



# InFormation

News for Pastoral Planners and Those Implementing the Plan

## Our Parish Plan! 2004



St. Alphonsus, Montgomery County, Cluster 75, 33 Conwell Dr., Maple Glen, PA 19002, Msgr. Thomas Owens, Pastor.

Upon arriving at St. Alphonsus in Maple Glen it was evident that an expansion of the church, school and some changes to the rectory were underway. I was met at the door by the pastor, Monsignor Thomas Owens. He showed me into a comfortable room and, as we chatted, I was quickly at ease starting my very first interview for the InFormation newsletter. I was glad to be working with someone as congenial as the Monsignor. He was enthusiastic about what was going on at his parish and was happy to share their approach with us.

He was named Pastor about a year and half ago. He arrived at the start of a large expansion project of the church and school. At that time, he reviewed the parish plan that was developed by the pastoral council about 1994. He realized that they were about to out run the 10 year old plan. What better time to revisit planning than when a new pastor arrives? Monsignor Owens had also taught a course at St. Charles seminary on a working relationship between clergy and laity. This gave him the opportunity to put into practice what he preached. The Parish Pastoral Council agreed to work on a new 5 to 7 year plan.

Next they decided they needed an instrument to guide them through the process. They contacted Bob Choiniere, the coordinator of Parish Pastoral Councils. After much discussion among the council members, they agreed to use "Revisioning The Parish Pastoral Council: A Workbook" published by Paulist Press as a tool. Since none of the current members were on the pastoral council when they were originally trained in pastoral planning, Bob met with the council to teach this process to them.

The council communicated the process to the parish in the Sunday bulletin and council members spoke at the Masses. They posted the 7 essential elements of Parish life (worship, teaching, evangelization, service, community, leadership and stewardship) on the walls around the church. A questionnaire was sent to all 1600 families. Four hundred (25%) were filled out and returned. They

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Archdiocesan Web Site  
[www.archphila.org](http://www.archphila.org)



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newsletters, info, schedules and  
key links

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call Fran —she can help 215-587-3545

# How and When Do You Do Parish Surveys?

Between 1994 and 1998, every parish in the Archdiocese conducted a parish self study. Many of the newly formed parish pastoral councils took the opportunity of the self study to become more familiar with the parish and to verify assumptions about the characteristics of the people of the parish and their practices. Some council members were surprised to learn about the racial, ethnic and language make up of their parishes. Many were surprised to learn how many people attend Sunday mass.

As part of the parish self studies, a random group of registered parishioners was surveyed in every parish to identify to what degree they agreed with statements consistent with the Archdiocesan mission statement that described their parish community. Fortyone items describing a parish guided by the five elements found in the Archdiocesan mission statement (worship, teaching, evangelization, community and service) as well as leadership and stewardship were included in the survey. Differences in parishioners' responses were identified based on gender, age, marital status, education and Sunday mass attendance. Respondents were also able to make comments in each area.

Parishes that have lost their report of this important survey conducted within the last 10 years can contact the Archdiocesan Office for Research and Planning to obtain a copy.

This would be especially helpful for parishes that are thinking about doing another survey. Surveys take time and money. But survey costs are frequently overshadowed by the much larger expense of taking action without good information. A compromise is to use the data you already have. In addition to the report from the parishioners survey

in every parish, the 2000 U.S. Census Reports have been distributed to the Pastor of each parish provide a wealth of information about the people who live in the parish. (Census reports are available on the Archdiocese web site)

Sometimes the plan of the parish requires action that needs to be supported by information that is not available in the existing reports. When this occurs, one possible source of the new information (but not always the only source) is a survey. According to Jonathon Widgeons and Don McCrabb, authors of Parish Surveys: Why, What and How there are five steps to conducting a survey:

- Step one: Identify what the parish leaders need to know
- Step two: Determine whom the parish needs to survey to know it
- Step three: Design the questionnaire
- Step four: Gather the information and enter the data
- Step five: Write a report summarizing the findings

These are the steps but they are frequently not easy for people who already have a great deal of work, are part time, or are volunteers. For this reason, the Office for Research and Planning has set up a special section of the pastoral planning area of the Archdiocesan web site to provide parish leaders with some resources to develop a parish survey. there are also resource people in the Office for Research and Planning who can assist parishes in identifying the assistance they need to develop a survey and to directly support their efforts.

