



Over the next 12 months, Bishop Jaime Soto invites his brother priests and the laity to join him in revitalizing our parish communities with a focus on offering greater hospitality and outreach to all our communities.

Pastors whose parish is without a Parish Pastoral Council are expected to inaugurate a Council by June 30, 2021.

To promote parish revitalization, Parish Pastoral Councils will meet monthly. Bishop Soto proposes agenda items for consultation among the pastor and the council members. The proposed agenda items are intended to augment but not replace parish agenda items. Bishop would ask you to choose three to four of the agenda items listed below to work on over the next six months:

- The Parish Pastoral Council is an effective tool for building parish co-responsibility and accountability
- Hospitality and Sunday Mass
- Hospitality in our Charitable Works
- Hospitality in our Religious Formation
- Hospitality for Young Families
- Hospitality for the Unmarried and the Engaged Couples
- Hospitality for the Dying and the Bereaved
- Hospitality to the Sick and Homebound
- Hospitality for Expectant Mothers and Fathers
- Missionary Outreach as Hospitality
- Hospitality and Vocations
- Hospitality and Journeying from Racism

CO-RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

of the Parish Pastoral Council

The Parish Pastoral Council and Pastor can work together in building parish co-responsibility and accountability. Effective collaboration and communication provide a means to establish common mission in the parish community. This agenda offers some guidance for discussion and discernment in bringing the principles of co-responsibility and accountability into action here in the Diocese of Sacramento.



REFLECT

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. [1 Cor. 12:4-6](#)

...A pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity. [1983 Code of Canon Law, Can. 536](#)

A great many wonderful things are to be hoped for from this familiar dialogue between the laity and their spiritual leaders: in the laity a strengthened sense of personal responsibility; a renewed enthusiasm; a more ready application of their talents to the projects of their spiritual leaders. The latter, on the other hand, aided by the experience of the laity, can more clearly and more incisively come to decisions regarding both spiritual and temporal matters. In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, may more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world. [Lumen Gentium, 37](#)

...It is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all the members of the People of God in their entirety is gradually promoted, with respect for vocations and for the respective roles of the consecrated and of lay people. This demands a change in mindset, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be viewed as 'collaborators' of the clergy but truly recognized as 'co-responsible', for the Church's being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity. [Pope Benedict XVI, Address on the Theme: "Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility", 26 May 2009](#)

The practice of co-responsibility and accountability are not just organizational tools. They are disciplines that enable us to grow in holiness together. They are wise ascetical practices that teach us how to be more hospitable to the gifts, the wisdom, as well as the needs of one another. They are holy habits that keep salt from losing its flavor or a light from being hidden under a bushel basket. [Call to Holiness, Bishop Jaime Soto](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What types of formation and training might assist the members of our Parish Pastoral Council in responding to the Call to Holiness?
2. What steps can our Parish Pastoral Council take so that it more effectively communicates the pastoral objectives and initiatives of our community?
3. What steps can our Parish Pastoral Council take to invite, welcome, and show our hospitality to our parish community?
4. How might the Parish Pastoral Council (and our Pastor) more effectively listen to our parish community regarding its pastoral needs?

HOSPITALITY AND

The Sunday Mass

Sunday Mass is the source and summit of parish life. Explore the ways Sunday Mass can bring others around the table of the Lord to share in the one saving sacrifice of Christ. The worship and praise of the Eucharist should bring us into communion with the Father through Jesus Christ.



REFLECT

Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. *Romans 15:7*

Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels. *Hebrews 13:2*

If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet.
John 13:14

In the power of the risen Lord, [Mary] wants to give birth to a new world, where all of us are brothers and sisters, where there is room for all those whom our societies discard, where justice and peace are resplendent. *Fratelli Tutti, 278*

The different cultures that have flourished over the centuries need to be preserved, lest our world be impoverished. *Fratelli Tutti, 134*

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.
Gaudium et Spes, 1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe what the experience would be for someone who comes to your parish Mass for the first time. They aren't familiar with the Catholic Church and know no one in the parish. Include all their experiences from their entrance onto the church property until they depart it.
2. How does a parish member who isn't involved in many ministries learn the names of their fellow parish members?
3. How welcomed do members of various demographic groups feel? These could include families with small children, the elderly, people from different language groups or ethnicities, and persons with disabilities. Think about how they are interacted with at liturgy, whether any of the art on the grounds reflects their demographic, what is included or not in the Universal Prayer, whether the language of liturgy is ever theirs, etc.

