

# **Youth Pastoral Document No.4**

## **RESOURCE MATERIAL AND GUIDELINES FOR AN EDUCATIONAL AND PASTORAL PLAN IN SALESIAN PARISHES**

DEPARTMENT FOR YOUTH PASTORAL WORK-ROME

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EDUCATIONAL AND PASTORAL  
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## FOREWORD

1. The Salesian Congregation today serves some one thousand parishes. Its abundant experience is solidly based. Ever since the SGC, it has felt the need of programming and organizing this experience into a plan which expresses the pastoral identity of the parishes it has been entrusted with
2. The actual Salesian parish however, does not show identical characteristics everywhere (cf. GC21, 135, note 3).
  - \* Some parishes are located in mission areas, where the Church is being developed now that the initial establishment of mission stations has taken place.
  - \* Others exist in areas where there is widespread adherence of the people to the Church with a strong religiosity, which demands a deeper kind of evangelization.
  - \* Some are set in places where the Church may be said to be in a period of restating itself to meet the needs of a society which has been de-Christianised.
  - \* Others, finally, have been erected in regions where the Church has been allowed no other structures or channels of evangelization.

Another difference to be noted is caused by varied social and/or economic conditions of place. In fact, our parishes are to be found:

- \* in rural areas and countries;
- \* on the outskirts of big cities, with attendant problems of crowding, human development and rootlessness;
- \* in areas which enjoy good economic and social standards of living, albeit modest.

Parishes differ, too, in the number of Salesians assigned to it and in their relationship to the community.

- \* Some Salesians are assigned exclusively to the care of the parish;
- \* others are assigned to reside in a school community;
- \* some are assigned to a community which exercises pastoral care in an area where other parishes exist;
- \* some confreres work alone.

Finally, a whole series of historical situations has influenced the existing reality of our parishes as they took shape in the past:

- \* In some parishes the change was made from a "public church" belonging to an institution, to a distinct parish. This transition was not always accompanied by a realization of the responsibilities being assumed towards the area and the people; nor were modifications made in structures, programmes and personnel as demanded by the new reality.
- \* Others came into being as "parish presences" and so were never affected by any prior planning.

3. This Aid takes these differences into account. Therefore, it proposes developmental guidelines and incorporates within them a series of suggestions rather than directives.

It takes into account also that the two parish documents approved by GC20 already contain, in a well-organized manner, doctrinal development and operational guidelines. Hence this Aid is sketchy in style. Its aim is to help communities unify their various activities and their areas of work in a design which will be organically strong and doctrinally sound.

Although this is an Aid and as such offers a range of proposals, it does make assertions both in its understanding of 'pastoral' and in its manner of structuring communities which are in parish ministry. These assertions are based on the above-mentioned documents of the last General Chapters and, most of all, in our Constitutions and our Regulations.

4. This handbook best serves as a springboard for one's personal reflections; therefore, we suggest:

- \* that the Provincial youth pastoral team study it and introduce into it that restructuring and redirecting and those enriching experiences which local circumstances call for;
- \* that the local parish community read it carefully, so as to direct its own planning according to its basic guidelines;
- \* that all pastoral workers on the local level meet and that, after carefully studying the above cited documents, they draw up the main lines of action of the Province's parish apostolate.

## INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS

### A. Model of the Church

All pastoral involvement is both an answer and an adjustment to a given model of the Church - here understood as a vision or concept of the Church which, without cancelling other features, focuses upon certain central and vital facets. Ministry is in fact a multiple activity of the ecclesial community which actuates in our time God's saving plan for mankind and its history with particular regard to everyday factual situations

The basic questions, then, facing pastoral ministry are:

What kind of Church is at work?

What kind of salvation does it proclaim and actuate?

What kind of Church is being formed?

This is particularly true of the 'parish', since this is the Church as it exists in a definite place. "The parish realizes in a certain sense the Church's integrating function because it accompanies persons and families through their existence" (Puebla, 644).