For help call # 215-587-3545 and ask for Fran Stratton.

Preview a survey tool at [parishsurvey.org](http://parishsurvey.org) g

## Today's Parish

Jonathon Wiggins and Donald McCrabb Parish Surveys: Why, What, and How  
10 March 2002,

PLEASE HELP!

## A Survey for the InFormation

Dear Reader:

I need your help! .....

In an effort to achieve maximum efficiency and still serve our audience we need input from everyone who presently receives a copy of the InFormation newsletter. In keeping with the article on surveys (above) we're asking you to take a survey! I promise it will be painless, quick and could lighten the monthly mailing load and its cost.

Do I have your interest yet? What if I told you that you could glimpse into the future and see how parishioners will be surveyed soon? Now I think you're interested? If so and you want to help us save the forest. Please go to <http://information.parishsurvey.org> , click on InFormation Newsletter survey and give us your thoughts about how you would like to receive this Publication. We will be grateful and will respect your wishes. Thank you in advance!

Respectfully,  
Ron Lill Ed.

## Trivia Box

In the Archdiocese  
of Philadelphia

What proportion of the total  
population grew up since the 2nd  
Vatican Council?

To find out go to

[http://archphila.org/pastplan/INDEX/MandR\\_index.html](http://archphila.org/pastplan/INDEX/MandR_index.html)  
and click on the Census Report 3 link  
at the bottom of the page.

How about in your parish?

Go to "Parish info" at  
<http://archphila.org/parishes/index.htm>  
Pick a parish, and click on  
U.S. Census Report 3,  
Age and Age Cohorts (PDF)

# A prayer suggestion for your Parish Pastoral Council meeting

## *A Spirit of Wisdom*

### Invitation to Prayer

**Leader:** O God of life, of all life, of each life,

**All:** We offer you our prayers in the love of Christ,

**Leader:** in the affection of Christ,

**All:** in the company of Christ.

**Scripture Reading:** *Ephesians 1:17-23*

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

### Shared Prayer

1. Read the scripture passage aloud once and allow some time for reflection

2. Read the passage a second time and invite all those present to share aloud one word from the passage which speaks to them or resonates with them right now

3. Read the passage a third time and invite all those present to share aloud one phrase from the passage which speaks to them or resonates with them right now

4. Invite all those present to share aloud why this phrase holds some significance for them or why it resonates with them.

### Closing Prayer

God our Creator, Jesus our Savior, Holy Spirit the Animator of our lives,

Hear the groaning of all creation as it longs for fulfillment and our amazement at the possibilities you open to us as disciples.

Hear the prayers of your people who often try too hard:  
to say what cannot be said,  
to express what cannot be expressed,  
to do perfectly what will always remain unfinished.

Take our hearts and shake them from complacency.  
Turn our thoughts and energies toward kingdom-building.  
Show us how to be sensible as well as imaginative, servants as well as lovers, co-workers as well as friends.

May we rejoice in our brokers, in the wonderfully incomplete world which is ours, which is us, which is yearning for you.

God our Creator, give us strength to commit ourselves to do your work.

God our Savior, come again to reveal once and for all the fullness of your reign.

God the Spirit, inspire us - bring us to the task with wisdom and humor, so that we may be filled with hope and vision.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, forever and ever!

Amen.

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felt this was a good representation of the parish.

A Town meeting was called for the entire parish. The purpose of the meeting was to gather insight into what long range goals they might embrace as a parish and to share ideas and visions for the future of the parish. This large group was broken down into smaller table groups facilitated by pastoral council members. Every one was given the opportunity to share their ideas. About 30 sheets of news print filled with ideas were taped to the gymnasium walls. All this information was gathered and condensed and compared to the answers to the parish questionnaire. The results were communicated to the parishioners in the Sunday Bulletin and were developed into a list of topics for further education and discussion.

The entire parish gathered again. The goals identified from the first meetings were organized into workshops lasting 45 minutes. Each parishioner was asked to attend two workshops that interested them the most. Again, the pastoral council members acted as facilitators. The groups brainstormed and came to consensus on short term objectives that would make the long range goals attainable. The results have provided the information and

background for the Pastor and the parish pastoral council to develop a 5 to 7 year goal oriented plan with 1 and 2 year objectives for meeting those goals. The new Parish Plan should be finished in May, approved over the summer, and be ready for implementation in September.

