



DIOCESSE *of* LACROSSE
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

November 29th, 2022

Fall 2022 Parish Roundtable Summary

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to summarize and disseminate parish comments from the Fall 2022 roundtables. This allows Curia staff to review the feedback and modify systems and processes as needed to more fully support parishes and their parishioners.

“The truth is found closest to the front lines” and the comments below represent the thoughts from 83 representatives from 90 parishes across our Diocese of La Crosse.

The comments are organized by alphabetically by topic and/or responsible Curia staff section.

Bishop’s Annual Report

- *(We emphasized that this is year one, and we will improve and refine the process every year. This gives us a foundation to go forward each year.)*
- The diocese should acknowledge that they received the reports from the parish. It could be as easy as an automated message that says, “thank you for this data entry.”
- The diocese should provide more feedback on the material submitted.
- The pages should be formatted better. There are about five pages of extra space, making printing a disaster for the parishes. *(Several parishes at different roundtables made this comment.)*
- Google forms create formatting problems. Parishes need a condensed version instead of a six-page document. *(We said it would be easy to send parishes information via an excel spreadsheet that they could then process, and the parishes were thankful)*
- Parishes believe we ask questions that are not realistically answerable.
 - “How are we supposed to answer questions like, ‘how many people in your area are Catholic?’ Each parish has to make up answers using their own methodology... or guess. This damages the report’s integrity and usefulness.”
 - The submitted answers are guesses and all done differently.

- Claudia is exceptional and helps parishes immensely. Another person said, “Claudia is a Godsend.”
- The communication between the Diocesan team facilitating the report could be better to ensure they are saying the same thing to the same people.
- There needs to be more clarity about how the information Nick pulls can differ from what the parishes see and report. “Not hard feelings, just not understanding the process.” People want fidelity and transparency in the process.
- Parishes want to be involved in the webinars. They can type questions in chat, but they are not always seen.
- Parishes need more detail. Parish councils want this information, and representatives can’t provide it without providing multiple reports. So they have to direct them to report a, b, c, d, etc.
- Parishes feel that so many changes are happening all at once - Parishsoft, Quick books, etc
- “Feels like we’re battling parishioners, diocese, and parish councils” (*It sounds like people care about this process, are invested, and feel confused by a process they want to work.*)
- “I watched the finance webinar today. We saw some gigantic excel spreadsheet with a ton of formulas. Is that really necessary? Is there an easier way? There has to be a better way. The complexity is overwhelming.”
- The printout
 - The printout and deliverable could be cleaner. The google doc is unwieldy.
 - The printout and results should look similar to what we input - the Bishop’s report. The printed document is just pages and pages long.
- Parishes need a one-page executive summary.
- Parishes appreciate not having to do the numbers.

Catechesis and Evangelization

- Certain areas are seeing an increase in the Hispanic population. International workers from South America are coming to work at local factories, and we should minister to these people. Many who speak Spanish go to the Diocese of Madison or a local protestant Spanish-speaking church. The Hispanic community is especially focused on community, so we should help them feel welcome and to build a local community. We need help evangelizing this influx of Spanish-speaking people.
- CCD programs are smaller, need help finding teachers and how to replicate a shared service when geographically challenged (i.e. in La Crosse). Can technology be leveraged? Could the diocese provide online teaching? There is so much knowledge there - can it be shared? We need support/leadership/guidance from the diocese.

Chancery Bulletin

- The document is overall greatly appreciated.
- Parishes are deeply grateful that they receive this one consolidated document from the Diocese instead of multiple emails from different Curia departments.
- Parishes asked: *(we're working on revised business rules now)*
 - That we be more succinct with the parish bulletin inserts. Inserts need to be more concise and should only consist of a few lines for each insert.
 - Establish a limit for how long diocesan offices can post the information. Some items are left on indefinitely, diluting the document's effectiveness. *(Several different parishes made this comment.)*
 - Keep the philosophy of each diocesan office having a stand-alone section, even if it means some overall redundancy. It allows parish representatives to send the applicable sections to their parish counterparts.
 - Stop putting "click here" for information - list the actual website so it can be copied and pasted into the bulletin *(Could we use QR codes to accomplish this in the best manner?)*. Another person said, "create tinyurls instead of long links. No "click here".
 - Find a way to flag essential items - to distinguish them from the rest. Differentiate items for action versus items for information.
 - Only some people have a color printer so please also provide simplified graphics to help parishes without color printers.
 - The publication date and material is not aligned with the bulletin timeline. Parishes owe bulletin information on Tuesday, so parishes must have it the Tuesday before the coming Sunday.
 - Would like to see more information from Catholic Schools.

