REFLECTIONS ON
PASTORAL PLANNING GOALS

for

SAINT ELIZABETH ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
Upper Uwchlan Township, PA
PARISH PASTORAL PLAN: GOAL 1
(from Saint Elizabeth Parish News, Winter 2005)

Introductory Note:
In November 2004, the parishioners of Saint Elizabeth received a pastoral planning booklet which identified three specific goals to guide the growth and development of our parish community over the next three-to-five years.
All were invited to offer their feedback and insights into these planning goals, either by letter or e-mail to our pastor at the parish office. The Fall 2004 issue of our newsletter included an article by Msgr. Mullin explaining the purposes of this inaugural pastoral plan for Saint Elizabeth. In this and two subsequent issues of the newsletter, members of our Parish Pastoral Council will provide a short commentary on each of our three planning goals.

Background to our Pastoral Planning Process:
In review and reflection upon the feedback received from parishioners responding to a Spring 2003 parish-wide survey of interests and concerns for Saint Elizabeth, pastoral council members identified three themes commonly expressed by parishioners; they are:
1) a desire to become more knowledgeable and educated about our Catholic faith and the Catholic Church;
2) a desire to apply our knowledge and spirituality in our everyday lives;
3) a desire to share our God-given gifts with others.
Council members then divided into three task-groups to develop these three themes in a more detailed manner. In regular meetings over the course of a full year, members prayed over, discussed and refined the initially broad themes into more distinct and concrete goals to be used as the framework for an inaugural pastoral plan for Saint Elizabeth– a plan intended to ensure that the activities and programs of the parish are faithful to our parish mission and responsive to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parish community over the next three to five years.

The pastoral planning booklet distributed in November 2004 included the text of the three planning goals and a brief explanation of the intended purposes of the pastoral planning process. Two prayerful town meetings were held that Advent for parishioners to pray together, to discuss and to offer their insights into our planning goals.

Reflections on Goal I:
In developing this first goal, the task-group initially focused on the personal attainment or enrichment of one’s knowledge of the Catholic faith and the Catholic Church. While this remained an important aspect of the goal throughout council discussions, a fuller definition of “education” emerged. In other words, the focus was not merely on education in the sense of “mastering a body of information,” but upon the transformative effect of one’s education – how knowledge and experience change us and shape how we live our daily lives.

In addition, our task-group affirmed that the attainment of knowledge requires one’s active participation – that each parishioner must exercise his or her baptismal responsibility to learn and to grow as a disciple of Christ. And this responsibility is not limited to “school-aged” parishioners; rather, it extends to parishioners of all ages. After much deliberation and frequent prayer to the Holy Spirit for guidance, the pastoral council set forth goal one in its current form, which states:
This first goal commits our parish to provide the means for all our parishioners to learn about their Catholic faith and to be transformed in the process of learning. Our parish accepts responsibility to make available its resources in facilities, financial investment and personnel to foster the transformative process of faith formation for adults and young adults, teenagers and younger children. As a result, programs developed under the umbrella of this goal will necessarily be varied in format, design and content to meet the faith formation needs of all our parishioners.

This goal conveys a variety of ideas, all centered upon the need for and the importance of a transformative faith journey for all parishioners. Like the other goals, this one is directly grounded in our parish mission statement and in Sacred Scripture; it is intended to serve as the basis for a variety of parish activities and programs focusing on faith formation and spiritual growth.

Because pastoral planning is an ongoing, thought-filled process, our pastoral council encourages parishioners to offer their feedback regarding this first goal and the entire inaugural pastoral plan by sending comments to the parish office.

PARISH PASTORAL PLAN: GOAL 2
(from Saint Elizabeth Parish News, Spring 2005)

As a parish pastoral council, our first priority has been to develop a mission statement and a parish pastoral plan which provide a foundation for who we are and all that we do at Saint Elizabeth Church. After many months of effort and with the help of the Holy Spirit, our pastoral council has drafted an inaugural pastoral plan to guide our parish over the next several years.

This pastoral plan includes three specific goals which are intended to ensure that the activities and programs of the parish are faithful to our parish mission and responsive to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parish community.

The Winter 2005 issue of our parish newsletter included an article about the first pastoral goal, which focuses upon formation and education in our Catholic Faith. In this issue we invite readers to reflect upon and discuss with fellow parishioners the second pastoral goal, which states:
This second goal reflects the affirmation in our mission statement that we are committed to be “stewards of the abundant gifts God gives to us.” As believers and as followers of Jesus Christ, we are challenged to be good stewards of our time, talent and treasure.

The Gospel of Mark reminds us: *The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many* [Mark 10/45]. Throughout his life, Jesus served others. We are often told that we lead by example; we can give no better example than to follow Jesus in giving to others as He did.

At Saint Elizabeth Church we are committed to providing opportunities for our parishioners to recognize the spiritual and material gifts each of us possesses, whatever our gifts may be: gifts such as hospitality, friendship and kindness. We are asked to cultivate these gifts and to share them with others, both within and beyond our own parish community.

The love we demonstrate and the fulfillment we receive, will inspire us to become more active, not only in the life of our parish community, but also in the life of God’s community in the world.
As Saint Paul affirms to Timothy:

Tell them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share, thus accumulating as treasure a good foundation for the future so as to win the life that is true life.  [1 Timothy 6/18]

What better life to win, than the true life of the kingdom of God!

Parish Pastoral Plan: Goal 3
(from Saint Elizabeth Parish News, Summer 2005)

Readers of the winter and spring issues of this newsletter may recall seeing articles about the first and second pastoral goals developed by our parish pastoral council as part of an inaugural pastoral plan for Saint Elizabeth Church. This plan, rooted in the parish mission statement which is proclaimed on the front cover of the weekly parish bulletin, provides the foundation for who we are and all that we do at Saint Elizabeth.

The plan’s three pastoral goals are intended to ensure that the activities and programs of the parish are faithful to our parish mission and responsive to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parish community over the next several years. In this issue we invite readers to reflect upon and discuss with fellow parishioners the third pastoral goal, which states:

As Christians, we are called to live out the word of Christ in our personal, family and public life. As baptized believers, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to share in the mission of the Church to evangelize the world as Christ did. In his earthly life, Christ exemplified love, compassion, empathy, caring, helping, listening and guiding others. We are called to do likewise by demonstrating in our daily lives what it means to follow Christ in service to others.

At Saint Elizabeth Church we are committed to providing opportunities and resources for everyone in our parish, young and old, married and single, to live the gospel message all week long: at home, at work, at school, and in service for justice in the public community.

When we live by the convictions and values proclaimed by Jesus, we evangelize through our personal example. Though the word “evangelize” sometimes conjures up a negative image, an evangelist is simply someone who spreads the faith by inspiring an ever-growing number of people to follow Christ. We, as individuals and as a parish community, can do this everyday, in everything we do, if we strive to shape our conduct by the morals, principles, and attitudes of Jesus Christ. We cannot claim to live the gospel if its message is not reflected in
our daily lives.

Let all of us Christian disciples here at Saint Elizabeth take to heart the words of our Master:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.
Just so, your light must shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

[Matthew 5/14-16]

- Saint Elizabeth Pastoral Council
Spring 2006