Monsignor related to me that there were many side benefits to the process:

- Many more parishioners got to know their parish pastoral council better
- All parishioners who chose to participate were given the opportunity to help shape the future of the parish.
- The Pastor got to view the many talents and skills of his parishioners as they worked together
- Everyone came away with a deeper sense of community

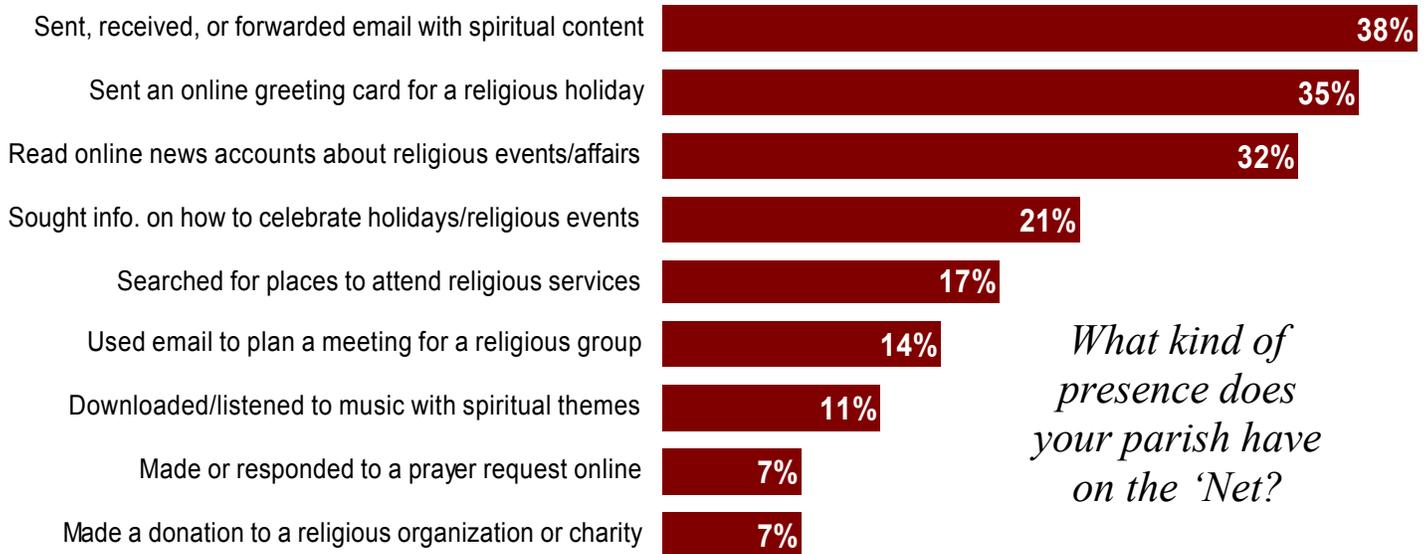
St Alphonsus' parish planning effort is an example of the most important things that are needed in any planning process: training for everyone involved, two-way communication both in writing and in person with all the parishioners, opportunities for

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# Nearly 82 million Americans have used the Internet to look for religious or spiritual information



According to recently released statistics from the Pew Internet and the American life survey, 64% (or 82 million) of the 182 million adult Americans with Internet access have gone online for spiritual or religious purposes. Shown below are some of the activities that were reported along with the percentage of all Internet users who said they engaged in this activity. To view the full report, visit <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=119>.



*What kind of presence does your parish have on the 'Net'?*

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Nov. 18- Dec. 14, 2003 survey. N=1,358 Internet users. Margin of error is ±3%.



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Ron Lill Ed.  
ORP@adphila.org

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parishioners to share ideas and become interested in making their ideas happen, the leadership and coordination by the parish pastoral council members and, most important, the leadership and support of the Pastor.



**Our thanks to Monsignor Owens and the good people of Saint Alphonsus for sharing their story with us! Please keep them in your prayers as they put the finishing touches on their Parish Plan.**

*If your parish has a story that you feel would help others, let me know. Having enjoyed my first interview, I'm ready for more.*