### B. The model of the Church which should inspire the Plan is that which arises from Vatican II and from the following reflections, namely:

- \* A Church-Community: of persons, called and assembled through the intervention of the Spirit of the Lord. Its binding force is faith in Jesus Christ, which is shown in love for God and for one another.
- \* A Service Community: The Church exists for the world and is known by the mission it has in the world to proclaim in word and deed that Jesus Christ is Saviour.
- \* A Charismatic Community whose members, as individuals and groups, have been enriched by the Holy Spirit with a variety of complementary gifts and graces, all needed for its mission of salvation.
- \* To foster COMMUNION, MISSION and PERSONAL GROWTH organizations are set up and institutions are set in motion.

### C. The Salesian Parish

In this Church Model the Salesian Parish:

- \* forms a part, with all rights, of the local Church and develops an organic pastoral ministry which aims at forming the People of God in each and every one of its members with no preference and no exclusions;
- \* is called to give a specific, unique contribution whose source is Salesian Charism. That contribution is not to be seen merely as a development of a particular sector, but rather as a sensitive concern which enriches the joint pastoral action of the Church with its characteristic strengths.

SGC and GC21 compress this contribution into such statements as:

- \* the Salesians give the parish the standing of a COMMUNITY;
- \* the Salesians give preferential priority to YOUTH;
- \* the SALESIANS EVANGELIZE by EDUCATING in their parishes;
- \* the Salesian programme is actuated in a pastoral STYLE which is prompted by 'apostolic charity', emanates from one's personal spirituality and imparts a particular mode of action to both choices and individual activities (the Preventive System).

D. Location: Where the people are:

The above points are closely linked to a prior choice which is founded upon our Salesian vocation - choosing a site.

When we are called by the Church to take on a parish commitment, we prefer densely populated and working-classes areas, so that we may be in a better position to serve poor youth (cf. SGC, 311). This 'popular location' of our Salesian parish commitment implies:

- \* a particular geographic and social location;
- \* a kind of action which aims at teaching the greatest number, so as not to be a "church of the few", not even with the excuse of seeking greater evangelical purity;
- \* carrying on pastoral action within the people's culture and its manifestations: popular devotions, customs, values which are typical of the people;
- \* being open to the life of the area and sharing the problems of the poorest of the people;

- \* relationships inspired by a desire to reach out and to be available to many.
- \* the language of evangelization in word and deed.

# 1. THE PARISH COMMUNITY

## 1.1 GUIDELINES

"That the parish may 'represent the visible Church established throughout the world' and achieve its mission of giving life through the Gospel to its surroundings, it must grow into a community" (SGC, 417).

"When Salesians are called by the bishop to the pastoral care of a particular zone, they take on before the Church the responsibility of sharing with the laity the creation of a community of brethren united in life, to listen to the word, celebrate the Lord's supper, and proclaim the message of salvation (SGC, 416).

"Community life comes first therefore, not merely chronologically, but because every pastoral activity takes place within a community which is always in the process of ecclesial growth" (SGC, 417).

The community dimension must be cherished and developed explicitly at all levels. Salesian work will therefore favour, interparochial and inter-diocesan sharing, not as a simple, organizational strategy but as a demand of the Church's very mission (cf. SGC, 416).

## 1.2 PERMANENT GOALS

In our apostolate we try to:

- \* make the parish an encounter and a dialogue, rather than merely a place to hold religious services;
- \* make everyone in the parish co-responsible for its mission, its organization, services and financial operation;
- \* foster all manifestations which express the existence and reality of the People of God, gathered in the Lord, united by a faith which transcends differences;
- \* make everyone aware of the original features of the Christian community and of the motives and attitudes which characterize its every action as "leaven" in the world of mankind.

- \* direct all the above objectives to forming an ever deepening "*communion*" of people around the Eucharist ready to serve the parish's mission of evangelization.

### 1.3 UNES OF ACTION

#### A. Concerning the Religious Community

We stress the following points:

- \* The actual experience of the community on the part of the confreres: "A parish must be built into a community whose members, dedicated to parish ministry, live, pray and work together in an environment which makes it possible for them to attain complete human, priestly and Salesian maturity" (SGC, 405).
- \* the shared witness of the evangelical counsels is the basis of brotherly love: "The Salesian community which is committed to parish ministry will strive to be, in the area.
- \* in which it works, a sign and witness of those spiritual values which are linked to the evangelical counsels and must animate the entire life of the parish community " (GC21, 407; see also GC21, 138).
- \* Sharing both responsibilities and parish activities:  
"The chief characteristic of a Salesian parish is that it is administered by a religious community" (GC21, 138) to which the mission is first of all entrusted. This calls for shared responsibility of the pastoral work in the area" (GC21, 138).
- \* Integrating the various plans and sectors of the pastoral ministry (parish, school, oratory) animated by the members of the community into a UNIFIED PASTORAL PLAN: "The parish presents itself as a field of labour which has at its heart a community of Salesians to whom the Church entrusts the mandate of spreading God's Kingdom" (SGC, 436).

