

# DETERMINING YOUR PARISH RESPONSE

All your efforts so far in the Year of Service have led to this critical step. The inventory process, the evaluation of the results, the preliminary plans for a parish response, and the parish-wide meeting have all led to this decision point: determining how your parish will increase outreach to pregnant women in need. During this time, we suggest that the core team gathers once more to pray and consider all the information and the feedback from the parish-wide meeting. (Consider praying a Holy Hour together as a core team.) Together, and in collaboration with the pastor, they should discuss and discern what commitments the parish will make to serve mothers in need. Plans for your parish response should then be finalized and presented to the pastor for approval. Use the following steps to help you finish this critical part of process.

## 1. Consider the Needs of Your Community

Gather all the information you have compiled so far, including the feedback and ideas from your larger parish community. Review the information and think about what the biggest obstacles may be for pregnant women in your specific community. Think about the solutions you brainstormed for bridging or completely eliminating these gaps. *What are the biggest challenges facing your community, and what can be done to address them?*

## 2. Assess the Capacity of Your Parish

Now, take a step back to think about the resources and capacities of your parish community. *What challenges or obstacles does the parish have in meeting the needs of pregnant women in your community? Are these challenges financial, material, or spiritual? Can these obstacles or challenges be overcome?* Think about the particular gifts of your parish community. *Has your parish been blessed with financial or material resources? Do you have the blessing of a devoted community of faith with numerous volunteers? What are the unique gifts that God has given to your parish community? What professional skills and education might particular parishioners be willing to lend to our efforts?* Think about how the gifts and resources of your parish community align with the needs present in your local area. *What gaps may your parish uniquely be able to fill? How can your parish make the biggest impact? Should you devote your efforts to a single, large project? Or, are there several smaller projects you can take on to make a broader impact?*



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## 3. Seek the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

Ultimately, determining how your parish will respond to the inventory results is best made after receiving wisdom, understanding, and counsel from the Holy Spirit. Your responsibility is to discern what the Lord is asking of the parish community, and, in the words of our Blessed Mother, “do whatever He tells you” (John 2:5). Take time individually and communally to pray about your parish response and share what God has revealed to you. Remember that improving support for moms in need is a process, and that it’s okay to modify or expand your response down the road. The point now



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is to plan next steps. As the saying goes, “Don’t let the perfect become the enemy of the good.” Work together to build a consensus about how the Lord desires your parish to serve pregnant women in your community. While final decisions are appropriately entrusted to your pastor, share with him what God has been revealing to you through prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

#### 4. Commit to Plans for a Parish Response

Once a final determination has been made by your pastor, share the plans with your core team. Trust the discernment of your pastor and parish community, and commit yourselves to fulfilling God’s will for the *Year of Service*. Once your plans have been determined, remember to share them and your inventory results with your Diocesan Contact Person.

#### 5. Pray for pregnant women and the success of your parish plans

Continue to lift up in prayer pregnant women in need as a parish community. Regularly pray the “[Prayer for Pregnant Mothers](#).” Also, commit to praying regularly for the specific efforts that your parish will undertake. Ask the Lord to open the hearts of all those in your parish community, that they may joyfully contribute to bringing your parish plans to fulfillment.