HOSPITALITY IN

Our Charitable Works

The Sacrament of Charity is for All Catholics not just a committed few. While most Catholics today hear the Word proclaimed and celebrate in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, too few Catholics are engaged in the ministries of Charity. The Eucharist compels all who believe in Him to become “bread that is broken” for others. This invitation is for all believers not just the mission of a few committed people. How do we organize our parishes to give EVERY Catholic the opportunity to engage in the social mission?



REFLECT

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? [Micah 6:8](#)

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me... [Matthew 25:31-46](#)

We are transformed by the sacraments of Christ into the Lord’s sacramental presence in society. In this sense, to be holy is to be Christ’s sacrament in the world, to be a sign and an instrument of Christ for others, to be the salt that revives the saddened soul and the light that awakens a weary world.

[Call to Holiness, Bishop Jaime Soto](#)

Our communities, when they celebrate the Eucharist, must become ever more conscious that the sacrifice of Christ is for all, and that the Eucharist thus compels all who believe in him to become “bread that is broken” for others, and to work for the building of a more just and fraternal world. Keeping in mind the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, we need to realize that Christ continues today to exhort his disciples to become personally engaged: “You yourselves, give them something to eat” (Mt 14:16). Each of us is truly called, together with Jesus, to be bread broken for the life of the world. [Sacramentum Caritatis, 88](#)

The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). ... love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to the Church as the ministry of the sacraments and the preaching of the Gospel. [Deus Caritas Est, 22 & 25](#)

We need to build local communities of faith where our social teaching is central, not fringe; where social ministry is integral, not optional; where it is the work of every believer, not just the mission of a few committed people and committees. [Communities of Salt and Light, USCCB](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do we organize our parishes to give EVERY Catholic the opportunity to engage in the social mission? How do we get younger Catholics (i.e. Young Adults and young families) engaged in charitable ministries?
2. How do we make sure that our ministries of charity are Christ-centered and missionary focused? How are our charitable ministries transformational for both volunteers and clients?

HOSPITALITY IN

Our Religious Formation

Parish programs that offer faith formation and sacramental preparation for children are often our first opportunities to welcome, evangelize and empower families. We have a responsibility to not only educate children about the truths of the faith, but to partner with parents to make sure they have the knowledge and tools to accompany their children on a lifelong journey of faith and to practice the faith daily in their homes, neighborhoods and workplaces.



REFLECT

Christ himself teaches us how to evangelize, how to invite people into communion with him, and how to create a culture of witness: namely, through love, mercy, and joy. Christ gives us the method: Come and see (Jn 1:39); Follow me (Mt 9:9); Remain in me (Jn 15:4-6); Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19). The words of Christ form the methodology for missionary discipleship that corresponds to:

<i>Come and See</i>	<i>Follow Me</i>	<i>Remain in Me</i>	<i>Go Therefore and Make Disciples of All Nations</i>
ENCOUNTER	ACCOMPANY	COMMUNITY	SEND

National Directory for Catechesis (NDC): The New Evangelization as the Context for Missionary Discipleship

Children's preparation for the Sacraments begins in the home. The family has the most important role in communicating the Christian and human values that form the foundation of a child's understanding of the Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation... Catechesis offered [by the parish should] help parents grow in their own understanding and appreciation of the Sacraments and enable them to catechize their children more effectively. [NDC 126-127](#)

Parents don't need theology degrees or extensive knowledge of the Bible or liturgy to pass on their faith. Parents merely need the love they have for their children to effectively form them and introduce them to a relationship with Christ. Every child and youth program needs to have one thing: Opportunities for kids and parents to gather together to talk about faith. And parents need to lead it.

