

Pastoral Orientation Congress

Vision of our Diocesan Church, pastoral orientations and recommendations adopted November 4, 2011

Diocese of Edmundston

DIOCESAN PASTORAL ORIENTATION CONGRESS 2011



Since November 2010, the members of the diocesan community were invited to express their dreams and hopes for the future of our Church. For many months, we have worked to translate these into more than sixty propositions grouped in eight pastoral orientations.

The celebration of the Congress is already a thing of the past. After a time of reflection on the vision of our Church, in which we wish to give arms, eyes, and a heart to Jesus Christ in our environment, we have voted, most often unanimously, the whole of the presented propositions.

Certainly, as I had recalled it at the Congress, our votes wanted to show our commitment in working together to realize, in the next five years, the orientations which we have adopted.

We will continue to be attentive to our brothers and sisters to whom we are sent. What are they searching for in their lives? How do they express their quest for happiness? What are their needs at this time? Our challenge: to show how the Good News which animates our lives can meet their own quest. This is one of the secrets of the « New Evangelization ».

After having started to meet Jesus Christ on our life journey, we progressively discover and welcome Him so that we may now follow and proclaim Him.

I am happy that we can continue our journey together, living always more intensely the mission entrusted to us by the Lord.

Fraternally,

+ Claude Champagne O.M.I.

*+ Claude Champagne, O.M.I.
Bishop of Edmundston*

A VISION OF OUR DIOCESAN CHURCH

We would like our diocesan Church to be:

- A living and loving Church that presents the Gospel and offers arms, hearts and eyes to Jesus Christ.
- A welcoming and all-inclusive Church, for everyone, without exception, and with a special openness to youth and those who have been hurt by life.
- A Church that listens to the needs of all, a Church concerned with adapting to the new realities of society and of today's culture.
- A dynamic Church composed of Christians who, moved by the Spirit of Pentecost, are witnesses to the faith in their milieu.
- A Church that moves ahead, full of hope, and with a positive vision regarding for the future.



PASTORAL ORIENTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FIRST PASTORAL ORIENTATION : EXPERIENCE CHURCH DIFFERENTLY BY ADOPTING NEW METHODS FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

When we talk about a new evangelization, we must first look at the word *evangelize*, a word that comes from the Greek *evangelion* which means GOOD NEWS. So, to evangelize is to proclaim the Good News. It is to proclaim the Gospel in a new way, and with new tools. However, the Good News remains the same.

The Good News refers to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who shows us the way to the Father and to life in the Kingdom of God. In the Gospel of Luke, we read that Jesus went to the synagogue and read these words from the prophet Isaiah: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, He has sent me to preach the Good News to the poor.* And Jesus concluded: *Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing* (Luke 4:18. 21).

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI wrote: *For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new* (18).

The challenge to our Diocesan Church at the beginning of the 21st century is to find and implement new ways of proclaiming Jesus Christ, and of being Church differently.



RECOMMENDATIONS :

1. That our pastoral and missionary action be more concerned with how to reach out to and involve people who do not share or who share very little in the life of the community: youth, young adults, the marginalised, those who are distant...
2. That new ways be found and used to promote the evangelisation of youth, young adults, and adults. Examples: NET (National Evangelization Team), Bible sharing groups...
3. That we really get to know what the object of religious education really is: an encounter with the living Christ in the Christian community, in the Word proclaimed, and in the sacraments. To do this, that formation be offered to religious educators and parents through workshops on different topics in every zone.
4. That we experiment with new or novel approaches: Examples: learning about the Bible through play and symbols, Bible camps with children and youth, and the use of web sites, play acting... these are a many ways of meeting the ends to religious education.
5. That more opportunities be given to the faith education of parents who request baptism for their child and that a follow-up after baptism be offered them.
6. That faith formation sessions be made available to all.
7. That a support service for the grieving be available in pastoral units and zones.
8. That Pastoral Animation Teams as well as the diocesan pastoral services promote projects and activities that contribute to greater unity and collaboration among the different parishes of a given pastoral unit, as well as among the pastoral units of the diocese.
9. That there be information, training or education in the Christian communities regarding liturgical and pastoral changes such as Sunday Liturgies of the Word in the Absence of a Priest.
10. That the diocesan services and the Pastoral Animation Teams use

the traditional media (radio, television) as well as new technologies (internet, interactive website, etc...) to promote the diocesan life and that of the Christian communities.

