

# Mission of the Church to the Diocese

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are no longer able to live our lives as Christians solely in a "spiritualized" sense. Because we understand the mission of the Church as radically involved in all that is human, we are faced with a more complex and nuanced meaning of our lives as Christians. This does not mean a rejection of God's intervention in our world. It means rather that we take seriously the words of Christ,

I give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples.

(John 13, 34-35)

40. This third chapter then must not be construed as some kind of magical solution to the complex task facing the Diocese of Rochester — a diocese extended over 12 counties and 7,455 square miles. It is rather a call to dialogue, a plea for cooperative planning. It refuses to be satisfied with ready-made answers for new needs. It hopes for nothing less than a total dedication to the building up of God's Kingdom on earth. The questions that follow are meant only to begin the process of self-reflection that it is hoped will be characteristic of our Year of Renewal.

## A) THE BELIEVING CHURCH:

41. Are we aware of the need for faith in our own lives and the consequent need for regular prayer?

Are we convinced of the importance to the Kingdom of the Christian family and are we doing all that we can to promote good Christian homes?

Are we trying to increase the depth of faith in all of our people — children, young people, adults and elderly? How are we doing it?

Are we apportioning our parish and diocesan resources to best serve the total needs of the Kingdom?

Are we honest in understanding the extent of the Kingdom, seeing it as much broader than my parish, my school, my buildings?

Are we personally supporting the forward missionary endeavors of the Church?

Are we providing the best possible religious formation for all of our children? — our young adults? Are we apportioning our personnel and finances justly?

Are we concerned with a program of continuing education in faith for our adults?

Are we attempting to meet the faith-needs of special groups, e.g. the teenager, the elderly, the apartment dweller, the transient?

Are we using a creative program to approach the prayer-needs of our day — e.g. retreats, Better World Movement, Cursillo, pentecostalism?

Are we continuing to encourage the traditional "confession of devotion," and to give spiritual counsel to those who confess frequently?

Are we helping our priests and religious to be leaders of prayer by freeing them from unnecessary and time-consuming administrative tasks?

Are we aware of or involved with believers of other faiths in our own area? How can this awareness and involvement be initiated? How intensified?

Are we able to work ecumenically in programs of common interest?

Are we making efforts to discover and courageously face the problems of non-believers, of the unchurched, of the Church-alienated?

Are we helping those who are prevented

from full participation in the faith community by present canonical legislation, e.g. the canons on marriage?

Are we encouraging and promoting vocations, through which we will be assured of future leaders of the faith-community?

Are we personally participating in the prayer life of our local parish or community to the greatest extent possible?

Faith carries with it an element of risk. Are we courageous enough to add other questions suggested by local situations?

## B) THE SERVING CHURCH:

42. Are we aware of the heavy personal demands required of those who speak of "service" in unity with the crucified Lord?

Are we cognizant of the varied needs of the Kingdom, of the total community to prevent a service that is ultimately self-serving?

Are we ready to face the complexity of social problems not only through personal charism, but also through the myriad of agencies working full-time on a professional basis?

Are we prepared to accept greater responsibility to serve within the Diocese, e.g. if we are more blessed either with financial or educational resources?

Are we willing to allow diversified community use of "our" parish buildings and resources, especially in changing neighborhoods?

Are we serious about the need for regionalism and co-responsibility? Can we define them in our own locality?

Are we convinced of the special love of Christ for the poor, the unwanted and the peacemaker?

Are we allowing considerations of color, race or nationality to mar our service to the Kingdom and the one Father to whom we all pray?

Are we willing to serve creatively in our local parish or faith community regardless of frustrations?

Are we generous in working upon projects depending upon volunteer assistance for support?

Are we contributing to the Church in proportion to God's goodness to us? How do our recreation or entertainment expenditures compare with our expenditures to help those in need?

Are we prepared to risk unpopularity and humiliation, even as Christ did?

Are we agreed that the Church is our authentic moral teacher and guide, e.g. on issues of peace and conscience?

Are we educating ourselves as to contemporary issues facing the community of man on a local, national and international level?

Are we open to the needs of the suburbs, the problems of the wealthy, the loneliness of our leaders in technology?

Are we convinced of the need for a team approach to service, to avoid instant experts of all things? Are we properly wary of the instant expert and the self-appointed authority?

Are we courageous enough to spell out and list in more detail other questions delineating the many other needs of which we are aware in our own area?

## C) THE WORSHIPPING CHURCH:

43. Are we grateful for the opportunity to worship in freedom?

Are we availing ourselves of the fine educational opportunities in this area, e.g. liturgy workshops, music workshops, adult theology courses?

Are we using our talents to study and understand basics, without which effective worship is difficult, e.g. fundamental scriptural themes?

Are we demanding that the Father receive praise and honor through well-planned authentic worship?

Are we against anything that is new or unwilling to see the beauty of much that is old?

Are able to distinguish between what is essential in prayer and what is accidental?

Are we willing to attempt a diversified worship, — not only authentic Eucharistic liturgies, but also other forms of public prayer, e.g. Bible vigils, penance services?

Are we people of prayer in private, so that we come together to pray publicly without hypocrisy?

Are we generous in contributing our talents to enhance the music, the readings, the physical beauty of our place of worship?

Are we willing participants in Eucharistic prayer, or do we approach public worship to be entertained by the music or to fulfill an obligation?

Are we budgeting a satisfactory sum for the praise of God, to obtain music and liturgically approved artistic materials and equipment which help our ability to pray?

Are we forming well-balanced liturgy committees to share the use of our talents effectively?

Are we informed of the nature and the purpose of the stipend system and do we have any constructive substitute?

Are we engaging in dialogue about decisions affecting our parish worship, e.g. scheduling, sermons, normal operating procedures?

Are we reaching out to pray and worship with others of different faiths, e.g. prayers for unity, Bible services?

Are we barring others from our worship because they are made to feel unwanted and unwelcome?

Are we using modern communications media effectively in our public prayer, e.g. tapes and slides?

Are these media carefully chosen and in good taste?

Are we motivated in charity toward the authentic leaders of the worshipping community, viz. our Bishop, clergy?

Are we providing when possible both large group experiences and answering small group needs?

Are we putting our public worship high on our list of priorities?

## (D) THE LISTENING CHURCH:

44. Are we ready to listen to the many voices which might lead us to the Father's Kingdom?

Are we prepared to listen in faith to those whom we call shepherds, or are we rather influenced by preconceived notions of personal insights and human efficiency?

Are we parochial in our outlook, seeking immediate solutions to local or personal problems without situating these difficulties in the diocesan or community context?

Are we a-historical and perhaps dishonest in attempting to forge a "new" Church, as if 2000 years of experience could be set aside?

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