www.usccb.org/news/2020/putting-parents-center-our-ministry-efforts

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What faith formation programs do we offer for children and teens and how are parents involved in the current programs? How might we strengthen the partnership between the parish faith formation program and the parents and families it serves?
2. What support do parents/guardians need from their parish catechetical program and catechists to allow their homes to become true "schools of Christ," building a "new civilization of love"?
3. Do we treat our families any different than other activities that families are involved with outside the church (e.g. youth sports, drama/dance, scouting, etc.)? How do our faith formation programs help families feel like they belong, are valued, are respected, are appreciated?
4. Are our programs leading families closer to each other, and closer to Jesus?

HOSPITALITY FOR *Young Families*

The parish should be a place of support and empowerment for young families, a place where they feel welcome, where they feel like they belong. A place that they can come as they are and find the tools and support they need to grow and thrive physically, emotionally, and spiritually. A primary focus of parish life should be to build up the domestic church and encourage families to witness to Christ through their everyday lives.

Parish life is a support to young parents raising their children not only in the knowledge of the Catholic Faith, but as members of the Body of Christ that give witness with their lives. Baptism is a graced moment to engage young families and develop a welcoming relationship to bring them to Christ and to the realization that as parents they are called to form their children's hearts to hear this call to discipleship as missionaries in the world.



REFLECT

Let us begin a revival of parish life by welcoming Christ into the journey of our lives... With Jesus as our Good Shepherd and companion we will fulfill his summons to be: the salt of the earth and the light of the world. True holiness makes us disciples of Jesus and missionaries of his gospel.

Call to Holiness, Bishop Jaime Soto

The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society. [CCC 2207](#)

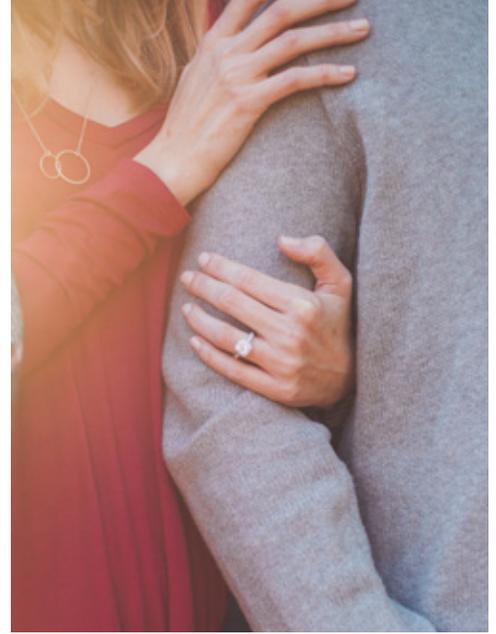
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In general, do young families feel welcome in our parish? Do they feel like they belong? How are we witnessing a spirituality of welcoming when these families visit our office or come to our services?
2. What do we currently offer to serve young families in our parish? Do we make an effort to offer programming that works with families with small children? Do we take into account the many different needs children might have, such as those with disabilities or chronic illnesses?
3. Are our Masses places that welcome families with children, or are we building an environment that is antagonistic to the needs of families? Are our welcoming ministries made up of people that greet families with a smile or do we see families with small children as a "problem"?
4. Do we talk to our young parents about their dreams and hopes for their children so we can develop appropriate programs that target those dreams outside of Religious Education?

HOSPITALITY FOR

Unmarried and Engaged Couples

The number of couples in the US that choose to marry is declining and the number that choose to marry in the church is even fewer. We need to find new ways to invite unmarried and engaged couples into our parish communities and help them to understand God's plan for marriage and family. The parish community needs to find new and hospitable ways to evangelize couples and to promote and honor the sacrament. Marriage preparation should not be a class that happens in the year before the marriage, but an effort that starts with children's faith formation and youth ministry. We need to create in our young people an appreciation for the precious gift of marriage and family.