The basis of everything is not the "works", but the living presence of a Salesian community which assumes the perspective of a service that is whole and entire, unified and shared, for an area's human development, civil and religious (cf. SGC, 436)

#### B. Concerning the Local Church

We seek to be in unity of spirit with the local Church and with our own charism, to join in a visible manner in its vitality and in its self-expression through:

- \* pastoral and personal rapport with the Bishop;
- \* active participation in drawing up the diocesan pastoral plan;
- \* creative fidelity in carrying out the local Church's pastoral directives;
- \* willingness to contribute and collaborate as requested by the diocese according to our special talents and capabilities;
- \* participating in the neighbouring parish community events and helping them in need;
- \* working in the service of the zone when such a choice is sanctioned by the local Church or suggested by circumstances.

C. Concerning groups and communities

- \* We favour the formation of small Christian groups and communities which make it easier to know and love each other; to lead one's life in the light of the Gospel and to take on an active commitment (cf. SGC, 419).
- \* We therefore appreciate traditional Parish associations and through education, animate them.

to rethink their original purposes

to update their formative and devotional features

to live their new dimension of evangelization and to continue their services in conformity with the Church's directives

to develop communion with all other parish groups.

- \* We also accept new forms of community experience as they arise from the Church's new presences and from the groups themselves.
- \* In each of these groups of communities:

We support their preference for religious activities, such as prayer, action, religious studies, community experiences;

We try to guide them to a wholesome, balanced synthesis inspired by good reason and Christian conduct;

in a pastoral manner, we correct any negative or radical tendencies they may have any elitism, discrimination, spiritualism, worldliness;

we develop mainly a sense of service, mutual fulfilment and openness, oneness within the body of the Church;

we foster unity among groups and communities as well as their basic ties to the larger parish community. We do this through meetings. Coordinating, activities, choosing common goals;

we particularly strengthen the vitality and work of these groups that form part of the Salesian vocation. The Salesian Family is not to be considered as only one more association of groups. The Salesian community will regularly meet with it to study, discover and verify its Salesian characteristics. Its members, involved at the very nerve centres of the parish's pastoral activities, will help the parish priests to bring to reality the objectives of our Salesian presence;

we give special value, in the light of the priorities which we set in our parish presence.to, those groups which direct their attention to young people.

#### D Concerning full participation

- \* Through word and practice we endeavour to develop a mature awareness that the parish belongs to all and is built up by the efforts of all the faithful,
- \* We clarify concepts concerning its evangelical services and functions and the contribution each person is to make in accordance with one's calling and personal gifts.
- \* We favour the ministries and services instituted by the local Church (diaconate, catechesis, Eucharistic ministers, various leaders etc.).
- \* We organize sectors of activity and divide responsibility for them.

- \* We establish and follow-up committees which will involve the greatest number of persons when fulfilling our parish mission, setting up its programmes and evaluating them.

E Concerning community liturgies

We underscore the community dimension and sense of collective celebration of religious events, particularly:

- \* Sunday Liturgy, whose forms are to be impressive and understandable
- \* Particular events which are traditionally personal or family-related, such as marriage, baptism, first communion, reconciliation, etc.

F Concerning the "Domestic Church"

The "community of the family" is the sociological model for building up the Church. We endeavour to foster a "family spirituality" by:

- \* helping families face each day at a time as a community of love and faith;
- \* building up the family as the natural environment of religious instruction;
- \* encouraging Christian inter-family relationships;
- \* affirming those special occasions of Christian growth, such as Christian initiation rites, preparation for marriage, family events, etc.

1.4 RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRUCTURES

- \* The Salesian Religious Community, is the animating soul of all forms of Salesian presence in any particular setting.

It heeds the diocese's pastoral guidelines and creatively seeks to put them into practice, enhancing them at the same time with its own charism.

