

**ENCOUNTER THE JOY**  
**OF THE GOSPEL**  
**SET THE WORLD ABLAZE**



**Year One Guide and  
Implementation Plan**



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# Template for Planning to Implement *Encounter the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze*

*E*verything is done in the context of a dialogue with Christ: speaking and listening, Scripture and Sacrament, communally and individually. Each of these steps is supported by listening to scripture, studying the Tradition, encountering Christ in the sacraments, and praying always.

1. **Assess** what is already right and good, enabling love for Christ with blossom and love for His Body the Church to flourish.
2. **Pray** for the Spirit's direction as to where you are to begin this journey. It is not enough to see what is. Once given sight, we must ask the Lord to direct our vision to that which must come now.
3. **Learn** from and work with others to create the leadership team you will need to support this work. (EJG p.14)
4. **Choose** what the Holy Spirit directs as the starting point of this great work. (EJG p.14)
5. **Assign** responsibilities and **target** beginning dates.
6. **Share** the Good News of your plan with the parish, other parish leadership bodies, and of course, the Office of Evangelization. (EJG p.14)
7. **Pray and look** for the Spirit's mighty wind to blow across your parish, through your work, and so to create new life!





# Year One Guide





# Year One: Personal Encounters with Jesus Christ

## Step One: Assess where you already are

### Rationale

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Introducing “active” parishioners to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through a call to continual conversion is the thrust of the New Evangelization. Contrary to what some say, it IS possible to see the signs of conversion, the signs that evangelization is taking root, changing lives, that Jesus is alive and at work today. This is one area where the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* serves as both inspiration and guide, for it is concerned with initial evangelization and then evangelizing catechesis. As such, it offers the Church outward signs of conversion, telling the initiating community that they are to discern the presence of these movements prior to celebrating the sacraments of initiation.

The New Evangelization was born of the fact that many of those already initiated are not in fact evangelized. It is appropriate then to assess the level of evangelization in a parish by taking the outward signs from the *Rite* (Paragraphs 42 and 120) and using them to assess where a parish stands in terms of being the nurturing womb of conversion Jesus intended his communities of disciples to be. Grounded in the call of the *General Directory for Catechesis* to allow the baptismal catechumenate to inspire all catechesis in the parish and drawing from the principle that catechesis is not effective unless it builds upon an initial evangelization, an initial loving relationship with Jesus Christ, this approach uses the signs of conversion as an assessment guide.

### Who participates in this

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All those currently considered to be parish leaders: clergy, staff, councils, committee chairs, catechetical leaders, worship planners, school leadership, parent leaders, and influence peddlers (those within the parish who, when they speak, many listen and believe).



# Step One: Assess where you already are

## Assessment using the signs of an evangelized people

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Evangelized people, that is, those in love with Jesus Christ, will give evidence to that internal reality through the following practices (RCIA, paragraphs 42 and 120: signs of conversion):

1. Evangelized people have lives that have changed in ways they can articulate from “before” their relationship with Christ to “after.” They can name some changes. (Witness)

### Assessment Questions

- a. How many small groups where this kind of faith-based storytelling happens are initiated and/or supported by the parish?
  - b. How are expectations for conversion part of Christian formation, homilies, and ministry within the parish?
  - c. What activities do parish gatherings have in which the “good news” of Jesus Christ can be shared?
  - d. What evidence do you have that parish leaders are able to tell their stories of the ways in which faith in the Risen Lord has changed their perspectives, offered them hope, challenged their practices, called them to places they never considered?
  - e. In what ways does the parish provide opportunities, other than the sacraments, for people to encounter the Risen Christ?
2. Evangelized people are intentional about developing their relationship with God through Christ and in the Holy Spirit. They see Scripture and Tradition as divinely inspired gifts to help them do this and continue to develop their knowledge and understanding through them. (Word)

### Assessment Questions

- a. What percentage of adults in the parish are ongoing faith learners, the primary meaning of the word “disciples”?
- b. How many opportunities for learning that sparks conversion are offered for adults in the parish in a year? (e.g., retreats, days of recollection, prayer services, mystagogical catechesis, activities that are followed by times of reflection on God’s presence in the activity)



