

# PASTORAL PLANNING

A chronology of steps for pastoral planning

1. Identify Mission

The purpose of a mission statement is to answer some fundamental questions: Why are we here? What do we hope to become? What is our purpose? What are we called to be? What do we believe in? What are our values?

2. Environmental Assessment

The parish does not exist in a vacuum; it is very much affected by its surroundings. To examine carefully what the trends are in some of the more influential factors and consider their possible implications on the success or failure in carrying out the mission.

Factors to consider:

- Demographics
- Economy
- Technology
- Labour Market
- Competition
- Trends in government – both church & civil

3. SWOTs Analysis

This is a self-analysis looking at the parish's internal strengths (S), weaknesses (W), its external opportunities (O) and threats (T). The determinants of a phenomenon being a strength or weakness is in terms of its being able to contribute to the mission of the parish.

Internal **STRENGTH** – some asset, resources, success which can best be used to build upon in achieving the mission.

Internal **WEAKNESS** – some need, failing, inadequacy or deficiency which can hinder the achieving of the mission.

External **OPPORTUNITY** – something positive outside the parish which has not yet been adequately made use of in achieving the mission

External **THREAT** – some obstacle able to seriously impede the achievement of the mission.

\* Because strategic planning is the way you are 'reading the signs of the times' and 'meeting the needs of the times,' it involves some method or other of identifying current needs of the people you are trying to serve. The SWOTs analysis step is one way of doing that. There are numerous other ways of bringing to light the particular needs of the parish at the moment. A survey instrument could be devised and administered to the entire parish or a representative sample of the parishioners. Focus groups could be formed to brainstorm some of the same topics. Polling could be done, etc.

4. Long Range Objectives and Strategies

For each issue discussed, the pastoral council will want to select a measurable objective (goal) describing the desired situation some time in the future. There can be more than one objective dealing with each issue, but the number of them is not the important thing: choosing realistic objectives is what is needed. To support each objective, you will want to get agreement on:

- its relative priority, even if expressed simply as high, medium or low in comparison

- some person or committee of the council to have oversight responsibility for the objectives;
- the names of others who will be expected to provide support in reaching the objective;
- a target date for the completion of the objective;
- an itemization of the general approach to be used in reaching the objective; note again that these will be generalizations.

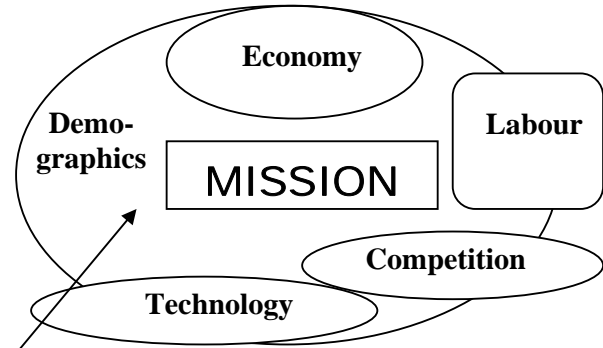
#### 5. Actions

The council should still be involved in evaluating the actions but the execution are left to the executive committee (EXCO). This part is really not any different from programme planning, but strategic planning brings a new discipline to the process by focusing such action plans on high priority strategies in pursuit of a clearly enunciated mission. Everything must flow from the mission and be geared to promoting the mission values. This step is nonetheless extremely important as far as implementing the plan is concerned. Without some concrete steps to put the plan into action, it will remain a fond dream, another volume on a shelf gathering dust. Therefore, it is important that individuals accept the work involved in carrying out these actions, and make commitments to report back on their progress periodically.

These elements of pastoral planning stem principally from the disciplines of organization development, systems design and research. The spirit which gives life to these secular sciences is theological reflection, which must infuse each step of the process. While no specific reference has been made to it in this discussion, the overriding importance of the mission, which presumably will capture spiritual values, will serve as a reminder that the care of souls must permeate the plan and its implementation.

*(Adapted from Developing a vibrant parish pastoral council – by Arthur X. Deegan II, Ph.D)*

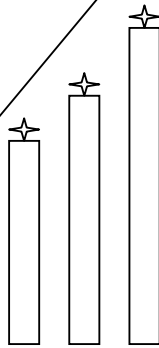
1. **MISSION** – desired position in an uncertain future.



4. **STRATEGIES** – Methods of fulfilling duties that will succeed in achieving the mission

2. **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT** – Trends & implications of external factors

**PARISH**



3. **SWOTs** – Analysis of present situation.

5. **ACTION PROGRAMMES** – Thrusts to carry out the strategies.