**Parish Committee for Family Life & Spirituality - Guidelines**

Updated: October 23, 2017

The Synod Committee, beginning November 2016, invited ten parishes to be pilots for implementing synod proposals. Each committee has its own specific outreach ministries unique to its own community. However, similar elements began to emerge among the parishes. In the spring of 2017, five additional pastors got in touch with the Synod Office. With these five parishes, the synod coordinator discussed with the pastors pilot findings which were helpful. And, with each of these additional parishes, the synod coordinator met with the pastor and selected committee members for the first meeting. All the committees reported to the synod office and committee on a regular basis.

**Below are suggested guidelines which surfaced as key elements for a successful committee:**

**Pastor:** The Synod strongly recommended that implementation of its proposals should not be an additional burden. With this in mind, it is important that the Pastor select two-co-chairs (unrelated) to lead the CFLS. What is key in the selection of the co-chairs is that they are people who have a passion for the family life in all of its complexity and are respected in the community. It is helpful for the Pastor to be at the first meeting, however he may chose appropriate times to check in when the co-chairs feel it is necessary. In some cases, the Pastor has delegated the CFLS to a deacon. This can be helpful in reporting back to the staff on a regular basis.

**Committee Members:** Either of two ways works in the selection of initial committee members. One way is for the Pastor to invite potential members to come to the first meeting, the second way is for the co-chairs to invite those recommended by the pastor.

It is important to think outside the box and it will be key to the success of the committee. Members should have diverse experiences of family life such as, a married couple of a few years and one longer, widowed, military couple, single parent, a LBGTQ persons, a divorced couple married in the church etc. This makeup has the power to further the ongoing implementation of the synod proposals.

**Committee Ministries:** After reviewing the synod proposals, each committee chooses certain ministries of outreach. In some cases, the committee chose two areas and in other cases some choose up to five areas of outreach. The latter is usually the case in larger parishes where more people are available to serve in a committee ministry. The profile of the parish usually determines what kind of ministries a parish embraces under the CFLS.

Ministries among the original pilot parishes and the additional five include:

Ministry to Engaged Couples Ministry to Newly Married Couples

Ministry to the Widowed Ministry to Military Couples

Ministry to Blended Families Ministry to LB GTQ Persons and

Ministry to Separated & Divorced and Family Members

This group of ministry outreach is a collection from all of the parishes and as mentioned, some parish committees have two ministries and some more. These ministries do not necessarily maximize the opportunities of particular family situations a parish may have.

Each ministry area will have two co-chairs (unrelated) who will sit on the CFLS. Members of their particular ministry area do not sit on the parish committee.

**Committee Meetings:** Ordinarily, all of the committees are meeting on a monthly basis and this can be determined by the committee itself. These meetings consist of the co-leaders and co-chairs of each of the respective ministries embraced by the CFLS.

**Committee Reporting:** It is helpful if minutes from the CFLS meetings are sent to the Synod Office at synod@sdcatholic.org and, the Office for Family Life & Spirituality at lmartin-spencer@sdcatholic.org.

**Next Steps:** If you wish to form a committee, please contact the Synod Office. Once Fr. Hurley has met with the pastor and initial committee meeting, ongoing presence will be transferred to the Office for Family Life and Spirituality who will be in regular contact with resources for the parish committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Fr. John Hurley, CSP in the Synod Office or Laura Martin-Spencer in the Office for Family Life and Spirituality for more information.