## Step One: Assess where you already are

- c. How is continued learning embedded in the ministerial life of the parish? Are those who participate on Committees and Councils expected to engage prayer, documents, writings, and teaching as part of their work? Are they given the resources and learning facilitation that enables them to do so? Are they expected to change practices based on their engagement with the Scripture and Tradition?
- d. What are the specific ways that the bulletin, the parish website, the bulletin boards, the marquees, the newsletters, the parent communications, and the announcements are used to communicate the expectations of genuine disciples of Jesus? Here is one expression of genuine discipleship from Sherry Weddell's book *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (60-61):
- It is normal for lay Catholics to have a living, growing love relationship with God.
  - It is normal for lay Catholics to be excited Christian activists.
  - It is normal for lay Catholics to be knowledgeable about their faith, the Scriptures, the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Church, and the history of the Church.
  - It is normal for lay Catholics to know what their charisms of service are and to be using them effectively in the fulfillment of their vocation or call in life.
  - It is normal for lay Catholics to know that they have a vocation/mission in life (primarily in the secular world) given to them by God. It is normal for lay Catholics to be actively engaged in discerning and living this vocation.
  - It is normal for lay Catholics to have the fellowship of other committed lay Catholics available to them, to encourage, nurture, and discern as they attempt to follow Jesus.
  - It is normal for the local parish to function consciously as a house of formation for lay Catholics, which enables and empowers the above to take place.
- e. Ongoing growth in discipleship can also be supported by self-directed or non-gathered learning. How are adults enabled to engage in self-directed learning? Are they given suggestions for websites, apps, spiritual reading, book reviews, television programming, films, and artistic events to nourish growth in discipleship? List other methods the parish encourages to support self-directed learning.



# Step One: Assess where you already are

- f. Is spiritual direction understood by parishioners? Readily available to adult parishioners? Is it subsidized by the parish? Encouraged by the leadership? Participated in by leaders? In what ways are parishioners encouraged to become qualified spiritual directors?
3. Evangelized people are continuously changing, repenting, working toward putting on the mind of Christ. (Word and Witness)

## Assessment Questions

- a. With what frequency are the adults in the parish invited to consider how God is changing their lives? (e.g., retreats, days of recollection, homilies, small Christian communities, Lenten activities, penitential services, spiritual direction)
- b. How are adults offered the signs of God's Kingdom and then given the chance to see if they are flourishing within them and around them? (e.g., adult faith formation focused on discerning the signs of the times and putting them in dialogue with Scripture and tradition, homilies, preached retreats, life stage formation – seniors with seniors, parents with parents, etc.)
- c. How do parish leaders give evidence of their own journeys of ongoing conversion? (e.g., witnessing, sharing signs of conversion and growth, praying for and expecting the Holy Spirit to work, making decisions based upon Scripture, Tradition, and the signs of the times)
- d. How often are penitential services, examinations of conscience, and prayers of lament offered? What other ways are parishioners aided in their movement toward mercy and forgiveness?
- e. What percentage of the parish celebrates the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation at least once per year? More?
- f. How are the graces of the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation witnessed to in the parish? How is God's mercy celebrated other than sacramentally? Who is constantly proclaiming Jesus as God's incarnation of justice and mercy, giving specific examples and calling parishioners to model that?



# Step One: Assess where you already are

4. Evangelized people have an active personal prayer life and fully, consciously and actively participate in the communal prayer life of the parish, living the Eucharist as source and summit of their lives. (Word, Worship, and Witness)

## Assessment Questions

- a. How are the adults of the parish introduced to methods of personal prayer? Given opportunities to try the methods and share about their experiences?
  - b. Is spiritual direction offered to parishioners from trained spiritual directors other than the pastor?
  - c. With what frequency are all registered parishioners celebrating the Sunday Eucharist? What is the role of weekday Eucharist? How are the graces of the Eucharist spoken about as witness to God-with-us; to an encounter with Christ really present?
  - d. With what frequency are adults of the parish invited to times of extended prayer, retreat, fasting, and prayerful activities like Stations of the Cross, Adoration, Exposition and Benediction, centering prayer, guided meditations?
  - e. How are adults in the parish enabled to discover the depth, mystery, and beauty of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist? (Mystagogical catechesis)
5. Evangelized people see the Church community as vital to their life in Christ. (Community)

## Assessment Questions

- a. How are parishioners invited into an active relationship with the parish? Do those currently serving in parish ministries participate in inviting others to serve, in mentoring them, and in telling the stories of how the service draws them more deeply toward Christ?
- b. What percentage of parishioners engage the parish's life (enable and attend events, participate in Mass and sacraments, serve in ministries, give financially)? What are the barriers to participation? Discerning these barriers will include looking at the events themselves and assessing their power, quality, and frequency, as well as looking at the signs of the times.



# Step One: Assess where you already are

- c. How are parishioners' hopes, dreams, and concerns listened to? Acted upon? Used as a catalyst for growth in knowledge and understanding about how Church functions?
6. Evangelized people seek, nurture, and enjoy the company of other Christians. (Community)

## Assessment Questions

- a. How are relationships between parishioners fostered by the parish; not acquaintances, but relationships of care and concern that lead to the practice of denying self in the service of others?
- b. Are there small Christian communities available during Advent and Lent for a significant portion of the parish community? Neighborhood communities of caring support? Life stage groups who learn how to follow Jesus together? Career or vocational groups who meet to share how following Jesus impacts their professional lives?
- c. Do parishioners have an opportunity to meet other parishioners who live in their neighborhoods? Are they expected to provide caring community for those who live near them as the precursor to creating communities of concern all around them?
- d. Are there shared responsibilities for raising children in the ways of faith across families? Across generations? How are parishioners connected to the families of the newly baptized? First Penance/Eucharist families? In what ways does the community of the baptized enact its responsibility to initiate others into intentional discipleship?
- e. Are parishioners given opportunities to develop "faith friendships"? Prayer partnerships, spiritual reading groups, Cursillo groups, etc.
- f. Are there mentors, spiritual directors, retreat leaders, teachers, and sacramental friends available to parishioners? How are they identified? Placed into relationships? Enabled to both form and end relationships?