REFLECT

The LORD God said: It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him. So the LORD God formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the air, ...but none proved to be a helper suited to the man. So the LORD God ... took out one of his ribs ... and built the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman. When he brought her to the man, the man said: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; ... That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. [Genesis 2:18-25](#)

The Lord, wishing to bestow special gifts of grace and divine love on married love, has restored, perfected, and elevated it. A love like that, bringing together the human and the divine, leads the partners to a free and mutual self-giving, experienced in tenderness and action, and permeating their entire lives; this love is actually developed and increased by its generous exercise. [Gaudium et Spes, 48](#)

[Many] couples do not see the value of marrying in the Church or understand the difference between a sacramental and civil marriage. Respondents also frequently noted a negative perception of the Church's marriage preparation process (and declaration of nullity process in some cases) as being restrictive, cumbersome, and expensive. www.usccb.org/topics/marriage-and-family-life-ministries/strategies-promoting-marriage-church#challenges

[We] are troubled by the fact that far too many people do not understand what it means to say that marriage—both as a natural institution and a Christian sacrament—is a blessing and gift from God. We observe, for example, that some people esteem marriage as an ideal but can be reluctant to make the actual commitment necessary to enter and sustain it. Some choose instead to live in cohabiting relationships that may or may not lead to marriage and can be detrimental to the well-being of themselves and any children. www.usccb.org/resources/pastoral-letter-marriage-love-and-life-in-the-divine-plan.pdf

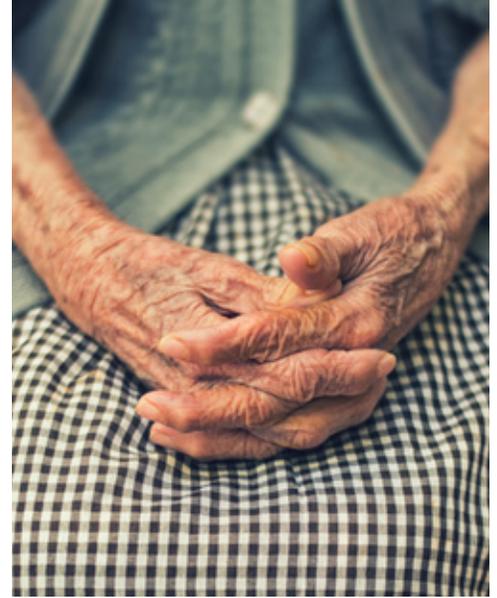
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is our parish a welcoming place for unmarried and engaged couples? When a couple calls or visits the parish office to inquire about getting married, how are they received?
2. What does the parish have to offer unmarried and engaged couples? What programs do we have that invite unmarried and engaged couples to explore sacramental marriages?
3. What do we do with children and teens in the parish to promote and encourage marriage?

HOSPITALITY FOR

The Dying and the Bereaved

Too many Catholics in our communities are left to suffer and die alone. The unfortunate passing of California's harmful Physician-Assisted Suicide Law in 2015 challenges Catholic parishes to ensure that the chronically and terminally ill in our communities do not feel compelled to choose assisted suicide. To this end, the Church must educate Catholics about the ethics around end of life care and strengthen parish ministries to the sick and dying. How do we ensure that parishioners and patients are accompanied, loved and supported in their serious illness and end-of-life journey?



REFLECT

I was sick and you visited me... [Matthew 25:36](#)

When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

[Matthew 14:14](#)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. [2 Corinthians 1:3-4](#)

The holiness of the Lord Jesus drew the sick and the hungry to seek healing and nourishment. When we unite ourselves more closely to Christ, his spirit then makes us his messengers, his missionaries with the light of his divine mercy in our hearts. It is not a matter of wondering when will others return but when will we eagerly seek to bring them to Christ? [Call to Holiness, Bishop Jaime Soto](#)

