

Best Practices Report – Diocese of Arlington

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The Diocese of Arlington established an Office of Multicultural Ministries and hired a director/coordinator for its Multicultural Ministries Project (MMP) to implement the U.S. Bishops' pastoral statement "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity." As a kick-off to the MMP, the diocese began a comprehensive assessment of how it serves the newcomers and ethnic communities. The Superintendent of Schools evaluated the school system and identified goals and action steps to be taken for creating an atmosphere of welcoming for cultural diversity; the Director of the Office of Resettlement conducted training sessions about cultural diversity at local parishes and for Arlington Catholic Charities staff, and the Offices of Youth Ministry and Family Life identified components of comprehensive ministry to all ethnic groups within the diocese. The MMP Coordinator began comprehensive survey of parish multicultural services and resources. The MMP Coordinator has already met with pastors in most of the parishes in order to familiarize clergy with the cultural background and worship practices of the different ethnic groups in their parishes, and to assess needs therein. To further identify needs, share best practices and begin developing a comprehensive strategic planning, the bishop and MMP Coordinator hosted a Diocesan Convocation for diocesan directors, clergy and parish staff.

The Coordinator, with collaboration from a committee of diocesan directors, will now spear-head the strategic plan, a major focus of which is training for clergy and parish staff. The Coordinator will also be the central point of contact to assist diocesan and parish personnel in providing pastoral services to newcomers and ethnic communities.

THE APPROACH

Methods or activities the diocese has taken to address the needs outlined in the diocese's needs assessment:

The diocese has identified a need for coordinated efforts to respond to increasing diversity and to provide special ministries for immigrant groups new to the diocese. As such, as a central component of its plan to implement the pastoral statement, the diocese decided to create an Office of Multicultural Ministries (OMM). This office responds to the need to move beyond *ad hoc* arrangements that only provide partial information about the full range of needs and possible responses related to immigration, multiculturalism, and welcoming strangers and newcomers. The OMM provides a centralized node for the intersection of various ethnic ministries, serves as a direct resource for newcomers unsure where to find the services or ministries they need, and advocates for needs brought to its attention to the Bishop, diocesan council, and federal, state, and local government legislatures and agencies.

A key need identified by a diocesan survey is education. Pastors and clergy need more training in the languages and cultures of the people who they serve, and parishioners and diocesan staff need to expand their horizons concerning their own capacities to welcome newcomers. OMM educates about these realities and provides strategies and techniques to effectively address newcomers of different ethnic groups as well as opportunities to recognize members of those groups as contributors to the Body of Christ, through multicultural liturgies and events that immerse participants in solidarity through their cooperative activities.

Challenges or obstacles the diocese has faced in its approach and specific actions the diocese has taken (is taking) to overcome these challenges in order to achieve objectives:

Obtaining demographic information to share with pastors and other interested parties challenged the Coordinator, but efforts before the beginning of the MMP aided in understanding the dynamics of various parishes and areas in the diocese.

Pastors who feel that all ethnic groups should be integrated and learn English are often unsympathetic to efforts to provide liturgies and services in languages other than English. Helping to understand language as a part of a group's cultural heritage continues to be a means of overcoming hostility, but there is considerable resistance on the part of some.

OUTCOME-BASED OBJECTIVES

The following is a list of the primary objectives of the diocesan action plan and indicators of success for each objective, as well as a list of activities the diocese has employed towards accomplishing each objective:

Objectives	Measurements of Success for Each Objective	Milestones / Activities involved in accomplishing the objective
Centralize and coordinate diocesan efforts to serve newcomers and ethnic groups by establishing an Office of Multicultural Ministry (OMM).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnic groups now have a central point of contact. 2. There is now a central facilitator for diocesan multicultural events and a central resource and referral person to find services/ materials in non-English languages. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinator of Multicultural Ministries Project (MMP) hired for new office May 2003
Promote a welcoming environment in diocesan parishes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The number of multicultural liturgies, events and services has increased in the parishes. 2. Education is now more readily available in the parishes in non-English languages. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinator has been able to meet 45 pastors. Most pastors respond positively, but many desire additional language training, support, or both.
Educational Resource Center will be provided for clergy, laity, and educators.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Office of Multicultural ministry is becoming a repository of educational materials meet the needs of those who seek support. 2. A database has been established which describes pastoral services to immigrants/ ethnic groups. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The parish visits and the convocation provided information on Welcoming the Stranger, clarification of Pope John Paul II's position on immigration 2. Materials are being collected on WTS, JP II on immigrants, other immigration and multicultural resources.
Clergy, laity, and educators will receive training so that they are more sensitive and response to the needs of the immigrants, people on the move and ethnic communities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The convocation and parish visitations allowed priests and staff to voice their concerns and talk about needs of ethnic people in their communities that were going un-met. The planned seminar has been designed to help the clergy/staff address these needs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education Seminar being planned. 2. Appropriate people have been invited. 3. Speaker confirmed.
Understanding and collaboration will increase among the different ethnic groups of the diocese.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnic groups now have more opportunities to share prayer, as well as leadership and collaboration on diocesan initiatives. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diocesan Pilgrimage included multicultural Rosary and Mass. 2. Ethnic groups worked together to help plan Diocesan Convocation.

EVALUATION OF HOW NEEDS HAVE BEEN MET:

Difference this initiative has made in the lives of those whom it is intended to serve:

Parishes have a greater understanding of their capacity to welcome, and there are positive responses in more liturgical options for multicultural communities, education in non-English languages, and increased participation of the laity—both long-term parishioners and newcomers—in working together as a multicultural community.

Catholic education in the diocese provides guidelines for being welcoming to multicultural learners.

Ethnic group leaders have a central contact point to address their concerns and to learn about other opportunities to serve their cultural groups in which they might not otherwise have become involved.

There is a database available to describe diocesan ethnic ministries and to provide contact information for those groups.

Ways in which the project has contributed to increasing the welcoming capacity of the diocese:

The diocese now possesses the capacity to coordinate its multicultural outreach efforts and has begun to develop a network of ethnic leaders and care providers. The clergy and staff of the diocese have enhanced understanding of their place in the changing demographic dynamics of the diocese. Parishes are building more ministries to address the growing Hispanic population and other non-Hispanic newcomers.

Ways in which the diocese plans to build up the work in the future:

Regular educational opportunities for ongoing formation will be provided by OMM. OMM will provide direct services and coordinate projects administered by other groups as part of the Diocesan Action Plan for “Welcoming the Stranger.” OMM will also serve as a resource for information collection and dissemination.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information about this project and best practices associated with it, please contact:

Rev. Richard Mullins
Director, Multicultural Ministries
Diocese of Arlington
80 N. Glebe Road
Arlington, VA 22203
Tel: 703-243-0752
r.mullins@arlingtondiocese.org

Last updated: March 2, 2005