# Step One: Assess where you already are

7. Evangelized people have a relationship of shared service, sharing this work of Kingdom building with the priests, deacons, and religious serving the parish. (Community)

## Assessment Questions

- a. Are the clergy and religious available to parishioners when they are sought? Are parishioners available to share in the work of the parish when needed?
  - b. Are the clergy and religious clearly loving toward the people of God? Are the people of God in loving relationships with the clergy and religious?
  - c. In what ways do the people of God see themselves as jointly responsible for the life of the parish? Worship? Formation? Death and Dying? Pastoral care of the sick? Inclusive hospitality? Providing care throughout the geographic region for which the parish is responsible? Ecumenical relationships? Reconciling ministries?
  - d. Are there signs of Christ's love exchanged between the clergy/religious and the people of God: compassion, mercy, justice, shared gifts, respect, exhortation, correction? How does the parish clergy listen to the hopes, dreams, joys and sorrows of the people of God? How do parishioners listen to the hopes, dreams, joys, and sorrows of the clergy and others in pastoral leadership?
  - e. How are parishioners being invited to discover the effects of their baptism?
8. Evangelized people are engaged in works of charity and justice, following Jesus' example of care for the weakest among us. (Community, Service, Witness)

## Assessment Questions

- a. How are the many works of charity and justice carried out by parishioners outside the ministries within the parish named and honored?
- b. What percentage of parishioners engage the parish's work for charity and justice? Are these activities set up as apprenticing activities so that they are always open to the first-timer? To entire families? Are they followed by reflection upon how God is at work?



# Step One: Assess where you already are

- c. How are the needs of the weakest and voiceless, locally as well as nationally and globally, presented to the parish? How does the parish ask God to direct their efforts in charity and justice? How is the parish growing in its commitment to the poor? In its understanding of biblical justice? In its advocacy and embrace of the role of the political system in providing structures that care for the weakest?
9. Evangelized people are willing to publicly profess their faith in Christ, their love for Him and for his Church. (Witness)

## Assessment Questions

- a. How are parishioners enabled to learn how to effectively speak about Jesus, about the Church, and about how relationships with them both affect their worldviews?
- b. How is the Spirit's gift of courage sought through the prayer of the parish? How are the gifts of the Spirit at work in the present age identified and celebrated in the parish?
- c. When do parishioners gather to hear of God's presence and action, taking place now? Who facilitates this powerful storytelling? What needs to happen so that more of this kind of celebration of the Word made flesh today can happen?
- d. How do homilies connect the actions of Christ to the actions of parishioners? With what frequency? With what vigor? With what challenge?
- e. What expectations has the parish set for disciples of Jesus to be able to witness to their faith? How is the parish apprenticing its members so that they can reach these benchmarks? How is the parish celebrating this work?



## Step One: Assess where you already are

This is the lens the New Evangelization asks parish leadership to use to analyze those who are already coming to church. How many intentional disciples of the Lord Jesus does the parish have and to what degree are they being equipped by the parish to share the Good News of the Risen Lord with others? These disciples are God's living witnesses already present. These disciples must be welcomed into the work of the New Evangelization. They are God-with-each-parish!

Ties to Goals 1 and 2 for Year One: Existing leaders share the Church's vision for the New Evangelization. Existing leaders carry out the assessment of the parish in light of the signs of a people in love with Christ and engaged with His Church at the parish level. This assessment is for Year One planning only.



## Step Two: Pray for the Spirit's direction as to where you are to begin this journey

Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium* reminds us that “in every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to cooperate with Him and who leads us on by the power of His Spirit (12).”

*Encounter the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze* challenges individuals and parishes to move outside of comfort zones, habits, and practices to seek transformative encounters with Jesus Christ (p.17). With that in mind, it is not enough to see what is. Once given sight through the lens of conversion to Christ and to His Church, parish leaders must ask the Lord to direct their vision to that which must come first. This is Jesus' Church and we are His people. God breathed the Holy Spirit over chaos and so was born a beautiful creation. Christ called a people and set them apart for mission. Trusting in Christ's vision and the Spirit's power means parishes must take the time to listen to the Spirit to determine where to begin, where to remain, what to nourish, and what to finish.

