

Steps in Creating a Vision for your Parish

Jesus articulated for us God's vision: God's Kingdom come, on earth, as it is in heaven. Catholic parishes exist to carry out a part of this enormous, all-encompassing vision. It falls to leaders in Catholic parishes to determine what aspects of Kingdom-building they will look to achieve.

The Church has also given to us some core values: the Eucharist as source and summit of our lives, the sacraments as visible signs of the invisible reality of God-with-us, for us and within us, intimacy with Jesus Christ as the purpose of all catechesis, discipleship as the aim of Christian initiation, and justice as constitutive of the Gospel, to name a few.

Finally, the parish is but one part of the Body of Christ. It is not the entire body, nor is a single parish responsible for the coming of the entire Kingdom. That said, a parish is responsible for some aspect(s) of God's kingdom coming. It is the role of leaders to determine what that is and then to set about creating the systems and structures that enable it to begin to be reached.

With these ideas in mind, let's turn to one approach to determining what the vision of the parish should be. With thanks to James Collins and Jerry Porris, here we go:

1. Ask yourself how individual parishioners lives are shaped more fully into disciples of Christ by the activity of the parish. Then ask yourself, if the parish ceased to exist tomorrow, who would notice? Why would they notice, beyond the obvious empty building? Do not think just about parishioners, but think also about the role the parish plays in building God's kingdom in the city, county and state/region.
2. Next, begin to put these ideas into words. A vision has to be able to be communicated. And what you have done in step one is see what is already happening.
3. Now, imagine. What do you want the parish to be continually striving to do? Which of the ideas you have already put into words capture the imagination? Just as Jesus captured God's imagination with the phrase "the Kingdom of God", how will you capture your part of that large vision?
4. A vision is an image of the desired future. What does that look like? What metaphors or analogies can you use to describe it? A vision articulates what it will look like if you fulfill your mission statement.
5. Now take some time to find language that is compelling, tangible and immediate. The genius of Jesus is that he enfleshed God's Kingdom. He was a compelling man, who did tangible things to meet immediate needs so that God was revealed. How will your parish do this as well?

Collins and Porres say there is no right way to create a vision statement. But they do say the following three conditions must be present for it to happen:

- a. An overall aim must be a reflection of the inner personal needs, values, and motivations of members of the organization.
- b. There must be an authentic personal commitment.
- c. Communication and reinforcement are vitally important.

This is the role of leadership. ConSpirita Consulting Network is here to assist you in leading the people of God in the footsteps of Jesus. We can assist you in creating a compelling vision for your parish. We can assist you in helping your parish leadership see their roles in this.

Resources:

"Purpose, Mission, Vision", James C. Collins and Jerry Porras, July 1989 Stanford Business School Magazine.

"Organizational Vision and Visionary Organizations", by James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, California Management Review, Fall 1991.

<http://www.growthconnection.com/Creating-Vision-Statements.htm> Accessed 4/5/10.