

Appendix

SOLIDARITY POLICY:

Phase I

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The Intention of the Council of Vicars

1. To build a culture of care so that we demonstrate care for the whole Church.
2. To find new and creative ways to serve the Church in this challenging time.
3. To make solidarity a core virtue of the Church that informs our relationships and pastoral policies.
4. To facilitate ownership of the process so that every Catholic becomes a motivator and a champion of it.

1. Introduction

The availability and quality of pastoral care for parishes are directly affected by the number of priests in active ministry. In 2006 the Archdiocese undertook two rounds of consultations with the vicars, priests, religious, Ecclesial Communities, Chairs of Councils, Commissions and Secretariats of the Archdiocese, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, Vicariate Councils and Parish Pastoral Councils to brainstorm and forge consensus around high quality pastoral care for all Catholic communities regardless of location.

The intention of the document is to forge into a policy the consensus arrived at during the meetings with the leadership of the Archdiocese in particular with the priests and parish administrators. The major parts of the policy reflect the adjustments that have already been made with pastoral success in the Central and Southern Vicariates

The goal of the Archdiocese is to build a culture of solidarity through dialogue.

Example: In the Southern Vicariate, the priests agreed to a solidarity proposal that involves each parish doing without Mass once per month so that all of the parishes of the Vicariate can have regular access to the Mass (our norm is at least twice per month). The roster is worked out and communicated to the whole Vicariate so all of the people have the same expectation. This way all parishes enjoy high standards of priestly presence.

In the Central Vicariate four priests manage five canonical parishes. This represents 25 Mass centers. This is done by sharing out the Mass times between the four priests on a month roster. This brings a different model to the fore that requires closer collaboration. All of the priests, although they have specific responsibility in their parish, have responsibility for the whole Vicariate.

Both models gave inspiration for this policy document. If we work together and see the pastoral responsibility of the whole Church as that of all priests, then we will be good shepherds to God's people, with all of the resources for the Church today.

2. Policy

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port of Spain must ensure equitable and quality pastoral care for all vicariates and parishes in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Regional Episcopal Vicars, with the support of the priests within their vicariates, are directly responsible for the availability and quality of pastoral care of all parishes within their vicariate.

High quality pastoral care is defined as:

- i. Each vicariate having a detailed Pastoral Plan using a whole person approach including adequate human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation of the laity.
- ii. Each parish and its parish communities having access to regular (at least twice per month) weekend and weekday Masses/Services
- iii. Each parish and its parish communities having access to regular sacramental ministry
- iv. Each parish and its parish communities having regular Office Hours as required.

The Archdiocese is committed to collaborate and provide support to the vicariates to ensure the realisation of quality pastoral care for all our Catholic communities.

3. Pastoral Planning

Under the guidance of the Archbishop and Council of Vicars it is the responsibility of the Regional Episcopal Vicar to develop, implement and monitor a detailed Pastoral Plan for his assigned vicariate. The Plan's focus is to envision the sustainable development of pastoral care within the vicariate and the development of ministries within the parishes to ensure the concretisation of this vision. The Pastoral Plan should include:

- i. An analysis of the needs of the vicariate as well as the specific needs of individual parish communities especially where no priest is assigned;

- ii. Identification of the strengths and weaknesses of ministries within the vicariate and individual parishes; and
- iii. Identification of the personnel and training requirements for specific ministries in the vicariate.

The Development of a Pastoral Plan is intended to close the gap between the Regional Episcopal Vicar's vision for his vicariate and the ministries that must be developed to achieve such a vision.

The Regional Episcopal Vicar, in collaboration with the priests and the Vicariate Council will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the Vicariate Pastoral Plan. This will require the assignment of responsibilities as well as regular monitoring of progress through formal monthly *Pastoral Care Progress Report* meetings.

Example:

A priest or lay leader could be assigned the responsibility to support the Regional Episcopal Vicar in the development and implementation of an overall Pastoral Plan for the vicariate. For a priest this would mean having responsibility for his appointed parish as well as developing the Pastoral Plan for the vicariate. For a lay person this would mean having the responsibility, as a volunteer, to develop the Vicariate Pastoral Plan.

Whether priest or lay leader, the individual would be responsible for the development and implementation of the Vicariate's Pastoral Plan, building solidarity between the various parishes using all the resources of the vicariate to enhance the growth of ministry within the vicariate.

It is expected that in parishes with no resident Parish Priest that the appointed priest or lay leader will have to place more focus and effort in guiding that parish in the development of its entire ministry.

The appointed priest or lay leader will be directly accountable to the Regional Episcopal Vicar and will be expected to report progress formally at *Vicariate Council Meetings every 4-6 weeks*.

The goal of the Archdiocese is that each parish, regardless of location, should have access to quality pastoral care as defined in this Policy.

4. Liturgy

The Regional Episcopal Vicar is directly responsible for ensuring that all parishes within his vicariate have regular (at least twice per month) weekend and weekday Masses or Services. This will entail:

- i. The preparation of Mass schedules and the assignment of priests within the vicariate to celebrate Masses across the vicariate;
- ii. Communicating with other Regional Vicars for assistance, through the provision of priests for Masses in keeping with the Solidarity Policy
- iii. Communication to all parishes within the vicariate to plan for Liturgy, with the expectation that there will be both Masses as well as Eucharistic Services in all parishes in keeping with the Solidarity Policy

The parish priests within the vicariate are directly responsible for assisting the parishes within the vicariate, as well as the broader Archdiocese, through the celebration of weekend or weekday Masses in keeping with this Policy.

