

AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE TO THE
Write the Vision: A Prophetic Call to Thrive Congress
XIII 2023 Pastoral Plan of Action
“CREATING A REGIONAL PLAN
OF ACTION”

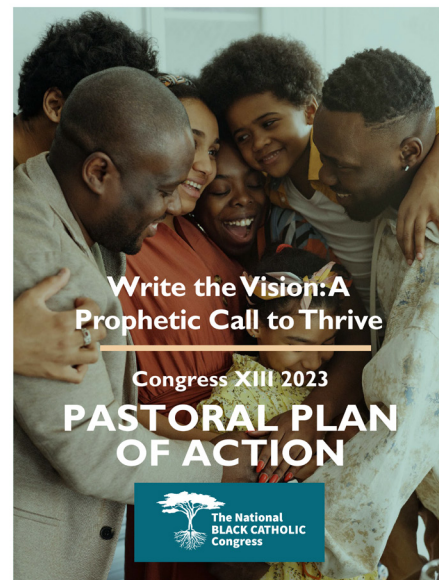


TO BE USED WITH THE CONGRESS XIII 2023
PASTORAL PLAN OF ACTION



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**Write the Vision: A
Prophetic Call to Thrive**

Congress XIII 2023

**PASTORAL PLAN
OF ACTION**



Introduction

This Implementation Guide was created to assist those (Arch) Dioceses and Black Catholic organizations that requested a step-by-step approach for creating their Regional Pastoral Plan of Action (RPPA).

The concepts and topics presented in this Implementation Guide are not meant to limit or define the content of your RPPA. We provide these ideas simply to stimulate and assist you as you identify the needs of the unique African American community to which you minister. The steps we give to create your RPPA are also meant as suggestions and may not fit within the outreach of your ministry. Please adapt what needs to be adapted, eliminate what does not work, and incorporate those things necessary to create the Plan that works best for your community.

Thank you for undertaking this task. We believe that the benefits of tailoring a Pastoral Plan specific to the needs of your community will give your constituents more “buy-in” during the implementation of the Plan, particularly when they are involved in the “construction” phase of the plan.

The National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) has provided a wealth of resources from page 32 through 38 in the Congress XIII 2023 Pastoral Plan of Action (Congress XIII PPA). We hope these will get you started as you look for ways to address the issues you identify as important in your unique RPPA.



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PART ONE:

Assembling the Pastoral Planning Committee

Steps you may consider as you create your Pastoral Planning Committee:

1. Contact your (Arch)Diocesan Office of Black or Multicultural Ministry (if you do not represent either office) to determine whether the office has begun or will begin the process of writing a RPPA. They may invite you to participate in their efforts, or you can request to be considered for the Pastoral Planning Committee. An important question to ask is whether the Episcopal Ordinary (Arch/Bishop) needs to give approval before the plan can be implemented within the (Arch)Diocese.
2. If there is no work underway, offer to create a Pastoral Planning Committee and oversee the construction of the Pastoral Plan. You should be prepared to provide a resume of similar experience and suitability to undertake this role, and a letter of good standing from the Pastor of your Catholic parish.
3. Reach out to the parishes within the (Arch) Diocese with a large percentage of Black parishioners to solicit members to join the Pastoral Planning Committee. Although a large number of committee members would be unwieldy, having at least one or two from each parish will guarantee that all voices are heard and that the finished Plan is more likely to have the support of all the parishes.
4. Invite leaders within the community to participate on the Pastoral Planning Committee. They have a wealth of organizational experience and generally possess a “growth” mindset.
5. Others to invite would be people who have attended Congress gatherings. They have experienced the mission of the National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC), and by attending breakout sessions and hearing keynotes from influential Black leaders, they have gained insights regarding recurring topics of concern and remedies to include in the Pastoral Plan.

PART TWO:

Creating Meeting Itineraries for the Pastoral Planning Committee

The following suggestions are merely that. If you feel your committee members are ready to jump into identifying topics to include in your Regional Pastoral Plan, then skip the preliminary steps outlined in numbers 1-2 below, and begin with the second part of number 3, completing exercise 1 of the Congress XIII PPA.

1. The first meeting should be an “Orientation”. The bottom of page 6 to page 7 of the “Congress XIII 2023 Pastoral Plan of Action” contains a list of questions that are useful to prime the committee members to begin thinking with a “growth mindset” about issues to include in the Pastoral Plan of Action.
2. During the second meeting, it would be beneficial to present the history of the National Black Catholic Congress with a focus on the previous thirteen gatherings. The Congress XIII PPA booklet contains a synopsis of each of the Congresses, including the topics that were addressed during those gatherings. Review pages 7 through 18 and make note of the issues that are consistently or repeatedly addressed. Are these issues still of concern today? Consider including ‘homework’ for the next meeting: Write your personal story of Black Catholic life. Are you a cradle Catholic? What’s your family’s history? Are you a convert? What prompted you to convert? Be prepared to share your stories at the next meeting. When we share our stories, we are evangelizing to others.
3. The third meeting can include the stories mentioned in step 2. Complete exercise 1 on pages 23-25, ‘Rebuild and Make Strong Our Relationship with God’, and write the answers to the three questions on page 25. The answers to these questions will identify the strategies you will include in your RPPA to address evangelization.

The main topic of concern the survey of Congress XIII attendees revealed is the future of our church. They asked, “Where are we going?” “What will our church look like for our kids; our grandkids?”

