



Prayer - Planning - Possibilities

What is a VIBRANT PARISH?

KEY INDICATORS: *an overview*

Parishes and schools are essential elements that make up the infrastructure of our diocese. That is why every parish, every school and every ministry in the Diocese of Erie is undergoing a rigorous self-assessment as part of the Pastoral Planning Process.

In order to evaluate parishes and schools on an even playing field, the Diocese of Erie has developed two important documents: *Key Indicators for a Vibrant Parish in the Diocese of Erie*, and *Key Indicators for a Healthy School in the Diocese of Erie*. Although the list of indicators is not exhaustive, it provides a good foundation for planning. All are encouraged to log onto www.ErieRCD.org/planning.asp to review the documents in their entirety, but this report provides a snapshot of some of the factors to be considered in evaluating the vibrancy of a parish.

Please note that key indicators are designed to provide:

- a **vision** for vibrant parishes and a vision for the future.
- **direction** for the Pastoral Plan.
- a **means for evaluating** recommendations in the plan.
- a **foundation** for pastoral planning in local schools and parishes.
- a **focus** on the long-term and future potential for individual Catholic schools and parishes.

Just as importantly, key indicators are NOT designed:

- as the sole criteria to determine if a school or parish will remain open. Factors such as mission, potential for the future, demographics, finances and consideration for alternative approaches are all going to be considered.
- as goals to achieve, but rather as expectations to meet or exceed.



What is a PARISH? Canon law defines a parish as a certain community of the Catholic faithful established in a specific geographic area and entrusted to the care of a pastor. A parish is the presence of Christ and the church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's Word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. It is the extension of the diocesan bishop's ministry in a specific place.

Pope Francis addresses the role of the Catholic Church:

“Being Church means being God's people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love. This means that we are to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity. **It means proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world,** which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way. **The Church must be a place of mercy freely given,** where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.”

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION, EVANGELII GAUDIUM OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS, 11.24.13

All parishioners are invited to complete a **PASTORAL PLANNING SURVEY** as found in the March edition of *Faith* magazine or at www.ErieRCD.org/planning.asp.

KEY INDICATORS *for a vibrant parish*

VISION AND LEADERSHIP

1. The parish follows and promotes the Gospel of Jesus Christ and understands its relationship to the diocese and universal church.
2. The parish develops a local vision for pastoral activity in the coming years which is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. The parish is staffed by properly trained ministers or shares staff with other parishes to lead and direct all areas of the parish's mission.
4. The parish has a finance council and a pastoral council in place, which meet regularly to engage and involve the faithful to help carry out the pastoral activity of the parish.

WORSHIP AND THE SACRAMENTS

5. Liturgical celebrations are properly and thoughtfully prepared and well attended with full, active and conscious participation.
6. Homilies are relevant, challenging and faithful to the Gospel and church teaching. Parishioners are taught how to grow, and are inspired to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.
7. Sacramental preparation is thoughtfully and properly planned and conducted in accord with approved guidelines and diocesan policies.
8. The prayer and devotional life of parishioners is supported and nourished beyond the Sunday liturgy and the sacraments.
9. Music as a part of worship is of high quality.
10. The RCIA is implemented and its rituals are celebrated at the proper times.

LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION, CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND EVANGELIZATION

11. The parish provides adult faith formation opportunities which include both study and spiritual formation in accord with diocesan policies.
12. The parish provides comprehensive faith formation for children in religious education programs in accord with diocesan policy.

13. The parish provides opportunities for learning, spiritual growth, participation in the sacramental life, service and community for its adolescents.
14. The opportunity to attend a Catholic school is provided to parishioners, including some financial support from the parish.
15. The parish is creating a culture of vocations that actively and prayerfully promotes vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life.
16. Parishioners are challenged to reach out to inactive Catholics, inquirers, the unchurched and others.

SERVICE AND PASTORAL CARE

17. The parish is actively engaged in proclaiming the Gospel through service to people in need locally, in the wider community and the world.
18. The parish provides ministry to the homebound and elderly parishioners and to those in hospitals, nursing homes and other care facilities.

STEWARDSHIP/BUILDING COMMUNITY

19. The parish welcomes new parishioners and invites them to become involved in the parish mission.
20. Parishioners are invited and provided opportunities to better understand their gifts and talents and ways these can be used to minister to others.
21. Parishioners understand stewardship as a response to their discipleship and give of time, talent, and treasure to support the Church's mission.
22. The parish fosters opportunities for fellowship providing a sense of community for parishioners.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

23. The parish operates with a balanced budget and has sufficient operating funds for ministries, programs, facilities and staff in order to meet the needs of the community.
24. The parish has all necessary financial controls and operating procedures in place in accordance with diocesan policies.
25. Financial reporting is done in a timely manner and follows the accounting standards established by the diocese.
26. Parish facilities are well-maintained, attractive, and appropriate for parish ministries and programs. Facilities are handicap-accessible and inviting.



To be vibrant is to "show great life, activity and energy." The full list of indicators at www.ErieRCD.org/planning.asp has been created to describe vibrancy as it should be found in a Catholic community of God's faithful people. The parish community may not exhibit all the indicators at a particular time, however, the hope and expectation is that parishes are able to exhibit these indicators either independently or in collaboration with other parishes. The indicators should be adapted to each local situation and provide criteria from which local parishes will develop their own plans.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next bulletin insert will provide an overview of the *Key Indicators for a Healthy School in the Diocese of Erie*.