Below are some resources that can assist in learning how to carry out this prayerful discernment:

- For the parish as a whole: a retreat facilitated by “Making Holy Choices” on discerning God's will <http://www.holychoices.org/Description.aspx>
- For parish leadership and potential leaders wishing to discern God's will: “Discerning God's Will” CD by Fr. Larry Richards <http://www.lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/discerning-god-s-will>  
This is especially important as parish leadership seek to align the practices of the parish with God's will, here and now.



## Step Two: Pray for the Spirit's direction

- For Councils or Committees: Using Ignatian Spirituality to discern God's will. Get started here:

<http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/an-approach-to-good-choices/how-ignatian-spirituality-gives-us-a-way-to-discern-gods-will/> This further supports the idea that the Church belongs to Christ and that the work of the Body of Christ is to carry out what Christ intends, using the charisms and opportunities present to each parish, uniquely and individually.

- For systematic study by a Staff or Council: *Discerning the Will of God: An Ignatian Guide to Christian Decision Making* By Timothy Gallagher OMV [http://www.amazon.com/Discerning-Will-God-Ignatian-Christian/dp/0824524896/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1375971574&sr=1-1&keywords=discerning+god%27s+will](http://www.amazon.com/Discerning-Will-God-Ignatian-Christian/dp/0824524896/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1375971574&sr=1-1&keywords=discerning+god%27s+will) Parishes will need to have a group of people versed in making choices about the direction of the parish based upon the discerned will of God.
- For parish leadership wishing to look at the “big picture”: The Center for Parish Development, [http://www.missionalchurch.org/pg/community\\_discern.html](http://www.missionalchurch.org/pg/community_discern.html) It is very easy to suffer from tunnel vision, seeing only the challenges and opportunities in immediate view. Leaders are responsible for the bigger vision: the coming of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

This marks a significant shift in pastoral practice and decision making for most parishes. This is part of the “new ardor, new messages, and new methods” of the New Evangelization. This is an approach grounded in the imperative that conversion to Jesus Christ precedes catechesis, is necessary for the full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful in the liturgy, and is the source of all work for charity and justice. It is love for Jesus Christ that creates the common bond that holds together the Christian community.

This is an approach to decision making that flows from Christ's real presence, alive now in the Church. This is an approach that takes seriously that Christ wishes each parish to follow Him, to be their own unique part of his glorious Body. This is part of the new methods inherent in the efforts of the New Evangelization and for most parishes, it is a new method.

Ties to Goal 3



## Step Three: Calling Forth and Forming Leadership focused on the New Evangelization

No pastoral plan that calls for “new ardor, new methods, and new messages” can make room for the Spirit’s actions without people specifically dedicated to these endeavors. Current leadership is already called by God to serve in specific ways.

The New Evangelization calls for separate leadership, devoted to infusing love for Christ and witness to His presence in all parish life. The status quo is not enough. Doing what has already been done and expecting different results is not enough. New parish leadership must be called forth and formed for this work. This new leadership MUST begin to plan, and those plans MUST include different systems and structures.

In this order:

1. Call forth the Evangelization Leadership Working Group/Team
  - Also see <http://www.phillyevang.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/HowTosforEvangelizationTeams.pdf>
  - Also see <http://www.21stcenturycatholicsevangalization.org/training-leaders.html>
2. Consider the wisdom of having a small group of people who can commit to overseeing all five “years” of the planning and also calling forth the Team that will remain dedicated to Year One goals for three years since efforts to increase the personal relationship with Jesus Christ will continue long after this first year has passed. This is the first and primary work of the parish.
3. Consider if having youth evangelization teams fits into your plan. Go to: <http://www.netusa.org/aboutnet/>



## Step Three: Calling Forth and Forming Leadership

4. Make sure those who respond to the call to serve are captured by the Church's vision for the New Evangelization. This is especially critical if they are people who were not part of the initial leadership formation. Their formation must include:
  - The ability to articulate their own conversion story. They cannot lead toward that which they have not at least initially experienced.
  - Familiarity with the US Catholic Bishop's document *Disciples Called to Witness* <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/disciples-called-to-witness/>
  - Familiarity with the Diocesan Pastoral Plan for Evangelization: *Encounter the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze* <http://www.richmonddiocese.org/content/encounter-joy-1>
  - Access to the materials from the Diocesan training days if they were not identified prior to those events.
  - A trust in the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, deliberately sought and willingly followed, in parish decision making.
5. Once identified and formed in the diocesan vision, the overall leadership team should study best practices. One source is Fr. Pat Brennan's old but valuable book called *The Evangelizing Parish*.

Available here: <http://www.amazon.com/The-Evangelizing-Parish-Patrick-Brennan/dp/B000IO8LS6>

- Can also look at best practices here: <http://www.21stcenturycatholic evangelization.org/parish.html>
  - Don't know what an evangelizing parish looks like? See descriptors here: <http://www.evangelizebuffalo.org/EnrichingtheFaithful/AnEvangelizingParish.aspx>
6. The leadership team identified to empower the activities of Year One of implementing *Encountering the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze*, Personal Conversion to Jesus Christ, should be given the results of the assessment the overall leadership body conducted.