It follows the general lines of action established by the Salesian pastoral Plan.

Through community organizations, coordinated in a suitable programme of action, it gives the confreres who are involved a sense of responsibility, unity and sharing.

It helps the confreres work together with the parish-priest in activities which are "directly parochial".

Together with parish-priest, it makes itself responsible for the formation and spiritual animation of the faithful and the parish workers.

It guides the Salesian family, especially the Co-operators, in being the parish-priest's "first collaborators".

\* The parish priest:

promotes the formation of the parish community; he is the head and assumes direct responsibility for it

coordinates the confreres' animating action and with them animate their activities and organizations of the parish.

presides over the Parish Council and handles all relations with the Bishop and the diocese.

is the centre of coordination for all activities and unifies the parish in a faith and love.

\* The Parish Council is made up of actively and personally involved parishioners; it is the visible sign of sharing and participation in the parish.

It studies the local situation and points out parish needs gives due attention to diocesan directives and the priorities of the Salesian pastoral Plan.

It further defines and then puts those directives into actual practice.

Through capable members it assumes some financial and organizational responsibilities.

It finds new ways for parishioners to share and participate more in all activities; one means is the Parish Assembly.

\* The Parish Assembly is a representative, deliberative and executive body. To carry out this threefold task, it must

have grassroots representation;

be representative of all parish groups, activities special capabilities;

be knowledgeable of Church procedures; be acquainted with the priorities of our Salesian parish apostolate and how we express them through such features as liturgy, catechesis, youth, charity, family, etc.;

work in full coordination with the parish-priest.

## 2. THE YOUTH PARISH

### 2.1 GUIDELINES

The parish is made up of all of God's people living in a given area; and so, it includes, with equal rights and in equal degree, in oneness of action and sharing:

- \* various categories of people the young, elderly, infirm, immigrants, etc;
- \* various vocations and ministries: priests, religious, laity, single, married, etc.;
- \* various activities liturgical, catechetical, educational, promotional, etc.;
- \* various associations: 'Basic Christian Communities', societies, family groups, etc.;
- \* various institutions: schools, centres, hospitals, etc.

While looking upon the parish as a single community made up of persons who depend upon each other for their human and Christian growth, the Salesian parish deliberately chooses as its priority, children and young adults, especially the poorest.

This priority for youth means:

- \* the parish is to develop a DIFFERENTIATED MINISTRY: that is, it must develop for young people a step-by-step ministry which, in goals, means, language, activities, approaches and relationships, meets their needs at the different phases of their maturity and faith growth;
- \* the parish is to include these needs within the totality of its life and concerns, not merely setting up parallel pastoral Plans, one for adults and one for the young. We speak here of a sensitivity and a sense of responsibility of the entire parish community under the guidance of the parish-priest.

"The Salesian parish builds up a parish community with special regard for the young. It values the youth dimension as an element of renewal, growth and vitality for the entire parish community". (GC 21, 139b)

This priority of the young, expressed in a true, organized ministry, is the original contribution of reflection and experience which the Salesian parish offers the local Church and its leaders. "Within the centralized pastoral effort of the diocese ... we offer our specialized skills and humble witness by inserting the young into the life of the local Church" (GC 21, 139b).

The parish offers us favourable opportunities for pastoral care of the young, and we intend to make use of them:

- \* It allows us to approach young people "with a better knowledge of their natural surroundings and of the actual problems they meet in their lives and relationships" (SGC, 401).
- \* "We are given the opportunity of following them through their entire cycle of education in unbroken contact with their families" (ib.).
- \* We have the opportunity of helping them enter directly into the life of the Church and letting the entire parish community share the events of their lives at all levels.

## 2.2 PERMANENT GOALS

- \* To make the parish the central point of reference for young people in their quest for God and the meaning of their own lives.
- \* To make the parish a 'place' where people of different generations can come to know each other.
- \* To help the young, by appropriate planning of their personal lives and sharing in the Christian community, to integrate their faith into their daily lives.
- \* To make parents and adults aware of youth's problems and of their responsibility to pass on the faith to succeeding generations.
- \* To make good use of youth's vitality for the dynamic growth of the parish by making sure that young people feel part of the Church and can experience it as "a place of communion and participation" (Puebla).
- \* To characterize the community's activities as of a Church "which sees its own image in youth" (Puebla).

