reach the pastor on a consistent basis. The perception that Hispanics were not taking good care of the facilities led some parishioners to suggest that the new hall should not be made available to the Hispanic community and that some kind of signed agreement should be made to make sure that Hispanics knew how to take care of the facilities they were already using. Resentment was growing on both sides as Hispanics began feeling unwelcome and treated unfairly.

Since the parish council had no Hispanic members at the time, the pastor decided to form a well-selected small group of parishioners, representative of the European American, African American, and Hispanic communities, with the sole purpose of assessing the parish facilities and developing criteria for their use and care. The small group

began its work by assessing the facilities and developing recommendations for repair and improvements. As a second step, the group identified a number of steps to take good and consistent care of all the facilities, including the new hall, and developed a calendar that was clear and accessible to all parishioners. Once the group finished its work, it made a formal recommendation to the pastor for his review and approval. All parishioners were informed about the commitment of all to the good stewardship of the parish facilities, and signs were made in English and Spanish to remind users of the steps needed in order to *leave the place better than they found it / dejar el lugar mejor de lo que estaba*. The thoughtful sharing of the facilities and the good care for them by all improved significantly as a result of this process.

Identification of Roles

The pastor listened to the legitimate complaints about the importance of taking good care of the parish facilities. He was also keenly aware of the potential unwelcoming attitudes and conflict that could take hold of communities and individuals, particularly around the new hall becoming a symbol of division between the ones who are “in” and the ones who are “out.” The representatives from the three communities—African Americans, European Americans, and Hispanics—were well selected by the pastor, and they understood quite well that the mission of the group was not to have one community telling the other what to do or how to do it. Rather, it was to promote a common sense of ownership of the facilities and, therefore, the good

care of them. This helped achieve a renewed sense of unity so that the three distinct communities in the parish had access to the decision-making process. All parishioners felt good about taking care of their new hall because it belonged to all of them.

Intercultural Competencies Utilized

Knowledge: The pastor shows a solid understanding of stewardship and the importance of all parishioners having a sense of ownership regarding the facilities of the parish. Knowledge of how different cultures deal with conflict and make decisions was also helpful in putting together the group that assessed the conditions of the facilities and made recommendations to care for them well.

Attitudes: There was openness on the part of the pastor to hear peoples’ complaints and to trust that a win-win situation could come out of the impending crisis. Leaders in the appointed group and staff were also open and willing to engage one another without falling into a blame game or into a power struggle.

Skills: Good listening and good intercultural communication among the three different communities; effective use of conflict resolution skills, group dynamics, and the decision-making processes.

Pastoral Planning Insight

Development of a task group with a specific objective, appointed by the pastor, and given authority to make recommendations. The decision-making process was transparent, and each community felt well represented. Thus, everyone embraced the guidelines for good care of facilities.

Pastoral Principle

An inclusive decision-making process leads to a common sense of ownership.

Fourth Pastoral Situation: “Spiritual and Leadership Development”

Brief Description of the Pastoral Situation

The parish was very multicultural and there was a considerable amount of spiritual formation happening within the different language groups. However, there was no cross-cultural program where people could develop both spiritually and as leaders. The parish was offered an opportunity to participate in a 14-week program called *Servant Leadership*. Meeting weekly, the group explored such areas as self-awareness, empowerment, transparency, and community building as they developed a creative and respect-filled style of *servant leadership*. The program created space for people of many different cultures to share what each topic meant to them from the point of view of their culture and history and to have their perspective broadened by the sharing of others and by reading the written thoughts of respected authorities in the area of spirituality and leadership. Over the course of those three months, relationships and a sense of community formed. Most of the participants would go on to serve in leadership positions in the parish, bringing with them their broadened perspective, which would be important especially for those who would eventually go on to serve on the multicultural parish council.

For some, the experience was so powerful that they wanted to share it with others. They were prepared as facilitators and for the next

few years shepherded others through the same process that had been so life-giving for them.

Seeing the fruits of this program, two years later, the pastor decided that it would benefit his multicultural staff, so for a year the priests and lay staff participated in the program to deepen their understanding of one another and what it means to be a servant leader.

Identification of Roles

The pastor sees the need to provide spiritual growth and leadership development opportunities for parish leaders from the culturally diverse communities in his parish. He proceeds to identify *Servant Leadership* as a program that covers both areas well and decides to make the investment to bring the program to the parish. Leaders from the various cultural communities respond well to the pastor’s invitation to participate in the program and have a very good experience in it. The pastor decides to provide the same opportunity for the priests and lay staff in the parish.

Intercultural Competencies Utilized

Knowledge: The pastor knows that parish leaders are ready to grow spiritually and to develop more leadership skills. He identifies a good resource to provide the formation needed. The pastor also knows how to successfully invite and secure participation of leaders from the various cultural communities in the parish.

Attitudes: Openness to grow spiritually and to develop new skills on the part of the pastor, parish leaders, and staff; openness to share cultural perspectives on the program’s

content; and openness to develop a sense of community among culturally diverse members. Generous investment of time, talent, and treasure in formation.

Skills: Consultation and research to identify the most suitable program were in place. Organizational skills to set up the training program in terms of space, times, hospitality, and related resources. The program itself improved the skills of participants in terms of self-awareness, empowerment, transparency, and community building as they developed a creative and respect-filled style of servant leadership.

Pastoral Planning Insight

A skilled leadership force is one of the best assets for the development and implementation of pastoral strategies and initiatives. It also builds community and a sense of belonging.

Pastoral Principle

Champion formation and leadership development within each cultural/ethnic community through common experiences.