Ties to Goals 1 and 5



## Step Four: Choose the activities that you are called by the Spirit to address

*B*y this point in the process, each parish should have leadership devoted to the vision of Year One: all people in love with Jesus Christ and His Body, the Church. This new leadership will take the work of the existing leadership in assessing the evangelization level of the parish and from that information, analyze, pray, and then begin to plan.

- Review, collate, and analyze the results of the parish assessment for Year One—personal conversion to Jesus Christ.
- Determine the criteria, justification for the criteria and the method for analyzing the assessment information.
- Work with members of your LPA to conduct resource analyses for the parish, LPA, and diocesan resource analysis.
- Based upon the resource analysis and prayer, choose the activities you will embrace. Record those decisions on the reporting sheet for the Diocese.

Ties to Goal 2, 3, and 4



## Step Five: Create the plan to implement what you have chosen

Assign responsibilities and target beginning dates

Fill in Diocesan reporting form

The resource analysis will determine how many items you can begin that will lead the parish to have a conversion focus: People continually committing and re-committing their lives to Jesus Christ, and to membership in His Body, the Church.

**SUGGESTION:** Three to five initiatives are all that can be successfully begun. In some cases, it may be just one fundamental focus that has many facets to it. Be careful to break down the goals you choose into small units, at least some of which can be measured.

**SUGGESTION:** Look for something to begin with that can get immediate positive results so you can celebrate that, gather momentum, and see the touch of the Spirit.

**SUGGESTION:** Tap into the Diocesan trainings/workshops, by committing to attending with at least one small community. It is often ineffective for someone to attend diocesan events as a single representative of a parish. They are simply drowned out by those who have not caught this vision.

**SUGGESTION:** Choose one area to target at a time. Consider beginning with the RCIA and the Church's view that the RCIA, properly implemented, can transform a parish. If that has not been your parish experience, this is one place to begin.

Fill in the planning sheet and the diocesan reporting form with the activities, people, deadlines, etc.

Ties to Goals 5 and 6

## Step Six: Share the Good News

- Leadership begins to tell the “transforming encounters with Christ” stories in groups large and small, in the language of the people.
- Leadership shares the reasons for the changes and what is needed from the people. Leaders must consistently be able to articulate the why behind the what. This is one very useful reason for LPA leadership to gather: to practice these kinds of oral presentations.
- Leadership asks for prayers from all parish leaders. Use the diocesan prayer in all meetings. Form a prayer group for this purpose, or ask existing prayer groups to embrace this intention. Use prayers of the faithful. Task parishioners with praying for this work.
- New Evangelization leaders record decisions/systems/structures and activities for sharing with the Diocese. See reporting form.
- Come up with many ways to let others know Jesus is alive in the Church: your parish, the LPA, and the diocese, as well as in the universal Church. New methods can be creatively used here.

Ties to Goal 7



## Step Seven: Pray and Look for the Spirit's Mighty Wind!

While the celebration of the Eucharist is our mighty moment to say “Thank you” to God who promises to be with us always, we also learn from the first disciples that we must pray always and keep looking for the fresh manifestations of God-with-us, of the mighty wind of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised us that He will empower us to great things, some of them even greater than those He did, he told us. One of the new methods that we can embrace with new ardor is this kind of prayer: of praise, thanksgiving, and for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, freshly outpoured.

- Create times where parish leaders gather to pray in praise and thanksgiving for the work of the New Evangelization.
- Add a prayer of the faithful concerning the fruits you are seeing as the New Evangelization takes root.
- Ask prayer groups and bible study groups to pray specifically and intentionally for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the parish and its individual members, and to help the leaders name signs of that occurring.
- Create or engage an already existing prayer group to become a praying community that will specifically support the New Evangelization with daily prayer for the individuals tasked with leading this initiative.
- Look for the signs of conversion and share those stories:
  - In person
  - In the bulletin
  - In announcements
  - In homilies



# Step Seven: Pray and Look for the Spirit's Mighty Wind

- Begin to tell stories of God-with-us at all parish gatherings:
  - Christian formation
  - Eucharist
  - Councils and Committees
  - Meetings
  - Prayer Groups
  - Staff meetings

Ties to Goal 8



Implementing *Encounter*  
*the Joy of the Gospel: Set*  
*the World Ablaze*





# Implementing *Encounter the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze*

## Suggestions for Elements in Year One of the Parish Pastoral Plan

### Elements of Year One Planning

- Getting the vision
- Organizing the human resources
- Understanding the signs of conversion
- Cooperating with the Holy Spirit
- Creating a plan
- Implementing the plan
- Communicating the Good News
- Celebrating Christ's presence

“Failing to plan is planning to fail.” This saying is attributed to Winston Churchill and serves as an impetus to roll up our sleeves and as a Diocese, create parish plans to bring the Living Christ into the hearts and homes of all whom God has entrusted to our care. Perhaps for some of you this kind of intentional focus, deliberate planning, and accountabilities for progress represent a significant shift in how your parish has run. Perhaps for others, this is an affirmation of the approach you are already using, and a challenge to apply the approach to Year One's focus: Encounters with Jesus Christ. In either instance, we welcome you to this process and encourage you to embrace it with faith, hope, and love. The Holy Spirit is leading the whole Church in this renewal and focus. We are privileged to become part of this great pilgrimage closer to the Risen Lord!



