

# Best Practices Report – Diocese of Rockville Centre

## DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The Diocese of Rockville Centre has built what they term a “5-5-5” *model of pastoral leadership dialogue* and development, bringing together five parish pastors to five meetings over the course of five months, to implement programs to welcome newcomers with a parish-centered focus on best practices. The dialogue has enabled pastors to reflect together on ways their own parishes have or can come together to serve their multicultural populations and build a sense of communion. Growing realization of the rapidly changing demographics of the diocese has spurred the creation of a *diocesan forum on multicultural ministry* that includes the initial five pastors as well as diocesan personnel, parish staff members, and lay people of the diocese who are all interested in providing effective welcome and ministry within the diocese. The diocese is authoring a *best practice report* with input from the dialogue and forum for use in other parishes.

## THE APPROACH

### ***Methods or activities the diocese has taken to address the needs outlined in the diocese’s needs assessment:***

Pastors and diocesan leaders need to provide effective ministry in a time of rapid demographic fluctuation. In accordance with this reality, this pilot program engages pastors, parish and diocesan representatives in structured dialogue with one another and with ethnic leaders in order to develop ideas for making parishes and diocesan ministries more welcoming for immigrant and ethnically diverse populations. This dialogue-centered program allows for solutions to common problems to be shared rapidly, increasing the continuity of services provided by different parishes and allows participants to vet solutions that have been implemented in other parishes. The program coordinators are using the feedback from the dialogue sessions to author a best practice report for use in other parishes. It is hoped that the program itself as well as its suggested outcomes will be replicated in other parishes.

### ***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:***

At times, time constraints have hampered the program and postponed scheduled dialogue days. Pastors and other participants have responded that they are either too busy or too concerned about other issues that need immediate attention. The program coordinators have also observed some issues among the participants themselves that have inhibited the capacity of the program to bring about needed change; including: an unwillingness to contribute fully to the dialogue, a lack of knowledge concerning historical realities of various ethnic groups, as well as a tendency to over-generalize about ethnically diverse cultures.

The program coordinators have recognized that the process of becoming a welcoming diocese is a difficult one and thus have expanded the initial timeline for the diocesan plan to increase capacity for multicultural inclusiveness.

The diocese has developed a needs assessment tool to assure that each diocesan and parish office has the proper resources to respond to the most common (and most parish-specific) needs of the particular communities that they serve. They have also developed additional training workshops to help the parishes and diocesan offices respond to already identified common needs.

<b>OUTCOME-BASED OBJECTIVES</b>		
<i>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:</i>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Measurements of Success for Each Objective</b>	<b>Milestones / Activities involved in accomplishing the objective</b>
Five pilot parish pastors will meet for five meetings over the course of five months to discuss implementation of parish action plans to increase the welcoming capacities of those parishes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parish pastors have participated in the dialogue.</li> <li>2. Positive response from pastors led to inviting more people to attend each session.</li> <li>3. Pastors and their staff members who have participated have reorganized resources and started to respond to previously unmet needs of various ethnic communities and newcomers.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Three pastoral meetings were held over the course of five months.</li> <li>2. Three additional meetings included additional pastors, as well as parish staff.</li> <li>3. Ethnic community leaders have entered into the dialogue with the pastors and staff.</li> </ol>
A best practices report will be authored by 5-7 parishes with techniques for replicating successful welcoming efforts. Modest seed money or “challenge grants” will help parishes replicate these best practices.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Best practices and resources and materials are being shared.</li> <li>2. Best practices will be available for other parishes to learn effective methods of responding to the needs of diverse ethnic communities and newcomers.</li> <li>3. Parishes will be aware of resources that are available to implement their goals.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Best practices have been shared in forum meetings of pastors, parish staff, and leaders from diocesan staff and ethnic communities.</li> <li>2. Planning is under consideration for a guideline booklet for diocesan agencies and parish staff in an effort to be welcoming to all ethnicities.</li> <li>3. Parishes are sharing ideas that have been effective for them.</li> </ol> <p>For instance, one parish separates by language group during the Liturgy of the Word, but the entire parish community comes together for the celebration of the Eucharist.</p>
The diocese will develop concrete recommendations for implementation of <i>Welcoming the Stranger</i> .	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Needs are correctly assessed.</li> <li>2. Parish efforts are underway to resolve problems that can be resolved on the parish level.</li> <li>3. The diocese is planning and beginning to implement responses to concerns that involve the entire diocese.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The diocese has developed a needs assessment and has shared results with the pilot parishes, diocesan agencies and ethnic leaders.</li> <li>2. Parishes are responding to local needs.</li> <li>3. Diocesan agencies have been informed of their weaknesses in working with some cultural groups.</li> <li>4. Spanish and Creole/French formation training has been established by the Pastoral Formation Institute, in conjunction with the Ethnic offices.</li> <li>5. Diocesan committees and commissions call for ethnically and culturally diverse representation.</li> </ol>

<b>EVALUATION OF HOW NEEDS HAVE BEEN MET:</b>
<i>Difference this initiative has made in the lives of those whom it is intended to serve:</i>
Immigrant and ethnically diverse populations are receiving a wider variety of better services. Diocesan personnel, parish staff members, and priests have a common meeting forum to share their frustrations and to offer support and guidance regarding how to deal with problems and to implement good programs and processes. The long-standing (“Anglo”) members of parish communities are responding with less anxiety and hostility than was the case before being educated and supported in learning about newcomer (non-Anglo) communities that share the same faith and parish life.
<i>Ways in which the project has contributed to increasing the welcoming capacity of the diocese:</i>
Those in positions of service or ministry have better training, better networks of support, and are more aware of resources to provide welcoming.  The Pastoral Formation Institute’s Spanish and Creole/French formation sections connect newcomers with ethnic leaders that have been trained to respond to their needs from within the same culture.  The diocese is embracing the task of embracing multicultural concerns by forming a special multicultural group to be sure those concerns are addressed during the synodal process that the diocese is currently undertaking.
<i>Ways in which the diocese plans to build up the work in the future:</i>
The diocese will pursue efforts for ongoing collaboration and education concerning its multicultural needs. Diocesan offices and agencies will be expected to respond to challenges raised in the multicultural forum. Parishioners will be encouraged to continue to learn about the changing demographics of the diocese and to welcome the newcomer communities.  Fall training will include special consideration of race and racism as a way to understand why responses to the same needs vary depending upon the group that will be helped in the process.

<b>CONTACT INFORMATION</b>
<i>For further information about this project and best practices associated with it, please contact:</i>
<b>Vanessa Baird-Streeter</b> <b>Diocese of Rockville Centre</b> <b>50 North Park Avenue</b> <b>Rockville Centre, NY 11570</b> <b>Tel: (516) 678-5800 ext 239</b> <b>Fax: (516) 255-3780</b> <a href="mailto:vbaird@drvc.org">vbaird@drvc.org</a>

Updated: March 14, 2005