Fifth Pastoral Situation: “Parish Strategic Planning”

Brief Description of the Pastoral Situation

In 2003–2004 there was a strategic planning process conducted in the parish to develop a pastoral plan for the following three years. Led by an outside facilitator from the diocese, about forty people who were already involved in ministry were gathered. Although the parish was 75 percent immigrant, participation

was heavily European American. The people were invited to dream and asked, “What is it we want to see have happened in the parish, in three years?” The large group identified a number of areas, and then people were invited to go to their area of interest and develop an action plan. Some very good things came out of the process, like a multicultural young adult ministry, a revived youth ministry, a new ministry to focus on justice and peace issues, and some renovation in the church building.

In 2008, in a desire to have the process be more collaborative and consultative, a different model was used called Best Practices for Parishes, a program that allows a parish to perform a self-study to “measure” itself against the one hundred most vibrant parishes in the seven key areas of parish life, such as prayer and worship, family and pastoral life, evangelization, and stewardship. Each area had a detailed set of questions in which participants were asked to rate how well their parish performed in a particular area: “Did they do something well, somewhat, rarely, or not at all?”

A consultant was brought in to assist in the process, and a core group was pulled from the parish council to manage the process. Facilitators were trained in the three major languages to conduct these separate self-study listening sessions. People were invited to participate who were currently involved in the ministry and who were not. When the results were compiled, it was discovered that in many areas the rating on a particular question depended on which language group was answering the question. For example, when asked to rate the quality of hospitality at Mass, the French-speaking

Africans with a highly developed hospitality ministry rated it as high, the Latinos who were in the process of forming a ministry rated it somewhere in the middle, and those attending English-speaking Masses rated it as low. On the other hand, in the justice and peace category, the European Americans rated parish efforts “high,” the French-speaking “somewhat,” and Spanish “rarely.” In many other questions, the answer depended on which language group was responding.

The findings of what was done well or not so well was published on the website and then brought to seven open town hall meetings held over the period of six weeks. Each meeting focused on one of the seven areas. Every member of the parish was invited to participate in as many meetings as they liked. The group gathered for prayer and then split into three language groups to recommend, given the findings, what the goals should be in that particular area for the next three years. These recommendations were brought back and shared with the larger group, so that the rationale of each group could be understood. Then the large group made their recommendations. Hundreds of people participated in this stage of the process, and all grew in understanding of the other language communities and their gifts and challenges.

When the seven meetings were over, the recommendations went to the multicultural parish council, and they prioritized, chose the goals, and developed an action plan with timelines and responsibilities. Summaries were published in the bulletin and the complete 74-page plan was placed permanently on the parish website.

Because the process was consultative at each level there was more understanding of what the parish was trying to achieve, more of a sense of mission in the parish, a greater understanding of its diversity and complexity, and ultimately more of a sense of ownership of the plan.

Pastoral Principle

Plan with people, not for people.

Exercise: Identify Your Own Best Practice

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 Following the outline used in the five pastoral situations, which showed particular best practices, identify a pastoral situation in your parish that was addressed in such a way that the response can be considered a best practice.

- a) Brief description of the pastoral situation
- b) Identification of roles
- c) Intercultural competencies utilized: knowledge, attitudes, and skills
- d) Insight for pastoral planning
- e) Pastoral principle

Conclusion

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 Parish life is the privileged context in which Catholics experience a personal and a communal encounter with Christ. It is also the spiritual home where the faithful develop a sense of belonging in the Church and where they engage in ministries of service to one another and to the broader community. The emergence of thousands of *shared parishes* over the past few decades is a pastoral response

to a major population shift taking place in dioceses across the country. Shared parishes are also a *sign of the times*, calling Catholics from different races, cultures, and ethnicities to experience anew the spirit of Pentecost, so we can hear and understand one another, moved by the same spirit of love and nurtured at the one Eucharistic Table of the Lord.

However, building unity in diversity requires particular attitudes, knowledge, and skills. It also requires having a clear and profoundly ecclesial understanding of what we want to achieve in our shared parishes and how we actually want to do it. We are grateful that the spirit of unity and pastoral love has inspired many pastors and their teams to achieve high levels of ecclesial integration/inclusion among the culturally diverse members in their shared parishes.

The stories, pastoral principles, and practical recommendations included in this guide are a great resource for thousands of pastors entrusted with the pastoral care of shared parishes and for others who may find

themselves ministering in a shared parish in the future. The guide is also helpful for staff and parish leaders collaborating with the pastor in the wonderful and yet difficult task of building unity in diversity. Along with the practical examples and insights, the guide provides a methodology for understanding the process of intercultural sensitivity and healthy integration. This methodology is interpreted through a spirituality of ministry and a sense of Catholic identity based in Scripture that has inspired and guided the work of many pastors of shared parishes and their teams.

We are keenly aware that the work for the New Evangelization is being carried out in shared parishes in a unique way as we become missionaries to one another and honor the presence of Christ in our diverse cultures. May we become ever more united at the Eucharistic Table of the Lord in our parishes and other Catholic institutions, and may we echo in our lives the prayer of Christ for us all, **“SO THAT THEY MAY ALL BE ONE.”**

Best Practices for Shared Parishes: So That They All May Be One

is a guide to assist pastors of culturally diverse parishes in the challenging task of building unity in diversity. Developed from responses of a recent study among a group of pastors who achieved a high level of integration and inclusion in the parishes where they serve, these recommendations help pastors and their teams respond to challenging ministerial situations and growing demographic changes. The guide identifies pastoral responses and proven best practices in relation to intercultural competencies in attitudes, knowledge, and skills. It helps parishes discern pastoral planning strategies and opportunities that will lead to a higher level of stewardship.

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