

## **Pastoral Letter Facilitation Guide** **February, 2006**

### **Introduction to the guide:**

*Since the publication of Archbishop Weisgerber's Pastoral Letter, Building a Church of Communion, many parishes and groups have asked for a guide to help them delve into the letter in their meetings and discussions. This guide can be used on its own, with a person from the parish or group as a facilitator or with a facilitator from the pool of diocesan facilitators available. The process suggested in this guide may require 2 or 3 evenings, depending on the nature of the group. In addition, the process can be revisited, over time, to look at any changes that have taken place. Gathering opportunities include:*

- *Potluck suppers or dessert potlucks*
- *Lenten or advent retreat opportunities*
- *Small group faith sharing*
- *As a session in RCIA groups*

*The proposed timeline for the process is as follows (the focuses can be done in separate gatherings):*

*Gathering prayer and introduction: 15 – 20 minutes*

*Introduction to agenda and Pastoral Letter: 10 minutes*

*Focus 1: 45 minutes*

*Focus 2: 45 – 60 minutes*

*Focus 3: 60 or more minutes*

*Throughout this guide, instructions in italics are for the facilitator.*

### **Preparation:**

*Ensure that participants come to the session prepared to discuss the Pastoral Vision. All participants should receive copies beforehand, and be asked to:*

- *Read it with purpose*
- *Highlight or underline phrases or ideas that stand out for them*

*For the session you will need: flip chart paper, masking tape, markers, question sheets (with the questions for focus 2 & 3).*

*The room should be set up in a way that is most logical for the group. There will be some small group work, so consideration should be given as to how that will be done; both how the space will be used and how the groups will be determined. Some people choose to give each person something as they arrive (a piece of coloured paper, for example) and have all the people who received the same colour join together as a group; others do the same with playing cards; yet others have the group number off and then all of the people with the same number are in one group.*

### **Gathering Prayer/Spiritual Formation**

*(Please see attached)*

## **Introduction:**

*The facilitator should set the tone for the gathering. Introductions (for people who don't know each other) should be done where appropriate and as required. Once the group feels comfortable and settled, the facilitator can proceed with introducing the session. Following are talking points that can be used:*

### Overview/background about the Pastoral Letter:

- The letter was written by Archbishop Weisgerber
- Part of the letter arises from teachings in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.
  - One of these teachings was to give a new way of understanding the Church: as the “people of God” and not simply a hierarchical structure and as a “sacrament” to the world with an active mission in all sectors of human society.
  - The documents that came out of the council communicated a message to the whole world, and not just primarily to experts and specialists as had been done in the past. “*Lumen Gentium* presented the church as a mystery and a communion of baptized believers moving toward heaven as one body that is holy, yet imperfect while on earth. Although organized hierarchically, the Church as a communion is a living body whose individual members are called to holiness and who each have specific roles, rights and responsibilities.”  
(from the *B.C. Catholic*, December 12, 2005)
- A good portion of the letter is based on a consultation process that the Archbishop undertook with pastoral councils (APCs, DPCs and PPCs), clergy and other groups throughout the diocese.
- The letter was written to bring focus to the diocese, to help us think about who we are as a baptized members of this Church and this diocese

### Goal of this facilitation process

- We are gathering to look at priorities in a church of communion and elaborate, explore, define priorities for parish and local church

### Process

- We will start with a gathering prayer
- There are 3 focus areas for the session [*This may change depending on how the session is going to be broken up; two may be done today and one another day*]
- In each focus area you will be asked to think about, discuss and respond to specific questions. Sometimes you will be asked to share in small groups, other times we will discuss the questions in the large group

### Guidelines

- Be respectful of others' ideas and comments
- Allow everyone to have an opportunity to speak/share

### **Focus 1: First Impressions**

*This focus is best done in small groups so everyone has a chance to speak; each group can record the results and these can be posted around the room for others to read.*

Focus question:

What words/phrases/ideas stood out? Why?

### **Focus 2: Current initiatives and reality**

*The first question in this focus can be done as a large group discussion. For this focus and focus 3, put questions on a hand-out sheet to make it easier for participants.*

Focus questions:

Recognizing that we are working together to build a church of communion, as you consider the current reality within your local context, for what do you give thanks?

What do you want to celebrate?

*The second question in this focus can be done in small groups again, with one spokesperson reporting back to the larger group afterward.*

Focus question:

What challenges us?

*Another way of wording this question might be: What new ground needs to be broken?*

### **Focus 3: Steps and priorities**

*Again, this could be done in small groups. Results could be posted for everyone to look at later on.*

Focus questions:

What challenges does the pastoral message present to us in light of our current reality?

What actions/steps can we take to strengthen this aspect?

What further reflection/discussion does this suggest to us?

*Another way of wording some of these questions might be: At ‘a time for great creativity and risk taking’, what are some creative ways in responding to building a church of communion? What are some risks we need to take?*

*Each group could post a sheet with its results. These could be posted around the room. Everyone could take a few moments to walk around the room and put a check mark beside the two items that are most important to them. The small groups could take their sheets back and look at the items that were checked off by others. Each small group could come to consensus about the two or three items that are the biggest priorities for them. This could then be shared with the larger group.*

## **Conclusion**

*This process can be ongoing and should be revisited as a way to see how we're doing, and do what we need to make changes and adjustments. Reports from the process need to be shared with all members of the community. This can be done through the parish bulletin, newsletters or other ways that are easily accessible to people. The reports could also be shared at the deanery and diocesan levels through the DPCs.*

## **Gathering Prayer**

**Leader:** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen

**Leader:** Let us pray:  
Blessed are you, loving God, maker of heaven and earth, you have called us to be your people and to give you praise in everything we do. Be with us during our gathering which will bring your people together. Help us to meet one another in joy and to work together for your glory and the unity of our community. We praise your name for ever.

**All:** Amen

**Leader:** Let us listen to these words from scripture.

**Reader:** A reading from the letter to the Ephesians. (Ephesians 4: 1-6)

## **Quiet Reflection**

**Leader:** Blessing:  
May God, the source of every good, bless us and give success to our work so that we may rejoice in the gifts we have received and praise God's name now and for ever.

**All:** Amen