Priests not assigned to a parish are also expected to assist with the celebration of weekend or weekday Masses, as circumstances may allow.

The goal of the Archdiocese is that each parish, regardless of location, shall have weekend Mass at least twice per month and weekday Mass/Service at least once per week.

5. Other Sacramental Ministries

The Regional Episcopal Vicar is directly responsible for ensuring that all parishes within his vicariate have regular sacramental ministry (e.g. Baptisms, Weddings, First Communion, Confirmation, Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick). This will entail:

- i. Collaboration with priests within the vicariate, whether assigned or not assigned to a parish, to commit time for sacramental ministry to parishes without an assigned priest;
- ii. Communication with other Regional Episcopal Vicars for assistance through the provision of priests for sacramental ministry in keeping with the Policy

The goal of the Archdiocese is that each parish, regardless of location, shall have access to other sacramental ministries.

6. Parish Administration

The Regional Episcopal Vicar is responsible to ensure adequate and canonical administration of all parishes within his vicariate. For parishes with an assigned parish priest the administration of the parish falls directly to the assigned priests. For parishes without an assigned priest the Regional Episcopal Vicar is to appoint a Pastoral Coordinator to oversee parish administration. This individual will be responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the parish (e.g. maintenance, records, etc.) as well as holding regular Office Hours to give parishioners access to the administrative services of the parish. This individual is accountable directly to the Regional Episcopal Vicar and must provide regular reports of his/her stewardship.

The goal of the Archdiocese is that each parish, regardless of location, or the availability of a Parish Priest, shall have access to regular parish Office Hours and quality pastoral care through the implementation of a Pastoral Plan that guides all aspects of parish life, including the maintenance of parish buildings and surroundings.

7. Implementation Plan

Where there is a parish without a resident priest the Regional Episcopal Vicar should:

- i. Communicate with the parish and its leaders, at the earliest possible time, the norms of this Policy and expectations that the parish can have. Time frames ought to be included. The communication plan should be adjusted to the parish and Vicariate needs. **See No. 8.**
- ii. In conjunction with the Personnel Board, appoint a Pastoral Coordinator to oversee the good governance of the parish. (This person could be a part-time volunteer, a religious paid a stipend or an employee paid by the parish.) **See No. 6** above.
- iii. In conjunction with the Vicariate Council and the Parish Council, develop and implement a *Pastoral Care Plan* for the parish in the absence of an assigned Parish Priest.
- iv. This Plan according to **No.4** above should make adequate provision for the liturgical needs of the community. All Mass times within the parish should be reassessed based upon congregation size alternatives and pastoral prudence. If adjustments are made to the mass schedule, a Mass list should be publicised and readily available for the parish and the Vicariate.

- v. This Plan should, according to **No. 5** above, make adequate provision for the sacramental needs of the parishioners.

EXAMPLE: Vicariate Governance

- i. Each Regional Episcopal Vicar should collaborate with the Vicariate Council for pastoral planning and implementation of the Vicariate Pastoral Plan.
- ii. The Regional Episcopal Vicar could pull together a small Management Team to assist in the administration of the Vicariate.
- iii. This Management Team should possess the expertise that is required and could comprise priest, Vicariate Council members and lay persons from the vicariate.
- iv. This Management Team should have one person responsible for the overall pastoral planning of the vicariate and one person responsible for each ministry focus, according to the guidelines of Synod 2008 or the pastoral needs of the vicariate.
- v. Under the guidance of the Regional Episcopal Vicar, this Management Team has the responsibility of developing and implementing the Vicariate Pastoral Plan as outlined in **No. 3** above.
- vi. This Management Team should meet on a monthly basis with the Regional Episcopal Vicar to conduct the business of the vicariate. At this meeting each member of the team should bring a formal report on their area of responsibility together with questions for clarity and implementation.

8. Communications Plan

OBJECTIVES

- i. To sensitise Catholics regarding the existing situation in the Archdiocese with respect to pastoral care.
- ii. To inform the Catholic community of the proposed plan to deal with the existing situation.
- iii. To influence the Catholic community's acceptance of and support for the proposed plan.

KEY COMMUNICATION POINTS

- i. All Catholics deserve the opportunity to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist as often as possible but at least on Sundays.
- ii. The number of active priests in the Archdiocese does not permit all parishes to have access to Sunday Masses every week.
- iii. As a result of extensive consultation with the vicars, priests, religious, Ecclesial Communities, Chairs of Councils, Commissions and Secretariats of the Archdiocese, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, Vicariate Councils and Parish Councils, a Plan has been developed to address the current situation.
- iv. This Plan will involve some personal sacrifice on the part of some parishes in respect of Sunday Masses.

- v. The support and cooperation of parish priests and parishioners will be needed to give effect to the Plan.
- vi. The Plan will also include other aspects of parish life including regular Sacramental Ministry (e.g. Baptisms, Weddings, First Communion, Confirmation, Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick)

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

A comprehensive schedule of weekend Masses throughout the Archdiocese will be published in leaflet form for distribution in the *Catholic News*. At the vicariate level this list should be made available to the various hotels, airports, seaports etc.

Parish priests will be asked to call parishioners' attention to any changes in the existing arrangements currently enjoyed by the parish. This ought to be done on at least four consecutive weekends.

The goal of the Archdiocese is that this Pastoral Policy for solidarity be communicated clearly to all Catholics.

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