4. During the fourth meeting, complete exercise 2 in the Congress XIII PPA (pages 25-28), 'Rebuild and Make Strong a Vision to Address the Situations and Struggles in Such a Time Like This,' and answer the questions on page 27. These answers will be included in your RPPA as the issues of concern to Black Catholics that must be addressed. As stated previously, there are a wealth of resources listed on pages 32 through 38 in the Congress XIII PPA. What local resources (people, foundations, organizations) exist that you can collaborate with to address these issues? What programs does your (Arch) Diocese or Parish conduct that relate to this issue or similar issues? Who is the contact person for that program so you can meet to share ideas? Is there a program that can be created and implemented that will address this issue? Write the issue and list the action steps you propose to take to address this issue and include it in your RPPA.
5. This meeting of the Pastoral Planning Committee will focus on exercise 3 of the Congress XIII PPA, 'Rebuild and Make Strong the Community at Large within Our Parishes: Tell the Story of the Wonders of God Through Dreams and Visions of the Faithful,' on pages 29-31. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Don't be afraid to dream large and envision a more integrated, cooperative family unit, parish, and community. Once you write the vision, you can create steps to achieve it!

For example, if you identify in step 4 that one issue is a decline in Mass attendance, particularly of Black men, youth, young adults, etc., and you

envision a vibrant parish filled with strong Black families, including the fathers and school-aged children, and an increased number of Black young adults who are involved in leadership roles in the Church, this 'vision' should be included in your RPPA. Then, have the committee brainstorm ways to achieve that vision. It might look something like the table on the next page.

Once you have created the steps needed to achieve your vision, remember the list of resources listed in the Congress XIII PPA (pages 32-38). Don't reinvent the wheel if there is an organization out there with the same or a similar program.

Then the Lord answered me and said:

Write down the vision;
Make it plain upon tablets,
so that the one who reads it
may run.

For the vision is a witness for the
appointed time,
a testimony to the end; it will
not disappoint.

If it delays, wait for it,
it will surely come, it will not
be late.

See, the rash have no integrity;
but the just one who is
righteous because of faith
shall live.

Habakkuk 2:2-4

TOPIC: Decline in Mass attendance in parishes with a significant number of Black Catholic parishioners.

Vision: Create vibrant parishes filled with strong Black families, including fathers and children of all ages, and an increased number of Black young adults.

1. Action Step 1: Identify the Contributing Problems. Create an anonymous survey for all registered parishioners to find out how often they attend mass, why they don't attend more often, what could the parish or parishioners offer to make it more likely for them to attend? (This should be given to all parishioners, including children elementary age and older).
2. Action Step 2: List the Contributing Problems and steps to address them:
 - a. Fewer Black men are involved in the parish: Create a Men's Ministry that will reach out to Black single men, husbands and fathers and provide a secure and relaxing forum for social interaction.
 - b. Children reach a certain age and disengage from the Church. Institute a 'Youth Bible Study' using games and plays to learn about Scripture. Host youth 'shut-in' nights with food, fellowship, movies and games.
 - c. Black young adults don't see a place for themselves as leaders in the Church. Form a mentoring program to provide a bridge between the generations. This includes the deacons, readers, hospitality groups. Spiritual groups,

such as the Catholic Women's League, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Legion of Mary, etc., should be reaching out to young adults to ensure the continuation of the organizational leadership.

Mentoring these young people makes the transition much easier. Deacons can identify several faith-filled young men and invite them to consider entering formation to the permanent diaconate. Provide the venue for a young adult monthly meeting and then let them plan the meetings and activities.

- d. Many Black families within the parish need support to meet their basic needs or strengthen the family unit. Institute a Parish Food Pantry and form a relationship with local grocery stores and non-profit groups for donations.

Consider implementing an after-school tutoring/mentoring program for at-risk students. What other needs are there: Daycare, transportation, etc?

Would a prison ministry program strengthen families? Providing social reintegration programs helps both the recently-incarcerated and the family.

Refer to the survey of the parishioners to identify their needs: We need to listen to the voice of the people!

PART THREE:

Possible Topics for Your RPPA

This is by no means an exhaustive list of issues that may impact Black Catholics, but historically, there are several topics that were addressed during past Congress gatherings, including the first Congress in 1889, and remain relevant today. They are organized into primary topics that are broad in scope, with sub-listings of potential actions. You may wish to consider some of these when you are constructing your RPPA.

1. Strengthening the Black Family
 - a. Parenting Education Programs
 - b. Mental Health Awareness and Outreach
 - c. After-School Tutoring/Mentoring Programs
 - d. Prison Ministry
 - e. Social Reintegration for the Recently Incarcerated
 - f. Food Pantry
 - g. Career Training/Job Placement
 - h. Affordable Housing Programs
2. Guaranteeing Catholic Education for Black Students. Public schools often fail Black children. Another benefit of a Catholic education is the growth of the Church as non-Catholic students choose to embrace the Catholic faith.
 - a. Scholarships for students of color who exhibit financial need and apply to attend a Catholic School.
 - b. An alternative approach is to support a scholarship program within a Catholic school that is experiencing declining enrollment.
3. Increasing Catholic Spirituality Through the Lens of Black Ethnicity.
 - a. Small group Bible study (all ages can benefit from this, with content and activities geared toward the age group)
4. Reengaging Black Catholic Youth and Young Adults in Their Faith.
 - a. Training for Faith Formation Leaders that Factors Culture into the Methodology.
 - b. Men's Catholic Social Group
 - c. Study of the Six Black Holy Men and Women on the Path to Sainthood, and the Black Saints Through History
5. Evangelizing to Local Communities.
 - a. Leadership Building Programs for Black Catholic Youth or Young Adults
 - b. Mentoring Programs for Black Catholic Youth or Young Adults
 - c. Catholic Media Programs (Podcasts or Blogs, for example)
 - d. Vocation Awareness Programs



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