

# Best Practices Report – Diocese of Wilmington

## DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The Diocese of Wilmington, through the efforts of the Director of Hispanic Ministry, has developed a strategic plan for migrant ministry and as a cornerstone of that program, has hired a Migrant Ministry Coordinator and established a Migrant Ministry Task Force to seek out additional laborer sites and to provide outreach, pastoral care and service to the diocese's fifty-eight identified migrant laborer sites. The Coordinator and Task Force accomplish these goals through a committed network of pastoral agents. However, this program is unique in that the diocese actually recruits parishes to sponsor migrant ministry programs to expand the ministry offered by the pastoral agents. Parishes provide transportation for migrants to and from liturgical services; they host events to build community with the migrants; they host special sacramental and leadership formation classes for the migrants and they sponsor services (like ESL or AA meetings). To encourage more parishes to establish migrant ministry programs and to appreciate and implement the message of "Welcoming the Stranger," the new Migrant Ministry Coordinator and Task Force are organizing trainings for priests, deacons, seminarians, and diocesan and parish support staffs.

## THE APPROACH

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

The diocese is attempting to respond to the needs of the migrant community -- liturgical and spiritual, community and social, formation and education, as well as the need for social action. The new Migrant Ministry Coordinator and Task force are helping to meet liturgical and spiritual needs by providing increased opportunities for migrants to attend mass and mini-retreats. The Coordinator and Task Force are working with parishes to build community between parishioners / staff and the migrant community through social events, field trips, and special celebrations / feasts of particular importance to the Hispanic community, such as Independence Day, All Souls Day, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and 'Despedidas' (farewell parties). The Coordinator and Task force have also expanded opportunities for migrants to receive formation and education including: leadership development and training, Bible studies, and mini-retreats and seminars pertaining to health, domestic violence, and substance abuse. Social action has taken the form of direct medical and financial assistance, as well as lobbying and advocacy initiatives.

These initiatives are carried out by a team of committed pastoral agents in migrant ministry; however, this whole plan would not be possible without the active involvement of the parishes. One of the keys to the success of Wilmington's plan has been that the Coordinator and Task Force have enlisted the support of parishes in the diocese to actually sponsor migrant ministry programs. Thus, parishes have created mobile teams to provide on-site services, or parishes provide transportation for parish-based experiences. The Coordinator/ Task Force have encouraged parishes which previously have migrant ministry outreach programs to expand their activities and are actively recruiting new parishes to join the program. By matching migrant communities with sponsoring parishes, the program in many ways also becomes financially self-sustaining.

### *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:*

Timing creates an obstacle to providing a number of services for migrant workers. Long, unpredictable hours, with few breaks and sometimes no days off, require the flexibility of pastoral ministers. Some Masses, retreats, and field trips have occurred between 6PM and midnight. One priest is on-call to say Mass for a local migrant community at 5:30AM or 12AM, depending on whether they have more time before their work or after work.

Situations of "deplorable housing conditions and unjust wages" are not challenged by migrant workers, and they

do not accept assistance to change their situation. Unfortunately this means that basic human rights and immigration status issues will wait to be addressed until such time that pastoral agents have built additional trust with the migrant communities or have found ways to assure that abuses are not added to already unacceptable circumstances.

Many migrant laborers prefer alcohol binges and/or camp base soccer games over spiritual activities. The ministers have responded with camp-based masses, parties, and soccer games with longtime parishioners and immigrant youth groups, but results vary.

## 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
Initial visitation and an on-site need assessment will be conducted at each of the identified migrant laborer sites in the Diocese of Wilmington.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. So far, 32 of the fifty-eight known migrant laborer sites have been visited and 28 have been evaluated.</li> <li>2. Newly identified sites will be visited and evaluated.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. August-October: 32 sites received visits, 28 of which were evaluated</li> </ol>
The Migrant Ministry Coordinator and Task Force will formulate and promulgate a comprehensive diocesan strategic plan for migrant ministry.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The plan has been properly formulated.</li> <li>2. The Plan is being spread through the diocese and is being received with great receptivity as evidenced by the increase in overall activity at the diocesan and parish levels to find migrant communities assess their needs and expand pastoral and human services.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Task Force begins to receive reports from needs assessments.</li> </ol>
Parish priests, staff, and lay leaders will gain greater awareness of and appreciation for migrants.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sensitivity training, Welcoming the Stranger workshops, and “Transforming Encounters” were offered to staffs and parishes.</li> <li>2. Training sessions were successful as measured by feedback from attendants and by the expansion in the number of parishes offering services to migrants.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. October: Candidates for permanent diaconate received training.</li> <li>2. November: Two parishes received training.</li> <li>3. February: Diocesan priests and bishop received training.</li> <li>4. May: All diocesan seminarians received training.</li> <li>5. January through June: Six additional parishes and all permanent deacons received training.</li> </ol>
Parishes will welcome migrants into the life of their communities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increasingly, migrants have been invited to share in parish events.</li> <li>2. Parishes have hosted events which raise awareness of the history, culture, &amp; popular religious expressions of migrant communities.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. July: Outdoor bilingual Mass with picnic and beach activities included one parish and three migrant worker sites.</li> <li>2. August: Parish picnic with two migrant sites.</li> <li>3. September: First Spanish Mass at St. Joseph, Middletown parish included</li> </ol>

