



DIOCESE OF METUCHEN

DEPARTMENT OF DIOCESAN PLANNING
JEFFRY ODELL KORGEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
732-562-2419

JKORGEN@DIOMETUCHEN.ORG

RENEWING THE CHURCH IN NEW BRUNSWICK: PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Introduction

Since mid-September, representatives from the seven Roman Catholic parishes of New Brunswick, The Catholic Center at Rutgers, St. Peter's Healthcare System, and Catholic Charities have been meeting to find potential areas of collaboration. As the process concludes, a multi-pronged partnership agreement is proposed, which reflects the direction of nine months of discussion. Throughout the process, immigration surfaced as a central issue connecting other concerns, like nutrition, poverty, health, and evangelization. Our parishes include many Latino migrants, but also significant immigrant communities from Poland, Italy, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Hungary, and the Philippines. We therefore offer the following areas of agreement to build a partnership among all of the Catholic entities of New Brunswick:

1. New Brunswick Catholic Social Ministry Team

Some of our conversations have revealed a lack of awareness of what each Catholic entity is doing in the area of social ministry. This keeps us from being as effective as we could be because of replication and overlap. In addition, those who may be taking advantage of parish make the rounds of our churches with little communication between us. A citywide, coherent approach to social ministry would help us respond to the many needs of our community with charity, justice, and effectiveness. Therefore, we recommend the creation of a New Brunswick Catholic Social Ministry Team to coordinate and network works of charity and justice among all of the parishes and Catholic organizations. This group would also be a focal point of several of the immigration initiatives recommended below.

2. Formation and Education of the Faithful on Immigration

Catholic Charities will commit staff resources toward a year of formation of the Catholic faithful on the nuances of the global, national, state, and local dimensions of immigration (see www.usccb.org). The content would be based in the real stories of migrants while providing relevant data and Church public policy positions. Parishes without undocumented migrants may be able to make a significant difference on the formation and public policy side of this issue. This year of formation would include:

- Training for the priests of the deanery on preaching about immigration.
- An agreed-upon Sunday for preaching on immigration
- Catholic Charities sponsored training on immigration and Church teaching for parish leaders.
- A Corpus Christi celebration uniting all of the ethnic communities of New Brunswick.
- Printed materials to be distributed in every parish.
- Publicity covering all of the above events (with help from the Communications Office)
- Updating the new Catholic Social Ministry Team on public policy initiatives.

3. Immigration Public Policy Action

Catholic Charities will monitor public policy initiatives nationally and in the state of New Jersey, as well as the local situation in the City of New Brunswick, working with the New Jersey Catholic Conference to discern the best time to mobilize parish leaders for legislative advocacy that incorporates the teaching of our local bishop, Most Rev. Paul G. Bootkoski, and the teaching of the New Jersey U.S. Conferences of Catholic Bishops. When the respective conferences of bishops note an opportune time for legislative advocacy, Catholic Charities would alert the Catholic Social Ministry Team members to request specific actions by parishioners.

4. Catholic Education for Immigrants

The role of Catholic education in the history of immigration in the United States is well known. Generations of immigrants owe their rise into the middle class to the steadfast support of the Church through its schools. Recently, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops set as a goal adding one million Latinos to Catholic school enrollments. With the closing of St. Peter and St. Mary's Academy, no Catholic school is currently open in New Brunswick. A working group of the Deanery Council would research and identify models of Catholic education that could possibly be effective in the future and work closely with the Superintendent of Schools Office and the Diocesan Catholic Schools Commission to explore these models further.

5. Healthcare and Immigration Summit

Saint Peter's Healthcare System would provide, through its community outreach department, health education and screenings to each parish. These health events would be scheduled at parish sites. In addition to lectures and screenings, St. Peter's Healthcare System would also provide information on healthcare access for the uninsured and underinsured.

Through the Catholic Center at Rutgers, interested students would have the opportunity to serve by assisting with registration and other administrative duties before and during the summits. Students in health-related fields of study could assist healthcare professionals as appropriate. Through its immigration services, Catholic Charities would invite undocumented immigrant families to receive healthcare and also provide them immigration related information. It would be an opportunity for Catholic Charities, the Catholic Center at Rutgers, and Saint Peter's Healthcare System to work collaboratively with parish pastors.

In addition to parish specific health and immigration summits, the New Brunswick Deanery might consider an annual joint New Brunswick-wide Catholic summit that would bring together all the parishes and Catholic organizations in New Brunswick.

Organization, Follow-Through, and New Pastoral Collaborations

The ongoing organizing of these initiatives would be coordinated by the New Brunswick Deanery Council, which will be introduced in Fall, 2010, replacing the "Renewing the Church in New Brunswick" process. This deanery council will oversee the implementation of these five areas of agreement as well as looking at other ways the parishes in New Brunswick could become stronger through sharing ministries and working with the city's Catholic organizations.