11. That in our Christian communities we work more closely with social organizations, schools, etc.

SECOND PASTORAL ORIENTATION :

WORD OF GOD... WORD OF LIFE

The Word of God is the Church's treasure. It is A Good News for the baptized who welcome it, meditate it, and live it.

Al indeed, God's word is living and effective... it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart (Hb. 4:12).

To know the Word of God is to ensure one's future.

AOur own time, then, must be increasingly marked by a new hearing of God's word and a new evangelization. Recovering the centrality of the divine word in the Christian life leads us to appreciate anew the deepest meaning of the forceful appeal of Pope John Paul II: to pursue the mission ad gentes and vigorously to embark upon the new evangelization, especially in those nations where the Gospel has been forgotten or meets with indifference as a result of widespread secularism. May the Holy Spirit awaken a hunger and thirst for the word of God, and raise up zealous heralds and witnesses of the Gospel... In our day, too, the Holy Spirit constantly calls convinced and persuasive hearers and preachers of the word of the Lord. (Verbum Domini, 122)

The challenge to our Diocesan Church at the beginning of the 21st century is the promotion of a better understanding and a greater integration of the Word of God in the lives of Christians and Christian communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS :

12. That Christian communities be established into Bible study; Scripture sharing groups, parish cells, to allow the people to understand and integrate in their lives the Word of God, and to share it with other believers. That animators for such groups be well prepared...
13. That means be given for the Word of God to be actualised in the daily life of young families and that the word of God be used frequently during catechism lessons.
14. That existing prayer groups be sustained and encouraged and that more prayer groups be formed.
15. That the Pastoral Animation Teams study the possibility of organizing an annual retreat in their pastoral unit.



THIRD PASTORAL ORIENTATION :

CELEBRATIONS THAT ARE ALIVE

Whenever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst@(Mt. 18:20).

These words of Jesus have always been the basis of community prayer. Our liturgical celebrations are a direct consequence of the in-depth revision inspired by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican Council II.

The Council also urges us, very strongly, to have the faithful engage actively in prayer: *ATo develop active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, actions, gestures and bodily attitudes. And at the proper time a reverent silence should be observed.@(No. 30)*

It is therefore important that everything possible be done to promote the active participation of all the assembly in its prayer.

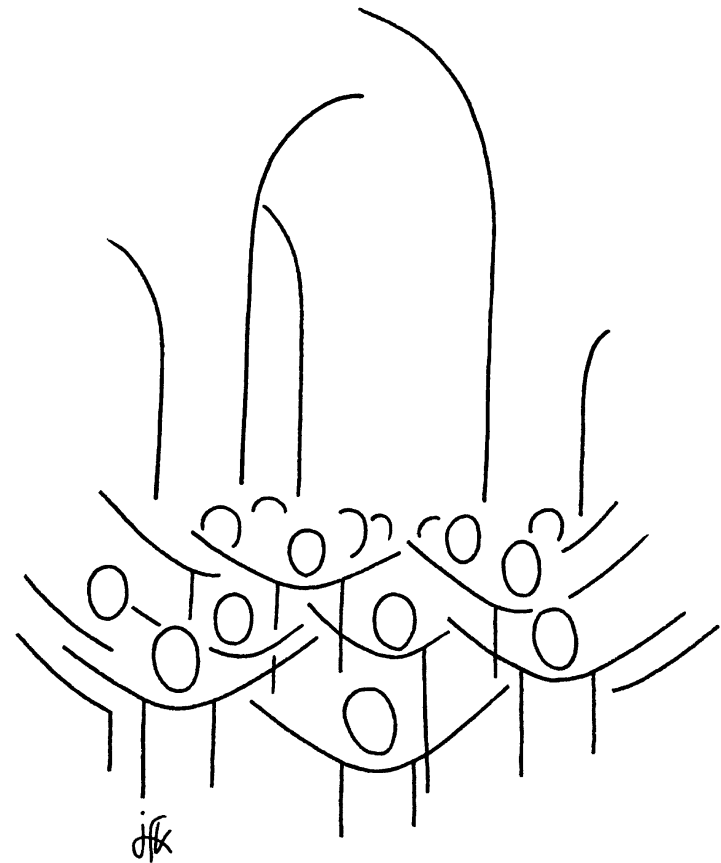
The challenge of our Diocesan Church at the beginning of the 21st century is that our liturgical celebrations (Eucharist, Sunday Celebration of the Word in the Absence of a Priest, or other celebrations exhibit a warm sense of welcome, and that these celebrations be more alive, more current, and in new forms of expression that affect to a greater degree the people, in their daily lives.



