

One Diocese, Many Voices: Strengthening the Focus of *Together in Faith*

Summary of Recommendations

Organizers convened the Urban Catholic Ministry Summit at Marygrove College on August 19, 2005 to discuss ways to strengthen the presence of the Church in Detroit. We see "Together in Faith" as an opportunity for reflection, redefinition, and reallocation with these objectives:

- ❑ Implementing a wide range of organizational strategies that will allow the Archdiocese to develop new sources of personnel and revenue and to redistribute all human and financial resources equitably throughout the region;
- ❑ Revitalizing its admirable legacy of providing education at all levels;
- ❑ Renewing its long-standing commitment to social and economic justice, with particular attention to addressing the racial divide that perpetuates inequality and inhibits collective

Best Practices and Possible Solutions:

At the Urban Catholic Ministry Summit, two clear themes regarding organizational strategies emerged:

- ❑ **Unity:** Participants favored models that encourage the crossing of geographical, racial, and economic borders. They found merit in the examples of parish partnerships and clustering described in the materials, and they advocated strategies that reduce competition for resources, place a priority on community-building, and foster a spirit of inclusion. "Exclusion is our greatest sin," said one respondent.
- ❑ **Innovation:** Participants expressed great interest in organizational models that promote new thinking about the nature of a parish and of parish administration: models that do not require the daily presence of a priest and encourage lay leadership, models based on the distinctive qualities of the community or communities being served, models that do not require large numbers in order to be sustainable.

Resource Recommendations

The strategic planning now underway can lead to a new vision for the Archdiocese, and concrete organizational strategies will depend, to a great extent, on the nature of this vision. We wish to contribute to the process with the following recommendations for use by vicariates and parishes:

1. Seek models that allow for and encourage the crossing of racial, cultural, and economic borders.
2. Think about parishes and parish organization in new ways, not restricted by old paradigms, but innovating within the models approved by Canon Law.
3. Make models responsive to and reflective of the character and needs of the communities they serve.
4. Do not think of new models as temporary expedients but as new ways to strengthen the mission of the Church.
5. Take advantage of the range of human resources at hand. Variations on team and cluster approaches offer the greatest promise for attracting new forms of leadership in the Church.
6. Avoid replication of societal assumptions and structures that perpetuate injustice and urban decline.

Education Recommendations

Based on the results of our Urban Catholic Ministry Summit discussions, our examination of the Memphis Jubilee Schools Program, and our review of statements by the U.S. Catholic Bishops, we recommend the following:

- ❑ Establish a way to develop and maintain Catholic schools in Detroit and its near suburbs, applying the Memphis model to the specific situation of Detroit.
- ❑ Initiate a capital fund drive to support Catholic educational efforts based upon the Memphis model.

- ❑ In collaboration with Catholic colleges, universities, and religious orders, develop a plan to establish two new urban high schools for students in Detroit and the inner-ring suburbs.
- ❑ Build stronger relationships between Catholic high schools and elementary schools (through tutoring programs, mentoring, etc.) to improve student achievement.
- ❑ Employ the goals established by the U. S. conference of Catholic Bishops in 1990 and 1995 as educational objectives for the Archdiocese. The 1990 goals are:
 - Catholic schools will continue to provide a Gospel-based education of the highest quality.
 - Catholic schools will be available, accessible, and affordable.
 - The bishops will launch initiatives in both the private and public sectors to secure financial assistance for parents, the primary educators of their children, so that they can better exercise their right to choose the best schools for their children.
 - Catholic schools will be staffed by highly qualified administrators and teachers who would receive just wages and benefits, as we expressed in our pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*.
- ❑ The 2005 Bishops' statement adds the following statement and recommendations:
 - In addition to recommendations we have already made, and to ensure that our Catholic elementary and secondary schools not only continue to exist, but will grow and prosper, we call on bishops and those in educational leadership to:
 - Convene gatherings of educational, business, and community leaders, in either the fourteen episcopal regions or in each state, to address the critical issues of Catholic identity, cultural diversity, finances, just wages and benefits, academic quality—especially in the area of religious education—alternative governance models, and the marketing of our Catholic schools.
 - Develop programs to assist pastors, clergy, seminarians, and laity to understand, appreciate, support, and promote the critical value of our Catholic schools in fulfilling the teaching ministry of the Church.
 - Develop strategies to increase the effective advocacy for the equitable treatment of Catholic school students and teachers in government programs. This would include support for existing and creation of new parent advocacy groups in each state and diocese.
 - Work with the leaders of Catholic colleges and universities to address the critical staffing needs of our Catholic elementary and secondary schools. This would include steps to ensure that sound and effective programs of teacher education and administration are available and affordable to those interested in working in our Catholic schools.
- ❑ Do not assume that any given parish or any given community will necessarily continue its present pattern of growth or decline.
- ❑ Work with community organizations and local government agencies to address the sources of division in our region. Support efforts to engage in regional planning.
- ❑ Recognize the resources we already have. Turn apparent liabilities into opportunities.

The Detroit Church and Social Justice Recommendations

- ❑ Produce an official archdiocesan statement that acknowledges the Church's role and responsibility for Detroit's past and present with a vision and commitment to its future.
- ❑ Develop a regional view of interdependence and a clear urban mission statement.
- ❑ Commit to open and transparent dialogue to seek alternative methods to address social justice issues, fulfill the urban mission and expand the model of Church to emphasize the Herald, Servant, and Pilgrim People models throughout the diocese.
- ❑ Learn from the experience of other dioceses that successfully engaged diverse populations for the common good.
- ❑ Experiment with alternative structures and different leadership models that achieve the mission and build the Kingdom.
- ❑ Collaborate as parishes and vicariates with community organizations and Community Development Corporations to attack local problems, and foster neighborhood redevelopment.

- ❑ Collaborate with regional groups like the NCCJ, SEMCOG, and New Detroit to address issues that affect the quality of life for everyone in southeastern Michigan.
- ❑ Commit to service of others regardless of their religion; serve the poor and vulnerable; participate in social, economic and political life of the region; support human rights and dignity; work for peace and social justice.

Recommendations on Race

- ❑ Promote Recovery from Racism workshops through the vicariates to more suburban churches.
- ❑ Staff Office of Hispanic Affairs to work with vicariates who have large Latino congregations.
- ❑ Recruit and train more African American and Latino lay people to be parish administrators.
- ❑ Create several cross vicariate pilot projects “twinning” predominantly African American and Latino parishes with predominantly white parishes; or appoint one pastoral team to jointly run both a city and suburban parish, including joint parish councils and commissions.
- ❑ Assist pastors and administrators in racially changing communities by offering facilitated discussions between and among them on how to preach about racism and racial change in effective, non-divisive ways.

Resources on Race

- ❑ Black and Latino Catholic lay leaders, priests, and women religious can offer a wealth of knowledge and skill to the Diocese on a variety of levels: workshops, story telling, research, writing, program development, and more.
- ❑ Faculty and staff in Catholic colleges and universities are also eager to assist in the research and writing of a pastoral letter or other documents. Campus ministry staff and students could assist vicariates in the planning and implementation of a host of programs on racial issues as part of Lenten or Advent reflection groups.
- ❑ Programs from the Office of Black Catholics and Hispanic Affairs are valuable resources available to vicariates and local parishes.
- ❑ MOSES, Focus Hope and other ecumenical faith based groups with multi-racial constituencies offer a wealth of experience and have vehicles for congregations to participate in actions and organizing around racial justice issues.