## 2.3 LINES OF ACTION

- \* As pastors and animators, we will cultivate an altitude of trust towards the young, their talents and their way of acting.
- \* We will make every youngster we meet feel welcome and at ease with us if we are really lo profess and show our priority for youth.
- \* We will endeavour to understand the present-day situation and phenomenon of young people (cf. GC21, 30b), updating our understanding with pastoral reflection and serious study.
- \* We will update and keep our youth ministry effective, urging all youth animators lo do the same, so that we may be, both individually and as community, specialists among the clergy.
- \* We will use to advantage the locales, institutions and educational initiatives which exist in the parish and which our young people attend. Every educational endeavour, whether sponsored by the parish or not, should excite our deep personal interest.
- \* We will support and aid all persons who work with youth; we will respect their competence and duly recognise their presence in our parish community.
- \* The parish will draw up a special programme foe the youth sector, keeping in mind the twofold principle of a differentiated ministry within an overall pastoral Plan. This programme will allocate space, train personnel and design special activities directed especially to young people.

We highlight three features of this youth ministry programme:

multi-purpose organization, the Oratory-Youth Centre, in which explicit religious goals are joined to those of a social, cultural and recreational nature (cf. Reg. 26) and which offers young people ample opportunity for self-expression, organization and dialogue.

Other Youth Groups which foster Christian growth Bible classes, Basic Communities, Catholic Action group, etc. Once these groups have been linked together with the groups of the Youth Centre (cf. SGC, 432) and their pastoral purpose understood, they can readily work well in other locations because of the fitness and adaptability of their programmes.

A missionary approach to young people, especially to those who are particularly needy, in their own environments and wherever they gather.

- \* We favour youth participation in liturgies with suitable modifications but always with due respect to basic liturgical rules and the spirit of those celebrations.
- \* We will allow for the active sharing of the young in responsible positions, affirming their presence in parochial associations, in planning and evaluation sessions (cf. GC, 21 139).
- \* Since young people tend to stick together strongly rather than join existing organizations, we will do our share in neighbourhood ministry, when such seems to be the best way we have of getting young people together and involving them in activities (cf. SGC, 410).
- \* In parish community celebrations, in homilies and liturgies, in planning and revision sessions, we will affirm the presence of youth as a central feature of our parish apostolate, so that the community may accept it as its own.

## 2.4 RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRUCTURES

- \* Although programming is the parish community's task and the parish-priest is to coordinate all activities, it will be well for him to have an associate for youth activities (cf. SGC, 432) who is regularly the director of the Oratory-Youth Centre.
- \* The youth ministry, within its own goals, methodology, activities and workers, although it is part of the entire parish pastoral Plan, will be very much helped by a youth council, team or advisory body who will share responsibilities, together consider lines of action and widen the sphere of its activities.

### 3. THE PARISH

#### CENTRE OF EVANGELIZATION AND EDUCATION

##### 3.1 GUIDELINES

"We see the parish as a field of labour which has at its centre a Salesian Community, to whom the Church entrusts the mandate to spread the Kingdom" (SGC, 436). The community, therefore, fully commits itself to the evangelization of an entire region.

We take evangelization in its broadest sense: "to bring the Good News to all classes ... and, by its influence, to transform ... from within and renew all mankind" (EN 18)

Evangelization - hearing the Good News and living by its spirit - implies:

- \* the witness of the Christian community;
- \* the explicit proclamation of the message;
- \* a heartfelt response and conversion;
- \* visible entrance into the community of believers;
- \* acceptance of the Sacraments;
- \* new initiatives of apostolate taken by those who have accepted the Gospel.

Launching an apostolate of evangelization means giving a parish a missionary thrust, not being satisfied with a simple acceptance, making it a centre from which the Gospel radiates.

In its effort to evangelize an area, the Salesian parish adopts a criterion and chooses a basic option: the active merging of three elements': Evangelization, Promotion, Education. This option is expressed by the slogan, "We evangelize by educating and we educate by evangelizing" (SGC, 140).

This criterion is to be applied to both persons and areas of work. To give them the opportunity of human growth we offer the Word, the programme and the hope, all of which have their source in the Gospel and in the Person of Jesus Christ

However, we proclaim this Word and present this Person from within the human being and from within the problems of mankind (cf. SGC, 290-291) as the transforming elements which turn situations that are less than human into the fulfilment of mankind in God.