The awareness that the dying person will soon meet God for all eternity should impel his or her relatives, loved ones, the medical, health-care and religious personnel, to help him or her in this decisive phase of life, with concern that pays attention to every aspect of existence, including the spiritual.- "Faith responds to fears about death." [Pope John Paul II, Address to an international congress on the care of the dying, March 17, 1992](#)

If the person feels loved, the shadow of euthanasia disappears. [Pope Francis Seminar in Health Management 2013](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

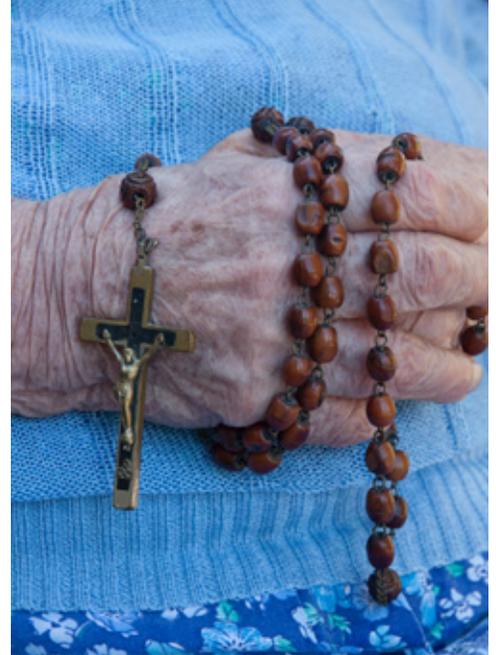
1. Death and dying is a part of living. What are the ways that we minister the sick and dying in our own parish community? How do we care for the sick and the homebound? Do we have healthcare ministry?
2. How do we minister the bereaved (i.e. funeral ministry, grief groups)?
3. How well do Catholics in our parish understand the Church's teaching on end of life ethics, accessing quality palliative care, hospice care and advance healthcare directives, and pastoral care at the end of life?

HOSPITALITY TO

The Sick and Homebound

The sick and the homebound share in the sufferings of Christ. The accompaniment of the Church makes Christ Jesus more present to them as well as to the Church community.

One of the foundations for living a life of holiness is charity, particularly the Corporal Works of Mercy which our Lord Jesus commands us to focus on as we live a life of service to others. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus specifically tells His disciples "I was ... ill and you cared for me." (Mt. 25.36). A sad consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic was the isolation of our elderly parishioners as the churches closed and they sheltered in place for their protection.



REFLECT

So with old age is wisdom, and with length of days understanding. [Job 12:12](#)

Do not cast me aside in my old age; as my strength fails, do not forsake me. [Psalms 71:9](#)

How the faith community relates to its older members—recognizing their presence, encouraging their contributions, responding to their needs, and providing appropriate opportunities for spiritual growth—is a sign of the community's spiritual health and maturity. [USCCB, The Blessings of Age](#)

We advocate a proactive stand that anticipates and meets older persons' needs as they arise and identifies ways of sharing the treasures of goodness, faith, and wisdom that older persons have to offer to enrich our faith communities. [USCCB, The Blessings of Age](#)

Spiritual health affects and is affected by the individual's physical, emotional, mental, and social health. While the faith community is especially concerned about meeting spiritual needs, it cannot ignore these other realities. [USCCB, The Blessings of Age](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What services and resources does the parish currently devote to the elderly and homebound?
2. How does the parish identify elderly parishioners who need a pastoral visit or help from our parish community? Do we publicly ask parishioners to notify parish ministers or staff as they become aware that an elderly parishioner would like to be contacted?
3. How can the parish integrate and increase involvement of seniors within the active life of the community? Some seniors have learned to participate in meetings via Zoom or other similar platforms during the pandemic on their own or with the assistance of caregivers. Can the parish combine face-to-face programs with virtual options so that persons who are homebound can participate?
4. How can the parish assist the elderly and homebound with other challenges that they may face? Has the parish considered soliciting working or retired nurses to serve as parish nurses? Parish nurses can take on many of the health-related tasks that previously fell to pastors and parish staff, such as handling requests for assistance, recruiting and training volunteers to visit shut-ins, and helping older parishioners when they are discharged from hospitals.

HOSPITALITY FOR

Expectant Mothers and Fathers

The gift of new life creates a bond between parents, the unborn child, and the Church. Parenthood does not come with an instruction manual. And many parents do not know where to look or who to talk to find resources and support. In some communities these resources are not available. Many expectant mothers and fathers are faced with hardships such as economic struggles, lack of work, malnutrition, and mental illness. Some families are immigrants that recently arrived in the states and have a language barrier that impedes their ability to express their struggle and need. No parent should feel abandoned and alone, and the parish should be a place of refuge, of help, of support and of empowerment to all expectant parents no matter what their situation.



REFLECT

In the Letter to the Hebrews, the author exhorted the community to practice hospitality, “Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.” (Heb. 13.2)

Call to Holiness, Bishop Jaime Soto

With great openness and courage, we need to question how widespread is the culture of life today among individual Christians, families, groups and communities in our Dioceses. With equal clarity and determination we must identify the steps we are called to take in order to serve life in all its truth. *Evangelium Vitae, 95*

When a loving person can do good for others, or sees that others are happy, they themselves live happily and in this way give glory to God, for “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7). Our Lord especially appreciates those who find joy in the happiness of others. If we fail to learn how to rejoice in the well-being of others, and focus primarily on our own needs, we condemn our-selves to a joyless existence, for, as Jesus said, “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The family must always be a place where, when something good happens to one of its members, they know that others will be there to celebrate it with them. *Amoris Laetitia, 110*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the parish currently provide to expectant mothers and fathers? Is supporting mothers and fathers in need a priority for the parish as a whole or just one small group or ministry?
2. Where can parents get support, training and resources in our community? How can we partner with them? What can the parish provide that other organizations cannot?
3. How can the parish educate itself on the needs of parents in our community? How can the church better connect with expectant mothers and fathers in the community?
4. Are there older parents and grandparents in our community who could act as mentors and guides to expectant parents? How would we connect them?

HOSPITALITY AND

Missionary Outreach

In his 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, Pope Francis called for the “reform of the Church in her missionary outreach” (17). A “pastoral and missionary conversion” (25), he stated, is needed “on every level” (27). We cannot achieve holiness by separating ourselves from others. Missionary Outreach challenges parishes to “go forth” to move beyond the four walls of the church boundaries and to encounter Christ in our neighbor.



Pope John Paul II in his papal encyclical *Redemptoris missio (The Mission of the Redeemer)* lists a number of missionary outreach paths. All missionary outreach activities proclaim the Good News. Here are a few forms:

- **WITNESS** (“Preach always. When necessary use words” St. Francis)
- **PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD** (faith formation, testimony, faith sharing...)
- **PRAYER** (Patron Saint of missionaries, St. Therese of Lisieux)
- **INTERRELIGIOUS AND SECULAR DIALOGUE** (Bring God to the public square)
- **CHARITY/SOCIAL JUSTICE** (Proclaiming God’s love through concrete actions)

REFLECT

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. [Matthew 28:19-20](#)

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. [James 2:14-17](#)

True holiness makes us disciples of Jesus and missionaries of his gospel. [Call to Holiness, Bishop Jaime Soto](#)

I dream of a ‘missionary option,’ that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. [Evangelii Gaudium, 27](#)

Sometimes we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. [Evangelii Gaudium, 270](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Pope Francis encourages parishes to re-organize parishes to be more outward directed missionary focused. How can we organize our parishes to better move beyond the four walls of the parish doors (i.e. charitable ministries, ministries for social justice and respect life, ecumenical/interreligious events, small Christian communities)?
2. How do we make sure that our missionary outreach puts Jesus at the center of our missionary enterprise? Is Christ at the center of all of our outreach efforts? What are some ways that we can keep Christ at the center of our missionary outreach ministries?

