



From A Bishop's Journal (638)

Recommendations Adopted at the Pastoral Orientation Congress

I am pleased to pass on to you the recommendations adopted at the Pastoral Orientation Congress for a New Evangelisation. They are precious guidelines to help us, in the next ten years. I accept them with confidence and gratitude.

Preamble

Whereas the Edmundston diocesan Church serves the Church's mission to "build vibrant communities, energised by youth" for today; whereas there are many challenges to be met regarding ministries, the restructuring of pastoral services, population shifts, the decrease in the number of priests, religious practice in general, finances, and the administration of our religious properties, in order to respond to the mission; whereas more and more lay people have become involved in serving their Church because of their faith, since Vatican Council II; whereas diocesan projects aim at raising the interest of families, youth, the needy, and people of every generation, in the future of our diocesan Church; whereas we are challenged to make changes for the sake of witnessing our faith in Jesus Christ:

1. "That it be courageously but resolutely acknowledged by the people of the diocese that new pastoral restructuring is needed in order to ensure the vitality of our diocesan Church."

Whereas any structural change or way of doing brings about inevitable concerns and resistance; whereas changes are made easier when they are publicised long in advance in both parishes and the media; whereas changes are made easier when close attention is paid to eliminating any detail which could cause dissension, such as favouritism towards one parish over another, the language used, the choice of meeting places, etc.; whereas the changes shall be consolidated if we are concerned with always building bridges between communities, through common actions; whereas there are certain advantages in these changes for the faithful of parishes concerned, such as better secretarial services, a greater variety of pastoral services, the elimination of duplication of services, etc., and that these improvements should be announced; whereas success of the pastoral restructuring is fundamentally founded on the adequate and complete preparation of the people of the diocese to accept them; whereas we shall need to pay special attention to recruiting active and committed volunteers:

2. "That meticulous attention be paid to planning the changes, and that there first be a process of consultation and awareness-raising of the parishioners concerned."

PROPHETIC FUNCTION – FORMATION TO CHRISTIAN LIVING

Family- and Parish-Based Catechetics

3. "That through a periodic evaluation of the family- and parish-based catechetics by catechists and parents, the Diocesan Commission on Family- and Parish-Based Catechetics identify the main needs in this area, and establish priorities in actions to be taken to respond to the needs expressed."
4. "That through concrete actions (such as homilies or meetings with parents for catechesis and sacramental preparation) parents be made more aware of their role in the Christian education of their children, and of the commitment they made when they asked to have their children be baptised."
5. "That members of pastoral teams be involved with catechists and parents to incite them to better prepare themselves in order to respond to their mission of evangelisation, especially through increased participation in the training sessions offered."
6. "That the diocesan Commission on Family- and Parish-Based Catechetics prepare a programme for levels 7 and 8, coherent with a revalued Profession of Faith."
7. "That parishes that so desire, replace the family- and parish-based catechetics for the 12-14 years old by an adapted pastoral ministry."
8. That catechetical training for children in grades 7 and 8 be established by joint pastoral youth ministry and family- and parish-based catechetics committees, and that this undertaking then be experimented at the parish level.
9. "That following an inventory of what already exists, and thanks to the animation of the diocesan Commission on Family- and Parish-Based Catechetics, parishes or pastoral units look into the possibility of setting up ways of promoting the religious awakening of children 0-6 years, as follow-up to their baptism."
10. "That following consultation with pastoral teams, his Excellency our Bishop give clear and precise guidelines concerning preparation and admission to the different sacraments. In this way, all parishes and parish units will follow the same guidelines and will have the same requirements for all candidates."
11. "That the diocesan commission on catechetics ensure that within the family- and parish-based catechetical programme there be an adequate and adapted formula for the preparation of the sacraments of Reconciliation, the Eucharist, and Confirmation."

Adult Faith Education

12. "That the École de la Foi consider decentralising its courses/sessions and hold them in the different pastoral zones of the diocese so as to reach as many people as possible in these milieus, and in this way increase the number of participants."
13. "That sessions for the School of Faith be still held for the general population of the diocese."
14. "That the School of Faith be revalued as a means of basic Christian formation for the people of the diocese."
15. "That the [French] Lenten Conferences be considered as a means of Christian formation of adults throughout the diocese."
16. "That consideration be given to organising a diocesan evangelisation campaign, following the financial campaign now taking place, and that it be professionally organised and structured by people competent in this matter."
17. "Whereas many people are believers but do not regularly attend church, that different new ways be found to reach the general public at the spiritual level, through different means of popular education: for example, "L'Évangile au quotidien" [The Gospel in Daily Life], minute-long radio "spots", internet messages, etc."
18. "That within the framework of an eventual evangelisation project and without prejudice to or competition with local radio stations, we look into the possibility of developing a religious radio station in our diocese."
19. "That within the framework of an eventual diocesan evangelisation campaign, be studied the possibility of publishing a bi-monthly bilingual diocesan newspaper, which could be funded in part by commercial advertisements."

20. "That within the framework of an eventual diocesan evangelisation campaign, each parish or pastoral unit adopt and implement a pastoral evangelisation project, taking into account the situation of families and youth.

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