In the light of this criterion, we learn along which channels we are to direct our energies, which activities we are to choose and which priorities we are to assign, namely:

- \* the time and importance we are to attach to catechesis and to reaching out to those who keep at a distance;
- \* the manner and intensity of celebrating and living the liturgy;
- \* vocational guidance of the faithful, especially the young;
- \* devotion to Mary in the light of the Church's actual teaching and of living Salesian tradition;
- \* relating the Gospel to daily life, both personal and social. This relationship will determine how the parish community is to act in regard to promotion, culture, development and liberation (cf. EN, 29, 31).

### 3.2 PERMANENT GOALS

- \* To foster within the Christian community the power of proclamation, celebration, and commitment;
- \* To discover and apply all possible means of evangelization, coordinating energies and looking for new resources;
- \* To imbue all parish initiatives and activities with a concern to bring the Gospel to the greatest possible number of believers and to reach out in a true missionary spirit especially to those who remain far off;
- \* To make all endeavours for human development faith inspired;
- \* To associate the gospel message with popular culture.

### 3.3 LINES OF ACTION

#### A. Concerning Evangelization:

- \* Properly appreciating the value of systematic teaching of catechism in its various forms and levels according to the directives set forth by the local church, while being careful to integrate both message and method;
- \* Giving strength and quality to sacramental catechesis in preparation for Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, etc.;
- \* Particular attention to the Sunday homily, which is to be marked by depth of doctrine and aimed at the particular and relevant needs of the community and environment (cf. CT 48);
- \* Backing all cultural and devotional celebrations with sound doctrine by preparing and adapting them to the various sections of the people, such as small groups, children and young adults (cf. Puebla, 928)
- \* Helping families become places of catechetical instruction through community initiatives; supplying families with catechetical aids;
- \* Personal contacts on those special occasions in the life of an individual or family or national events which open the way to prudent evangelization;
- \* Opportunities of religious re-education tactfully offered to adults who are quasi catechumens, unchurched, forgotten, poorly educated: workshops, mini courses, etc. (cf. CT 43-44);
- \* Special religious education courses for neglected sectors: the handicapped, shut-ins, street people;
- \* Getting into the means of social communication to make the Church known; to run catechetical services, to make a maximum impact upon the faithful by radio, T.V., audio visuals, lending library, parish book store, etc
- \* Preparing a sufficient number of catechists and animators, and forming them into a special "community ".

#### B. Concerning education and promotion

Linking evangelization to culture and promotion both in a single thrust of charity is an essential tasks and trait of the Salesian presence in a parish (cf. GC 21, 139).

Some ways to achieve this are:

- \* Using the human sciences and applying their findings to our own situations so as to enlighten our pastoral ministry; by studying them and using them in our work we will better understand the culture we live in;
- \* bringing into our liturgical celebrations all the hopes and fears and aspirations of our parishioners and pointing out their transcendent values;
- \* commending popular religious manifestations especially when these celebrations are closely linked to the national and family traditions of the parish community;
- \* reaffirming and renewing works of charity and social assistance for people in the area and elsewhere, such as collections for the missions, solidarity with the hungry of the world, refugees (Catholic Development Fund, diocesan collections), etc.;
- \* Sharing the life and problems of the neighbourhood by becoming personally involved in the area, its organizations, neighbourhood services, etc.;
- \* Setting up cultural projects which are evangelical and compatible with community resources, such as music festivals, art festivals etc.;
- \* Offering educational services such as tutoring night classes, etc.;
- \* fostering a mature social and political consciousness in the people as individuals and as community according to the Church's latest teachings.
- \* In this regard the following are useful:
  - \* stir up a sense of civic responsibility;
  - \* train people to see the relationship between politics and human values;
  - \* teach the Church's social doctrines (cf. EN, 38);
  - \* urge people to take active part in all projects which favour human values and show them how to make choices compatible with Gospel values.

### 3.4. RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRUCTURES

1. The Parish Council may set up working committees to assume particular charge of one of the above-mentioned areas of responsibility.
  2. The yearly pastoral Plan will take account of those needs and areas which most concern the parish community and best meet the annual goals which have been set.
-