# Step Seven: Pray and Look for the Spirit's Mighty Wind

Pastoral planning differs from other types of strategic planning in that it must take into account an unseen “voice”: the Risen Lord speaking through His promised Holy Spirit. The Church belongs to Christ. It is His Body: His hands and feet bringing God’s ways to life on earth, as they are in heaven. That means that those charged with pastoral planning for the Church must be intent upon listening for the voice of the Lord in prayer, Scripture, and Tradition and then sharing insights with others encountering the same channels of communication, until it is clear to the Body what the Head wants.

Pastoral planning also benefits from using elements of strategic planning that are available to parishes from other organizations. This descriptive and suggestive process draws from those elements, blends them with the unique elements of planning for the Christ’s Church, and offers a template for parishes to use to begin implementing the vision of *Encountering the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze*.

**Year One Objective:** Personal encounters with Jesus Christ that lead to intentional disciples.

## Goals for Year One:

1. Existing parish leaders understand and embrace the vision laid out in *Encounter the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze*.
2. Current parish leadership assesses the parish in light of the outward signs of conversion offered to the Church in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, paragraphs 42 and 120.
3. Current parish leaders call forth two leadership entities:
  - a. One body that will oversee the movement of the implementation of the diocesan pastoral plan for the New Evangelization
  - b. One body that will remain focused on enabling all those entrusted to the parish’s care (existing parishioners and those who are fallen away, as well as those who may be seekers or married to Roman Catholics but not part of the Catholic household) to encounter the Risen Lord Jesus and so experience transformation.
4. Analyze the data from the parish assessment using the lenses of Scripture, Tradition, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.
5. Choose three to five elements revealed in this conversion-based assessment to be the focus of Year One’s pastoral planning efforts.



# Step Seven: Pray and Look for the Spirit's Mighty Wind

6. Create a three-year plan to focus on bearing fruit in the first three to five elements.
7. Create a plan to communicate the Good News that will burst forth from personal encounters with Jesus Christ.
8. Focus on abiding prayer and celebration of the Spirit's mighty creative wind blowing across the parish.

In strategic planning, each goal needs to be broken down into small steps, and those steps then need to be given to the appropriate people to make happen. Deadlines and both intermittent and final accountability reports need to be agreed upon. What follows are some *suggested* steps that can begin the implementation of each of the above goals. Each parish begins in a different place. Each parish must seek the Holy Spirit's guidance as it attends to each of these goals. Some of these suggested steps are already in place and just need to be re-focused or intentionally focused on Personal Encounters with Jesus Christ. Other steps need pre-work before they can be accomplished.

In Year One, every parish is expected to accomplish these goals in order to assure that the pastoral planning system is in place, and to assure that focused attention is being paid to the objective of Year One: **Encounters with Jesus Christ.**



## Suggestions for Elements in a Parish Pastoral Plan

### Elements of Year One Planning

- Getting the vision
- Organizing the human resources
- Understanding the signs of conversion
- Cooperating with the Holy Spirit
- Creating a plan
- Implementing the plan

**GOAL ONE:** Existing parish leaders understand and embrace the vision laid out in *Encounter the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze*.

What follows are some SUGGESTIONS of steps to undertake to fulfill this first goal:

1. Identify the existing leaders in the parish: clerical, staff, and volunteer, by ministry and by the amount of influence they hold in the parish. There are leaders who are called influence peddlers: when they speak, important constituencies listen, even if they hold no official leadership role within the parish.
2. Form existing leaders in the vision of the Church for the New Evangelization by:
  - a. Reading and studying the US Bishops' document *Disciples Called to Witness* <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/disciples-called-to-witness/>
  - b. Reading and studying the Diocese of Richmond's pastoral plan for the New Evangelization: *Encounter the Joy of the Gospel: Set the World Ablaze* <http://ww.richmonddiocese.org/content/encounter-joy-1>
  - c. Reading through the implementation plan that has come from the Office of Evangelization.
  - d. Giving existing leaders the opportunity to practice articulating this vision so that they can readily share it with others.



# Suggestions for Elements in a Parish Pastoral Plan

**GOAL 2:** Existing parish leadership assesses the parish in light of the outward signs of conversion offered to the Church in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, paragraphs 42 and 120.

