Fr. Matthew George's Pastoral Approach

St. Boniface & St. Peter’s Parishes October 11-12th, 2014

If there is one term that summarizes my over-arching pastoral attitude & behaviour in a parish, it would be **non-priest-centred**. While I am convinced of the essential leadership role of the pastor in the life of the parish, it is but one among many crucial realities – and forms of leadership – that we as a Church must be attentive to. Quite apart from the simple reality of less priests within our diocese, I believe that having a non-priest-centred focus will help as we call all the Baptized to maturity in faith and take fuller responsibility for how all the People of God experience our shared life in Christ. It has been my unfortunate experience that the majority of practicing Catholics have been conditioned to, or at least seems satisfied with “sitting back and letting Father run the show”; unfortunately, many priests seem to cultivate, or at least have accepted that role. Personally, I have found that in every instance where both the priest and the people have tried to adhere to a more “professional”, consistent pastoral approach, the community has been able to move from a personality-driven dynamic to a **Church-centred** one. We are the **Roman Catholic** Church after all – we should not be making things up as we go, as if we are the first people in our wide Catholic history to ever experience what we are going through. Both the universal Church and our diocesan family have guidelines (I never fail to be amazed at how many of our priests remain ignorant of our Parish Administration Manual, and the standard operating procedures therein) that give balance and direction to all our local concerns and actions: while I am not advocating for an impersonal, business-like model of our parish, I know that **starting with the Church’s take on things** – be it either the teachings of our faith, our Ritual, laws or diocesan policies – has always proved fruitful when translated into the local experience; and that it is not always the case vice versa.

For any major shift in attitude and behaviour to take place in a group, people need the time & ability to reflect on their present situation, the future they want and the course of action they choose to follow, to achieve that future. We are talking about a process involving many years’ work.

I have found the following (not in any order of importance) to be key areas of action, if we are to help our parish become a more mature community of faith:

- Parish Pastoral Council spending the better part of its time in prayer & pastoral planning;
- an active Called, Gifted & Sent committee, inviting, training & appreciating parish volunteers;
- a priority given to communicating the whys, what’s & how’s of all activities with parishioners;
- all people in parish groups, ministries & sacramental preparation programs sharing their faith on a regular basis (i.e., built into each regular meeting);
- increasing parish outreach to the poor, either by existing groups or forming new ones (e.g., the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Development & Peace, a mission committee, etc.);
- regular opportunities for on-going Adult Faith Development;
- excellence in liturgy, both its study & Sunday experience.

In every parish (mission, rural, urban & suburban) I have served in or been part of, the above factors were common to People who were committed to (in the words of our bishop): “moving from a maintenance model of Church to a mission-based one”. I believe our parishioners, given the chance, would agree they also share that same goal.
Outline for Baptism During Mass

RECEPTION OF THE CHILDREN
- Greeting
- Opening dialogue
- Signing of the children with the cross (Prayer)
- Invitation to the celebration of the word of God

LITURGY OF THE WORD
- Readings
- Homily
- Intercessions

PREPARATORY RITES
- Prayer of exorcism
- Anointing before baptism

CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM
- Invitation to prayer
- Prayer over the water
- Profession of faith
  - Renunciation of sin
  - Profession of faith
- Baptism
- Acclamation
- Explanatory Rites
  - Anointing after baptism
  - Clothing with white garment
  - Presentation of lighted candle
- Ephphetha
- Precession to the altar

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST
- Or

CONCLUDING RITES
- Lord’s Prayer
- Blessing
- Dismissal

Outline for Confirmation During Mass

INTRODUCTORY RITES

LITURGY OF THE WORD

CONFIRMATION
- Presentation of the candidates
- Homily or instruction
- Renewal of baptismal promises
- Laying on of hands
- Anointing with chrism
- Sign of peace
- General intercessions

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST