

VII. STEWARDSHIP

What identifies a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly are one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord. (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response Pastoral Letter of the U.S. Bishops*)

These seven essential elements of a parish's pastoral mission, then, with the Eucharist at the center, provide the filter through which the new wine is poured into new wineskins. The parish's purpose is constantly sifted through these seven elements as the pastoral council leads the community in the ongoing, prayerful discernment of the call of God to the parish at this moment in time. The pastoral council provides this leadership primarily through the process of pastoral visioning and planning.

SOURCES

Diocese of Shreveport, *Journey With the Spirit: Pastoral Council Handbook for Parishes*, 2001

Dauess, Sr. Margaret, Chancellor, Diocese of Shreveport,
"Putting the Mission Statement into Action", *Pastoral Planning*, April 2005.

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Diocese of Shreveport

Seven Essential
Elements of Parish Life

A Quick Reference
Handbook

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I. EVANGELIZATION

Evangelization is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. The Church exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious Resurrection.

(Evangelii Nuntiandi On Evangelization in the Modern World)
Pope Paul VI.

II. WORSHIP

The spiritual life of a parish animates its mission. Personal and communal prayer are essential to the building up of the Body of Christ. The worship of the community, in turn, gives expression to its prayerfulness. In the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist and in other sacramental and liturgical rites, individuals gather to manifest a communal proclamation of faith. In doing so, they carry out the mission of evangelization by witnessing the Good News of Jesus Christ to one another.

III. WORD

Catechesis encompasses the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help persons believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in His name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the Body of Christ...Catechesis is built on the initial proclamation of the Gospel to arouse faith, examination of the reasons for belief, experience of Christian living, celebration of the sacraments, integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness. *(Catechism of the Catholic Church)*

IV. COMMUNITY

Community is an essential element of parish life. It draws parishioners to gather in mutual support, activity, celebration, and growth. It is the unity that results from members becoming involved with one another in all elements of the parish pastoral mission.

Each individual part of the Church contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. Thus, through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase. *(Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.)*

V. SERVICE

The central message is simple: our faith is profoundly social. We cannot be truly "Catholic" unless we hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace. We see the parish dimension of social ministry not as an added burden, but as part of what keeps a parish alive and makes it truly Catholic. Effective social ministry helps the parish both do more and be more—more of a reflection of the Gospel, more of a worshipping and evangelizing people, more of a faithful community. It is an essential part of parish life. *(Communities of Salt and Light: the Social Ministry of the Parish. US Bishops' Statement.)*

VI. LEADERSHIP

Effective pastoral councils require a shared leadership among clergy and laity.

Pastoral council members ought to be individuals of faith who are capable of leading the parish in the discernment, expression, and fulfillment of its mission. Ideally they are people of vision, open to the workings of the Holy Spirit in and through themselves, while having a deep respect and openness for the workings of the Spirit in others.