RECOMMENDATIONS :

- 16.** That the local liturgy committees see to the changes that must be made regarding visual effects ,the singing, music, and the participation of children, youth and adults, so that our liturgical celebrations be more lively, dynamic, creative, and adapted to our culture, and filled with a spirit of fellowship and celebration. That the committees make effort to find more young adults who would commit to serve in their Christian community.
- 17.** That greater importance be given to welcoming everyone to the liturgy, whether children or adults.
- 18.** That efforts be made, to help the assembly participate more in the singing at celebrations. For example, have someone lead the singing for the congregation, have the words of the the hymns available for the congregation...
- 19.** That in every pastoral unit, Sunday celebrations be prepared and animated by children and youth, preferably with a family or children-s choir, and with a special Word celebrations for the younger children.
- 20.** That each pastoral unit have a well-prepared animation team for Sunday celebrations of the Word and that formation be given to the Christian communities regarding the meaning and importance of these celebrations.
- 21.** That the PPC and PAT study the possibility of changes in the interior disposition of the church to allow more participative celebrations.
- 22.** That means be used to rediscover the meaning of the Sacrament of Penance.
- 23.** That pastoral units continue to offer celebrations of reconciliation during Advent, Lent, parochial retreats and on other occasions.
- 24.** That new technological means be employed to enrich celebrations and meetings/gatherings.
- 25.** That the diocesan liturgy committee help sustain the work of liturgy committees in the pastoral units and see to the formation of liturgy committee members.

- 26.** That the diocesan liturgy committee study the needs of the parish/unit liturgy committee and offer help.
- 27.** That as a link with a recommendation of the 2006 Pastoral Congress, we reiterate that the Sunday Eucharistic celebrations take place in the parish churches and that ordinarily, the Eucharist, celebrated in Senior citizen's homes, be celebrated during the week.



FOURTH PASTORAL ORIENTATION :

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, says that *The young should become the first apostles to the young, in direct contact with them, exercising the apostolate by themselves, taking account of their social environment... Buoyed by their natural ardor and exuberant energy, when awareness of their own personality ripens in them they shoulder their responsibilities and are eager to take their place in social and cultural life. If this enthusiasm is penetrated with the spirit of Christ, animated by... love... of the Church, a very rich harvest can be expected from it.* (No. 12)

And in Vatican council's Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, we are reminded that *The union of the human family is greatly consolidated and perfected by the unity which Christ established among the sons and daughters of God* (No. 42.1) We are also told that *The well-being of the human individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of the community of marriage and the family* (47.1) The Council also insists on the fact that *The family is, in a sense, a school for human enrichment.* (52.1)

The challenge of our Diocesan Church at the beginning of the 21st century is to follow up on this vision of building up communities where the families and the young have their place, where they are respected and listened to, and where they feel that they can participate in the work of Christ among us to build a better world, a world of justice.