What follows are some SUGGESTIONS to begin to reach this second goal for Year One:

1. Divide the existing parish leadership into assessment “teams.”
2. Assign each assessment team a section of the parish upon whom they are to focus when using the assessment instrument.
3. Spend time making sure all members of the assessment teams understand the assessment instrument that is based upon the outward signs of conversion.
4. Determine what method or methods the assessment teams will use. Some methods might include:
  - a. Listening groups
  - b. Self-reported responses
  - c. Individual interviews
  - d. Self-selected groups assemble to go through the assessment in community
  - e. Using an online self-reporting method like Survey-Monkey
5. Schedule assessment time frame, make-up options, and final deadline.
6. Determine how the information will be collected, collated.
7. Determine the date by which the information will be completely collected and collated.
8. Prepare the collated data for transmission to the leadership body that will analyze it.
9. Give the data to the newly formed leadership bodies.



# Suggestions for Elements in a Parish Pastoral Plan

**GOAL 3:** Current parish leaders call forth two NEW leadership entities:

- a. One body that will oversee the movement of the implementation of the diocesan pastoral plan for the New Evangelization.
- b. One body that will remain focused on enabling all those entrusted to the parish's care (existing parishioners and those who are fallen away, as well as those who may be seekers or married to Roman Catholics but not part of the Catholic household) to encounter the Risen Lord Jesus and so experience transformation.

What follows are some SUGGESTIONS to begin to reach this third goal for Year One:

1. Now that the existing leadership is formed in the vision and has a sense of where the parish is and what it might need, it is time to discern and call forth those called by God to lead these initiatives. The first leadership body that needs to be formed is a small group of people who can commit to overseeing the implementation of each year of the five-year plan envisioned in *Encountering the Joy of the Gospel*.
  - a. Determine what the gifts and skills are that will be needed in this animating and encouraging leadership body.
  - b. Determine a process by which to name these potential leaders.
  - c. Decide who will make the first invitation to consider serving the parish.
  - d. Settle on a deadline by which the first membership on this body must be settled.
  - e. Time commitment is five years but the leadership body can figure out how to bring in new people and transition others off this body.
  - f. If members of this body have not been formed in the vision of the New Evangelization, existing formed leadership must assist them in becoming so.
2. A second leadership body must also be called forth at this time. This body will concern itself solely with implementing the plan for Year One of the Pastoral Plan for Evangelization: Encounters with Jesus Christ.
  - a. Determine what the gifts and skills are that will be needed in this animating and encouraging leadership body.
  - b. Determine a process by which to name these potential leaders.
  - c. Decide who will make the first invitation to consider serving the parish.
  - d. Settle on a deadline by which the first membership on this body must be settled.



# Suggestions for Elements in a Parish Pastoral Plan

- e. Time commitment is three years focused only on the elements of the plan that foster encounters with Jesus Christ. Members can figure out how to transition new members into this work and transition initial members off if the three-year commitment cannot be kept.
- f. If these members have not been formed in the vision of the New Evangelization laid out in the diocesan pastoral plan *Encounter the Joy of the Gospel*, existing leaders must assist them in becoming so.

**GOAL FOUR:** Analyze the data from the parish assessment using the lenses of Scripture, Tradition, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

What follows are some SUGGESTIONS to begin to reach this fourth goal for Year One:

1. Determine whether both newly formed leadership bodies will participate in analyzing the data and listening for the direction/guidance of the Holy Spirit.
2. Determine the process by which the leadership group will uncover the Holy Spirit's voice and message within the collected data.
  - a. How will Scripture be used to illumine the responses?
  - b. What elements of the Tradition will the leadership body consult as it listens for the Spirit?
    - i. Diocesan Pastoral Letter Encounter the Joy of the Gospel
    - ii. Bishops and papal documents on Evangelization
    - iii. Catechism of the Catholic Church
    - iv. Parish Mission statement
    - v. Other?
  - c. How will the diocesan prayer for the New Evangelization be part of the listening?
  - d. What other times of prayer will be part of discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit?
3. Articulate what the Holy Spirit may be saying to individuals who have used the above process.
4. Look for convergence of ideas and for ideas that are perhaps singularly stated but will yield tremendous fruit.
5. List all the ideas that surface from the analysis of the assessment instrument.



# Suggestions for Elements in a Parish Pastoral Plan

6. Collate the ideas into like areas.
7. Determine which subsets of the parish ought to see these ideas and be given an opportunity to offer their insights.
8. Release the ideas to these subsets with some suggested questions for discussion and a way to report their insights.
9. Determine the date by which you want their input.

**GOAL 5:** Choose three to five elements revealed in the conversion-based assessment to be the focus of Year One's pastoral planning efforts.

What follows are some SUGGESTIONS to begin to reach this fifth goal for Year One:

1. Determine who will make the final decision of the three to five elements that will make up the plan.
2. Set a deadline for making the final determination.
3. Assign someone to write the three to five elements in terms of goals.