Communications & Public Relations

- Parishes asked:
 - That we more effectively distribute information about what the diocese does for the parishes. Parishioners don't understand how the diocese is an asset or what it does.
 - Tell the story of the diocese, so we know more than that the diocese taxes and disciplines
 - We do a better job of making information accessible on the diocesan website.
- MyParish app
 - The most important thing is mass intentions. One parish representative lists them for the entire month.

- One parish representative asked about cost, and we explained that only the [evangelus](#) aspect and feature cost money. We also explained that this could change in the future.
- Catholic Life
 - When a priest passes, they deserve more than a tiny picture. (*We mentioned that the complete obituary is online, and the parish representative responded that older readers aren't looking online*)
 - A parish representative particularly enjoyed the “last word” section.
- Ministry Scheduling: Several parishes use ministry scheduler pro software, but most do not.

General

- Parishes would like to see diocesan leadership more frequently. Diocesan leadership last visited many parishes years or decades ago.
- There should be a diocesan page for cemetery information. It is not readily available or accessible. (*many other dioceses have a cemetery page on their website*) Additionally, the diocese should post the video from the cemetery meeting several years ago. Cemetery sextons transition in and out, and there is no single place for them to find information.
- With inflation and a declining number of people available for the parish workforce, parishes increasingly rely on volunteers. The diocese should support this by recognizing volunteers' valuable contributions and simplifying diocesan reports. Volunteer appreciation day is April 20th.
- Catholic Charities should be connected to Giving Tuesday. (*done*)
- “Some diocesan personnel do not reply promptly to emails or at all. This is very frustrating.”
- Some parishes learned that a previous pastor was associated with a credible sexual abuse allegation only by looking on the Diocesan webpage. They would have appreciated a direct email informing them. Push the information to parishes instead of asking them to pull it.
- “The primary focus of the diocese seems to be money. The primary focus of our Catholic faith is found in Canon 1752. ‘... the salvation of souls, which must always be the supreme law of the Church, is to be kept before one's eyes.’ The Diocese of La Crosse seems to focus on money rather than the supreme law.”

Inspired by the Spirit Campaign

- The diocese should better explain the phases. How each phase and block are aligned isn't clear, leading to misconceptions.
- Consider using a local company to run the campaign.

- Parish representatives don't know what's going on and asked for specific effort to communicate with them on this.
- There is confusion when Mission Sunday occurs during the middle of this campaign. Too many campaigns make each one's intent and purpose unclear.
- "If you meet people's spiritual needs, money will come."

Ministries and Social Concerns

- The overturning of Roe v. Wade should generate a significant effort to encourage parishes to support pregnant women. For some women, abortion is, unfortunately, viewed as the best choice. Project Gabriel, popular in many dioceses, should be present in our diocese.
- The Lay ministry program could be online/virtual as an option. This is true with many diocesan meetings/activities/gatherings.
- The major population centers are prioritized. Rural areas should be better served by the diocese.

Parish Email Accounts

- *(We emphasized that we can set up and run these accounts to (a) help parishes professionalize their email addresses, (b) ensure the email address for parish staff remains the same even if/when they switch out (minimizes disruptions to parishioners) and (c) take some work off the parish staff's plate.)*
- One member mentioned that parishes could set up google workspaces at their level, and Zach concurred and recommended that path.
- The point of contact is Zach Tudahl at ztudahl@diolc.org

Parishsoft

- Fruitful discussions about how to export adult children. Sr. Donna is the point of contact - dkrzmarzick@diolc.org
- Parishes asked for training on how to use the software - which is especially important for new parish staff. *(the training is located [here](#))*

Safe Environment

- Procedural questions about how to update the roster
- A helpful conversation about training for those who minister to home-bound residents.
- Teresa emphasized that the paperwork transfers and moves with the person
- The home-bound conversation clicked with one representative when she asked, "So, you're doing this to protect our people from accusations?" Teresa's "yes" answer crystallized the requirement's "why" for her.

Temporalities

- Parish contributions to people or legal entities booked to the works of charity account (not the account replenished with offerings for sacraments or funerals but rather the general parish account) should be deductible from parish gross income (the amount subject to annual appeal and quota calculation) to encourage parishes to live out their Catholic faith and help others in need. This advances the mission of the church.
- Some parishes are doing well financially, and some are not. If parish A provides financial assistance to parish B, this amount should be recorded in the works of charity account and be deducted from gross income. We are all one team, so why not help those in our backyard who are in need?
- We should relook the semiannual St. Joseph's Priest Fund methodology. If parishes with one or more priests pay the same as a parish with no dedicated priest, it should be accounted for that the latter parish receives fewer priestly services. The \$1,000 semiannual assessment could be divided between the supported parishes instead of being assessed to each one.
- The parish finance manual needs to be accessible online. Hard copies are outdated.

These comments, recommendations and ideas represent the totality of our roundtable feedback. We are grateful for the parish involvement, the support from Pastors, and these opportunities to hone our craft.