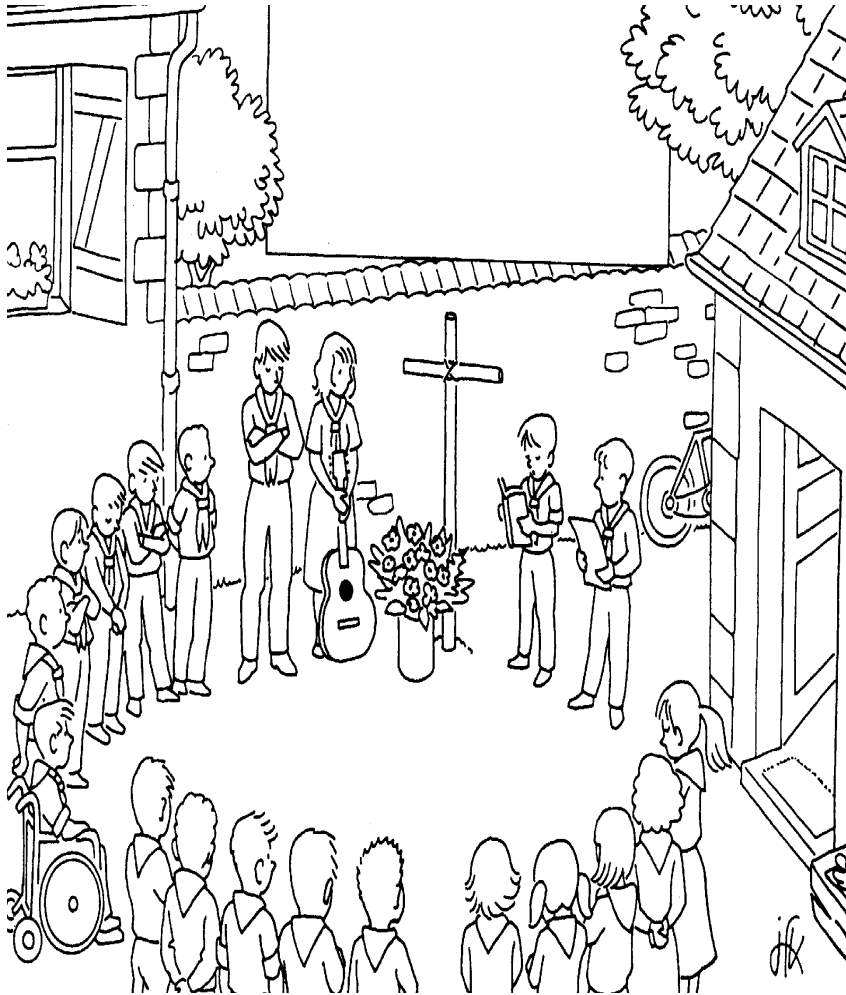
RECOMMENDATIONS :

28. That the diocesan youth ministry continue to form youth ministry teams in all the pastoral units with the help of the Pastoral Animation Teams.
29. That new ways be created and implemented to promote the evangelizing of youth and young adults, for example, the NET (National Evangelization Teams), which is evangelization of youth by youth.
30. That in our pastoral units there be activities and projects to reach out to and gather together youth and young adults.
31. That means and resources be available in order to consult with youth and young adults regarding their expectations and needs, and their participation in the Church, and that there be follow-up.
32. That the diocesan Youth Ministry Office organize Bible camps for adolescents.
33. That the pastoral units organize, among the youth, activities which aim at Social commitment as well as creative actions in favor of the needy. Examples: visits to the elderly in special care homes, etc.
34. That the Diocesan youth ministry, in collaboration with the parish/unit youth committees, organize pilgrimages and walks with reflections in our diocese for youth and young adults, for example: * *Des chemins qui marchent* +, in the Gatineau diocese.
35. That projects of international solidarity be organised to allow our youth to live an experience with those who struggle against poverty, in the Latin American countries.
36. That the collaboration of the youth and young adults be sought on the theme of the protection of the environment, for example the program of *l-Eglise verte du Centre canadien d-œcuménisme*. (*The Green Church of the Canadian Ecumenical Center*)
37. That the Diocesan pastoral services with the collaboration of neighboring dioceses: Ste Anne de la Pocatière, Rimouski and

Portland, organise religious and spiritual activities related to Congrès Mondial Acadien 2014.

38. That the Diocesan Office of the Family ensure that Family Days be organised each year in each of our pastoral zones.

39. That the Diocesan youth ministry see to possible collaboration with the *Village des Sources ResMaVic*.



FIFTH PASTORAL ORIENTATION :

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

Al assure you, as long as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it to me. (Mt. 25:40)

These words of Jesus have resonated in the hearts of Christians of all time as a preferential option in favour of those who are the most disadvantaged of the world. They call us to act on behalf of those who have no place to lay their head. Who no longer expect anything from others, or those who suffer injustice. They invite us to reach out to those who are excluded, to those who are rejected, to all who suffer. It is among these humble, fragile and weak people that Jesus told us to meet him. These are the people who must more and more become our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