HOSPITALITY AND

Vocations

The Lord Jesus Christ based his salvific mission in the two main actions of hospitality: on the one hand, asking people to welcome him into their lives, and on the other hand, welcoming different kinds of people for them to join the Kingdom of God and become his followers. Both of them went hand in hand throughout his life on earth.

Vocations do not come just by our honest wishing to have more men and women enrolled in a seminary or religious house, but they come as the result of the whole parish community that welcomed the individual, nourished his/her faith and walked with him/her. This in turn, allows the person to be open and be able to welcome the voice of God that calls to a specific vocation in life.

Thus, vocations are the fruit of a Parish community that welcomes everyone, especially the young ones and gives them a place and role to fulfill. When young people feel that they can do something meaningful and positive for others, it is then when they are willing to commit their lives to a bigger project, which can be the priestly and religious life vocation.



REFLECT

The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door. There are other doors that should not be closed either. Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community.

Evangelii Gaudium, 46-47

The parish is where vocations are first explored and nourished in the faith and where they come into contact with the clergy, men and women in consecrated life, and lay leaders who accompany them on this journey and encourage them into service. It is vital that the parish develop a culture of vocations to invite youth, young adults and adults to consider the calls to marriage, the priesthood, and consecrated life. [USCCB](#)

Draft of the Program of Priestly Formation, 6th Edition, n. 48

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As Parish community, are the apostolic activities crafted in a way that clearly shows our desire to be open to welcome people by giving them opportunities to participate in the life of the Parish? Are young people welcomed, included and taken into account in those activities?
2. Do the Parish ministries have concrete strategies for both hospitality actions: 1) Going out to look for people, especially the young ones, and 2) Welcoming those who come to our Parish by making easy their way to find us and join us?
3. What are the concrete strategies that our parish is putting together to promote Vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life? Do we talk about this topic in the different ministries, formations and homilies?

HOSPITALITY AND

Journeying from Racism

Despite many promising strides made in our country, racism still afflicts our nation. We've seen the nationwide protests related to the killing of George Floyd as well as other unarmed black men and women. There has been a rise in anti-Asian violence. As the Church seeks to end the evil of racism, we must conduct our own examination of conscience about the issues of racism within our own Catholic institutions. Addressing racism within our own Catholic community is not easy.



Faith in the one God, Creator and Redeemer of all men and women made in his image and likeness, compels the absolute and necessary negation of any racist ideas and behaviors. “We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God’s image.”

The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society, Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, 1988, #19

REFLECT

But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them. [1 John 2:11](#)

At this moment in the history of the Diocese of Sacramento, it is right and just for us to purify ourselves of the sin of racism so that we may more fully unite ourselves with Christ who ‘broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh.’ (Eph. 2:14) *It is Right and Just: Journeying from Racism to Communion in Christ, Bishop Jaime Soto*

Racism arises when—either consciously or unconsciously—a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. *USCCB, Open Wide Our Hearts*

As Christians, we are called to listen and know the stories of our brothers and sisters. We must create opportunities to hear, with open hearts, the tragic stories that are deeply imprinted on the lives of our brothers and sisters, if we are to be moved to empathy to promote justice. *USCCB, Open Wide Our Hearts*

Let the Church proclaim to all that the sin of racism defiles the image of God and degrades the sacred dignity of humankind which has been revealed by the mystery of the Incarnation. Let all know that it is a terrible sin that mocks the cross of Christ and ridicules the Incarnation. For the brother and sister of our Brother Jesus Christ are brother and sister to us. *USCCB, Brothers and Sisters to Us, 1979*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Diocese of Sacramento is a community of “many”; composed of many ethnic groups, cultures and races, from a variety of backgrounds, with a multitude of gifts and abilities. What are the attitudes and practices that divide our community? How do we overcome racial and ethnic misperceptions and fears within the body of Christ?
2. “As Christians, we are called to listen and know the stories of our brothers.” How do we practice listening and learning each other’s stories in our parish community?
3. How do we create a more welcoming Catholic community? How do we foster more dialogue and participation in our parish? How do we reach out into our neighborhoods to welcome all God’s children?