

# Best Practices Report – San Bernardino

## DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The diocese has hired a Diocesan Coordinator for “Welcoming the Stranger.” The coordinator works collaboratively with the Offices of Hispanic Affairs and Asian and Pacific Ministry, Pastoral Services, Vicar for Clergy, Vicar for Religious, Social Concerns, Liturgy, as well as other offices and parish leadership to implement the Diocesan Action Plan for Welcoming the Stranger. A Steering Committee -- comprised of leaders from seven pilot parishes representing each of the six vicariates (and one additional parish), as well as various ethnic groups -- provides support and leadership in implementation of the plan. The seven parishes are conducting intensive work to implement the document, as pilot. Future plans are also being made to host a “Leadership Symposium” and ‘parish studies” in order to gather data on the successes and challenge of the pilot parishes, and to offer increased opportunities to collaborate in new and ongoing implementation efforts for the Diocesan Action Plan.

## THE APPROACH

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

The cornerstone of the diocese’s plan was to hire a “Welcoming the Stranger” Coordinator. The coordinator has provided a common source of information and planning regarding the activities of diverse groups in the diocese, bridging a previous gap between various ethnic communities, newcomers, and parish leadership. The efforts of the coordinator also replace efforts of those who had multicultural concerns and newcomer concerns added to their other full-time responsibilities. Thus, there is an increase in consistency and follow through on the part of diocesan leadership and the Pastoral Center.

The Diocese also brought together the leadership from ethnic communities represented in the diocese as well as seven pilot parishes to form a “Steering Committee” to oversee implementation of the dioceses’ “Welcoming the Stranger” Action Plan. The pilot parishes have made the greatest advances in responding to needs as they are identified. They have engaged in advocacy efforts. They have developed activities and opportunities for sharing stories and gifts, including multicultural family picnics, celebration of cultural feasts, and celebration of intercultural liturgies. Newcomers are now welcomed in a more systematic fashion, and they are included in the leadership of the parish communities to which they belong.

### *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:*

The diocese reports numerous challenges to implementation of its plan. Parish leaders are often unwilling to commit the time asked of them. Resources have been unavailable in the languages of the populations targeted by the coordinator, steering committee, and pilot parishes. Parishes and ethnic groups are often hostile to collaborative efforts. Geographical distances impose additional barriers, which must be worked around as they cannot be changed.

The coordinator has engaged in monthly meetings with pastors and parish staff to promote the benefits of implementing the project and to provide support in meeting challenges with appropriate attitudes and responses. Outside assistance has alleviated some difficulties in securing appropriate resources, including efforts within the Bishops Conference to post a Spanish translation of “Welcoming the Stranger” on the pastoral statement’s website within Migration and Refugee Services. Training and follow up have increased willingness to meet needs and collaborate as cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication foster more understanding, acceptance, and cooperation.

<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>
The diocese will respond better to the needs of newcomers and ethnic communities by hiring a Welcoming the Stranger Coordinator to facilitate diocesan programs and initiatives to serve these populations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The coordinator has undertaken many new initiatives to reach newcomers and ethnic communities including working with ethnic and parish leaders on the “Steering Committee” to oversee the implementation of the diocesan action plan for welcoming the stranger.</li> <li>2. The coordinator has provided a common source of information and planning regarding the activities of diverse groups in the diocese, bridging a previous gap between various ethnic communities, newcomers, and parish leadership.</li> <li>3. The efforts of the coordinator also replace efforts of those who had multicultural concerns and newcomer concerns added to their other full-time responsibilities. Thus, there is an increase in consistency and follow through on the part of diocesan leadership and the Pastoral Center.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The coordinator was hired in January 2003.</li> <li>2. The coordinator meets regularly with the Steering Committee for the Action Plan.</li> <li>3. The coordinator meets monthly with pastors and parish staff to promote the benefits of implementing the project.</li> </ol>
The Diocese will implement the pastoral statement throughout diocesan and parish life by establishing a Steering Committee comprised of ethnic and parish leaders.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Steering Committee developed a Diocesan Action Plan and is in the process of implementing it in seven pilot parishes.</li> <li>2. See below for examples of the successes of the Plan.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The steering committee was formed and continues to function.</li> <li>2. Fifteen to twenty leaders from various ethnic groups and the pilot parishes participate in the work of the committee.</li> </ol>

<p>Parishes will conduct studies to document the needs of immigrant and migrant communities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Data is readily available in many parishes. The collected data helps parish leadership provide better service and ministry to immigrant and migrant communities.</li> <li>2. Immigrant and migrant communities have a greater sense that the Church is concerned about them and their needs.</li> <li>3. Newcomers have received direct attention regarding their concerns about parish allocation of resources, space, and schedules.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Several parishes are collecting data via interviews with immigrants and members of the ethnic communities among them.</li> <li>2. These parish studies inform parish decision-making so that it is inclusive.</li> </ol>
<p>Each vicariate will establish a pilot parish for implementation of Unity in Diversity initiatives in order to make parishes more aware of the needs of marginalized people, especially newcomers and small ethnic populations. As awareness grows, services will be established to meet needs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The pilot parishes have made the greatest advances in responding to needs as they are identified. For one, they have engaged in advocacy efforts.</li> <li>2. They have developed activities and opportunities for sharing stories and gifts, including multicultural family picnics, celebration of cultural feasts, and celebration of intercultural liturgies.</li> <li>3. Newcomers are now welcomed in a more systematic fashion, and they are included in the leadership of the parish communities to which they belong. Some parishes now systematically include newcomers and work for integration of diversity in parish leadership.</li> <li>4. Four parishes have added additional Mass times in response to increased attendance by newcomers who now feel welcome.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seven parishes are participating in the Unity in Diversity initiative, one more than the six expected.</li> <li>2. Monthly meetings provide ongoing training for parishes developing and refining their particular action plans.</li> </ol>
<p>A Symposium will be held for 500 people to discuss “Welcoming the Stranger,” hear stories told by immigrants, refugees, and other newcomers, discuss the results of the pilot parish projects, and evaluate data collected.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Planning is underway for the Symposium.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A date and location have been chosen.</li> </ol>

## **EVALUATION OF HOW NEEDS HAVE BEEN MET:**

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

Immigrants, refugees, newcomers, and others in marginalized communities have experienced an enhanced sense of welcome and participation in several pilot parishes. There is greater participation in parish leadership on the part of newcomers and parishioners from diverse ethnic backgrounds and cultures. Ethnic communities have developed better lines of communication within their own communities and in solidarity with other communities with the parishes.

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

Diocesan and parish staff members are better prepared to respond to newcomers with welcoming and sensitivity to the particular needs of newcomers. Parishes have informed themselves about their own populations and the needs of those populations, often leading to changes to structures or services in order to better respond to the entire parish. Some resources are more readily shared among parishes, particularly those within the same vicariate, where similar populations often have similar needs. In general as awareness has grown throughout the diocese and parishes, services have been increased.

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

The diocese has made a commitment to extend the pilot project to all the remaining parishes of the diocese. There is a strong possibility that the diocese will adopt the commitment to diversity as part of the diocesan pastoral plan. Ongoing intercultural training will continue to be provided, with efforts to overcome the lack of awareness because of which some do not assign importance to the benefits of the training.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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

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