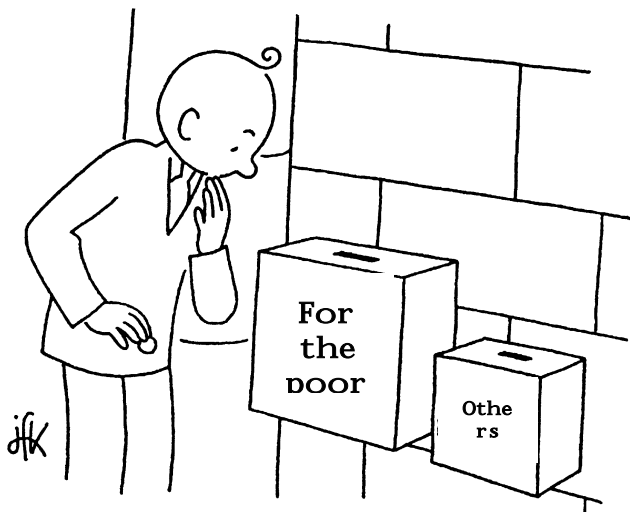
At the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and the anguish of the followers of Christ. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. (Gaudium et Spes, No. 1)

The challenge of our Diocesan Church at the beginning of the 21st century is that Social Justice Ministry be at the heart of the concerns of all our Christian communities and that it be the main sign of the vitality of the Christian faith in our diocese.



RECOMMENDATIONS :

40. That every person and every Christian community be more involved with those who struggle against every form of poverty (the sick, the disenfranchised, the marginalised, those who have been rejected...), and that they commit themselves specifically in acts of sharing and solidarity.
41. That a solidarity and social justice team be established in every pastoral unit and pastoral zone, to bring comfort and support to those who are deprived, and to work with other organisations for greater justice and solidarity in our milieu.
42. That formation in social justice, in conjunction with the Church's mission, be offered at the diocesan level (1 or 2 activities annually) and at the pastoral unit level, especially through the formation given to social justice and solidarity teams.
43. That the members of the solidarity and justice committees in the pastoral units work in collaboration with organizations helping the needy and support their actions. That the committees realize activities which are complementary and not parallel to these organizations.
44. That each pastoral unit accomplish each year at least one concrete action towards the less fortunate in their locality.



SIXTH PASTORAL ORIENTATION :

LAY COMMITMENT

The Church is mandated by Christ to continue His mission of gathering the people of God for the Kingdom of heaven. Henceforth, every baptized person, through his or her priestly, prophetic and royal functions, is an agent of evangelization: *“You too go along to my vineyard...,”* says the Lord (Mt. 20:4).

In his post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, Pope John Paul II declared: *“The call is a concern not only of pastors, clergy, and men and women religious. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world.”* (No. 2)

The challenge of our Diocesan Church at the beginning of the 21st century is to involve and form committed lay people who take up their responsibilities as baptized in the Church's mission.



RECOMMENDATIONS :

45. That greater awareness and promotion be used regarding the role of the laity in the Church, their responsibilities as baptized, and on the importance of their commitment in the Christian community. And that following this awareness, a greater number of lay people, especially young adults, be personally challenged to commit themselves to using their charismas in service to the Christian community.

46. That the School of Pastoral Formation be continued and that continued formation for those engaged in pastoral services be given according to the needs, so as to form leaders for our Christian communities.

47. That we offer training to lay people (men and women) in leading celebrations of the Word or Sunday Celebrations of the Word in the Absence of a Priest, weekday celebrations, and celebrations for baptisms, weddings and funerals. That these people be mandated by the Bishop for these ministries.

48. That we continue and improve teamwork among priests and lay people in a spirit of real collaboration, mutual respect, and democracy in decision-making, in listening, in fellowship, and in sharing responsibility.

49. That we see whether there is interest, need, or relevance of having the diaconate in our diocese.

50. That a Diocesan committee *AWomen in the Church* be created to raise awareness of the importance of women in the mission of the Church and to work towards giving women a greater role in the Church.

51. That the Pastoral animation Team see to the setting up of a team to extend a service of pastoral care for the elderly in senior citizen's homes in their pastoral unit.

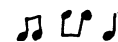
SEVENTH PASTORAL ORIENTATION :

PASTORAL RESTRUCTURING

Proclaiming the *AGood News of the Kingdom* requires of everyone in the diocese to make an effort to adapt so as to reach out to as many believers as possible in those less frequented or unknown places. It is Jesus himself who, at the sight of the immense needs around him, commanded his disciples to roll up their sleeves: *AThe harvest is great but the laborers are few: pray therefore the Master of the harvest to send laborers to his harvest* (Mt. 9:35-37).