**GOAL 6:** Create a three-year plan to focus on bearing fruit in the first three to five elements.

What follows are some SUGGESTIONS to begin to reach this sixth goal for Year One:

1. Write the steps that will need to be taken to achieve the goals determined in step five. Keep in mind that the focus is personal encounters with Jesus Christ and there are at least three levels to this:
  - a. Encounters to initiate the relationship with Jesus Christ (first encounters)
  - b. Encounters to renew a previous relationship with Jesus Christ (inviting re-engagement with Christ and His Body the Church)
  - c. Encounters to invigorate, support, and encourage growth among the intentional disciples within the parish community
2. Determine who will need to be responsible for those steps.
3. Determine if additional authority will be necessary to assign these steps to responsible parties and secure that authority (that usually comes from the pastor and/or the pastoral staff and may also mean granting permission to stop doing something so that this can be done by the deadline).



# Suggestions for Elements in a Parish Pastoral Plan

NOTE: The leadership team is NOT also the actual doers of the steps. This is the work of various elements within the parish and so the steps become the responsibility of others. Encouragement, reminders, and deadlines are the work of the Committee as is continual planning and learning to see the signs of conversion.

4. Assign the work and the priorities for the first year of this plan.
5. Offer resources to assist those to whom this work is delegated.
6. Return to the assessment and choose the next set of two to three areas upon which the second year of focusing on personal conversion can be based.
7. Determine a reminder schedule for the people assigned the tasks and assign a leadership team member to abiding the timeline.
8. Create a communication plan to share progress with:
  - a. The larger evangelization team
  - b. Each other
  - c. Members of the parish
  - d. The LPA
9. Report to the Office of Evangelization on the progress of the plan.
10. Be continuously prepared to share Good News of personal encounters with Jesus Christ with the staff and with Bishop DiLorenzo as he makes his parish visits.



# Suggestions for Elements in a Parish Pastoral Plan

**GOAL 7:** Create a plan to communicate the Good News that will burst forth from personal encounters with Jesus Christ.

Personal encounters with Jesus Christ result in the need to share those encounters. The Scriptures tell us the truth of this and the reason a New Evangelization is needed is that the Church has strayed from the practice of sharing the Good News. The Church must equip those who have encountered the Lord to share the Good News. To do less is to silence the spread of the Gospel and so to cooperate with the very Evil we have promised to reject in Baptism.

What follows are some SUGGESTIONS to begin to reach this seventh goal for Year One:

1. Create opportunities for those who have encountered Jesus to share their stories. Some suggestions to consider:
  - a. Retreats
  - b. Small Christian communities
  - c. Prior to Mass in witness talks
  - d. Neophytes in the period of Mystagogia in RCIA gatherings and in the Sunday assembly
  - e. Through written pieces in the bulletin and website
  - f. Through art, music, or dance shared with others
  - g. From children who have received first sacraments to other children preparing to receive them
  - h. From families of newly baptized infants to parents in baptismal preparation
  - i. From the newly married to those preparing for marriage
2. Train mystagogues: those able to draw forth the witness to the work of the Lord by reflection, scripture references, symbols, song.
3. Create opportunities for all parish leaders to encounter the Lord and then to practice sharing their own witness stories.
4. Craft prayers of petition, praise, and gratitude for the many ways the Lord is being revealed to those in the parish and beyond through this work.
5. Solicit the help of videographers, artists, writers, and dancers to use new mediums to share conversion stories.
6. Share conversion stories with the diocesan publications and the Office of Evangelization.



# Suggestions for Elements in a Parish Pastoral Plan

7. Create LPA-wide Good News events.

**GOAL 8:** Focus on abiding prayer and celebration of the Spirit's mighty creative wind blowing across the parish.

One of the patterns of discipleship that we learn from studying Jesus is that abiding prayer and then times set apart to share stories are part of how he nurtured himself and his disciples. Encounters with Jesus Christ need to be nurtured, supported, and affirmed through prayer and celebration. They need a time of mystagogy where their wonder and awe are shared, deepened, and supported by Scripture, catechesis, community, and commitment to follow Jesus. Otherwise, they fade and can be easily discounted.

What follows are some SUGGESTIONS to begin to reach this eighth goal for Year One:

1. Create times of praise and thanksgiving for the Spirit's mighty work among you that are separate from the Eucharist. Consider use of music, art, dance, storytelling, and technology-based media as part of the new methods called for in the New Evangelization.
2. Craft Prayers of the Faithful for the Sunday Assembly to pray.
3. Set special times where those who have encountered the Lord are invited to be with others who also know Him, to pray, to share stories, to study the Word and the Tradition to deepen and strengthen these encounters.
4. Make sure parish leadership continues to study the signs of conversion so they can recognize them when the Spirit brings them to light.
5. Train all those who have encountered Jesus Christ in the methods of witness and faith sharing appropriate for sharing among other believers and for sharing among those who might range from skeptical to denigrating.