		<p>strong support and participation from parish pastor, staff, and longtime lay leaders.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. September: Migrants from one site welcomed into <i>Jóvenes</i> parish young adult group.</li> <li>5. July and October: Migrants from one site participated at retreats at two different parishes.</li> <li>6. October: First Communion celebrated by migrant communities from two sites at two parishes.</li> <li>7. April – June 2004: First weekly Spanish mass at two parishes. At least half of the congregation was composed of migrants.</li> </ol>
Migrants will have weekly pastoral and sacramental care available to them.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parishes have created mobile teams to provide on-site services, or parishes provide transportation for parish-based experiences.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. July: On-site weekly Mass established at Queenstown, MD migrant worker site.</li> <li>2. August: Monday night Migrant Ministry at four sites.</li> <li>3. September: Weekly parish Mass transportation for one site established.</li> </ol>
Migrants will have increased opportunities to receive faith formation and human formation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parishes provide opportunities for migrants to participate in religious instruction or sacramental preparation.</li> <li>2. Parishes provide opportunities for ESL, AA/Twelve Steps programs, or workshops on other topics.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. August: RCIA established for two migrant sites.</li> <li>2. August: Three sites have presentations on substance abuse, AIDS awareness, and overview of countywide social and medical services.</li> <li>3. September: ESL offered to migrants at one parish, with transportation provided.</li> <li>4. September: Talk on domestic violence at one site.</li> </ol>
Diocesan directors and staff will become more aware of migrant needs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Diocesan directors and staff have participated in sensitivity training and workshops on “Welcoming the Stranger” and found them to be inspiring.</li> <li>2. This has led to a direct increase in the number of personnel (especially seminarians, deacons and Catholic Charities staff) who have volunteered to help the migrant program.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. July &amp; August: Six seminarians and four deacon candidates participate in on-site visits to migrant sites.</li> <li>2. July &amp; August: Three deacon candidates trained to conduct on-site liturgical services in the absence of a priest; each presides at two or three services at two different camps.</li> <li>3. July: Two seminarians present a twilight evening retreat to 35 migrants at a retreat house.</li> <li>4. July: Catholic Charities Immigration Dpt. commences weekly on-site immigration services.</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:***

Migrants' spiritual and human needs are being addressed, and there is a greater sense among migrant communities of belonging to host parishes. More pastors are participating in visits to migrant camps. Migrants experience solidarity with priests, religious, staff, and lay leaders of host parishes. Pastoral needs are being addressed by priests and pastoral ministers from parish settings, taking local responsibility for the needs of migrants instead of presuming pastoral care can be provided for all migrants by a diocesan-based traveling team. One clergy member shared that his experience with migrant ministry has helped him through a mid-life and personal vocation crisis. This ministry has renewed his passion for the priesthood.

Eight parishes have established new Hispanic Ministry Pastoral Associate positions to meet the needs of migrants and immigrants. Eleven parishes have established new on-going ministry with migrants at thirty-one sites. Three of these parishes have initiated a new Spanish mass. Reports and observation indicate in two of these parishes, half of the members of the congregation for these Masses are migrants on the move. The diocese is also conducting additional needs assessments and strategic planning to initiate migrant ministry at an additional parish in a rural isolated region in 2005. A new seasonal on-site liturgy was added at a cannery in Queenstown, MD.

A delegation of four pastoral agents from Guatemala visited migrant labor sites as part of a solidarity relationship with the diocese of San Marcos.

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

The diocese is more aware of the needs of the migrants within its borders. Pastors and other members of parishes are reaching out to migrants within their borders. Training has prepared diocesan and parish priests, ministers, leaders, and staff to respond more effectively to the needs of migrants. All diocesan priests, seminarians, permanent deacon candidates, and selected parish lay leadership teams have received Welcoming the Stranger training.

Bilingual pastoral associates are being added with specific responsibilities to respond to the needs of migrants, immigrants, and other newcomers. Previously established ministries were given training and resources to expand the scope of their services, providing more opportunities for participation in liturgies and spiritual formation, as well as parish events and local social services.

Eight parishes have organized "Transforming Encounter" events and have brought migrants into conversation with long-time parishioners and parish staff to increase mutual understanding and build a sense of solidarity between migrants and traditional parishioners.

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

The diocese plans to complete its on-site assessments to evaluate the specific needs and opportunities at various identified migrant labor sites.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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

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Updated: April 6, 2005