The pastoral undertakings will have to concentrate more on the people, as they reach out to those who are outside the traditional path. Due to the decrease in the number of ordained ministers and of consecrated people, lay people will have to commit themselves more and more in their communities.

The challenge of our Diocesan Church at the beginning of the 21st century is that pastoral restructuring promote more lively and dynamic communities in service to the mission.



*We are Gods people
on the way*



RECOMMENDATIONS :

52. That continued effort be expended in each pastoral unit to value, promote and organize common pastoral services. Examples; baptism preparation, ministry to the sick, youth ministry, social justice ministry, liturgy...

53. That the baptized in our Diocesan Church be made aware of the actual situation of our diocese and parishes, to encourage greater use of their baptismal responsibilities. This awareness could be made among other ways, during the homilies, at meetings of diocesan organizations, through the media and the diocesan web site.

54. That we find ways to reach out to interest and motivate adolescents and young adults, especially the parents, to involving themselves in their community.

55. That in all reflection and discussion concerning pastoral restructuring, priority be placed on living and dynamic communities that take themselves in hand and implement the mission of the Church by offering services in every sector of pastoral ministry.

56. That the diocesan services determine the process to be implemented when the time will come to reflect on the future of a parish building, a place of worship, or a parish. This process shall include consulting the parishioners, both young adults and older ones, and to encourage the participation of the greatest number in decision making.

57. That a study be made by the Diocesan Pastoral Council of the role and responsibilities of the parish animation team (PAT) and the parish pastoral council (PPC), so as to determine if any changes need to be made to these two groups.

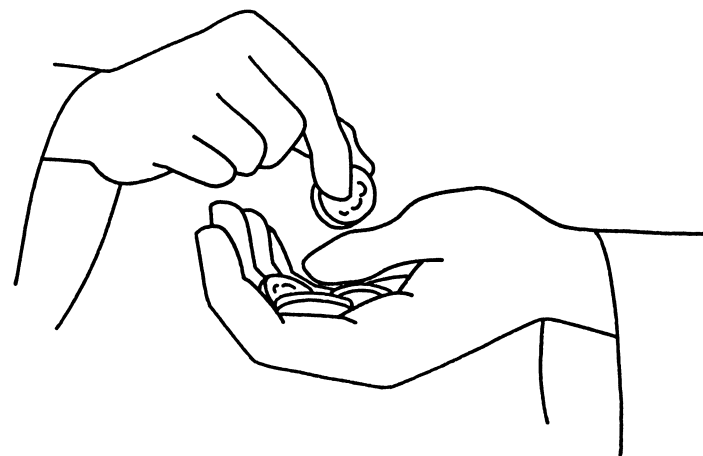
EIGHTH PASTORAL ORIENTATION :

FINANCES IN SERVICE TO THE MISSION

A parish's first mission is proclaiming the Good News and to spread the message of Jesus Christ. This important mission is carried out especially through the implementation of all areas of pastoral work, and this implies that financial resources be available for carrying out pastoral projects and activities.

In a diocesan document on the role of the parish council for economic affairs (PEAC), it was said that *“The PEAC needs to know the pastoral situation of the parish in order to make enlightened decisions, when the budget is drawn up.”*

The challenge of our Diocesan Church at the beginning of the 21st century is to ensure that, despite the decrease of financial resources, the administration of economic affairs be more focused on the pastoral work and the carrying out of the mission of the Church.



RECOMMENDATIONS :

58. That parish councils for economic affairs (PEAC) receive training on the importance of contributing financial resources to the different areas of pastoral work.

59. That formation be offered by the diocesan committee for economic affairs to members of parish councils for economic affairs(PEAC) and to parish managers to make it easier for them to to administer the material and financial resources of the parish.

60. That there be a study in the parishes regarding the use of parish buildings in order to enlighten those involved in their decisions.

61. That in the pastoral units there be a study regarding the possibility of remunerating those full- or part-time pastoral agents who have a specific mandate from the bishop.

62. That the members of the PPC make the parishioners aware of the importance of collaborating in finding means to financially sustain their parish community.

63. That occasionally, at the end of a Sunday celebration or on other occasions, a member of the PEAC inform the parishioners of the financial situation of the parish.



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