

Diocese Health Check - Towards a more Vibrant Diocese (Instrument designed to do a reality check for developing improvement plans)

This document, the 'Diocese Health Check' has been developed by interviewing several priests, nuns, lay leaders and laity in general. It has considered the experiences of several people who have been closely associated with the church for more than 20 years. The points below elaborate the thought behind the concept.

Why this Reality Check?

This review will help you to understand yourself better in the context of the church and also appreciate where your community stands in relation to the church teachings and decrees. The aim of this document is to awaken the power of all connected with the church towards bringing about change in line with the times. A trigger towards a more vibrant church

What is this Reality Check?

The statements in the review document are based on several decrees of the church and other documents. It is meant to bring about a realization of where the community is today and where they would like to be. The scores put by any individual, bishop, priest, nun, laity or interested groups are meant to highlight how things are seen and understood.

Getting most out of this Review

Resist reading 'Good' or 'Bad' into any of the statements or assessment ratings. There could be many constraints that impact a situation. These could be caused by a specific instance, knowledge or capability level of an entity and sometimes an attitude towards a specific area. What may be seen as positive in one area could be taken as a negative in another area. An example would be pastoral care for majority of migrants, exiles and refugees, seafarers, air-travelers, tribal, and others of this kind. Pastoral methods to sustain the spiritual life for these categories may vary and all may not be covered though some may be handled exceptionally well.

We need to remember also that we always do not perceive all situations in the same way, even though our tendency to act in consistent patterns may be strong. Therefore you may want to visualize several different situations you normally observe in church life before making an assessment. This might help to clarify apparent contradictions and enable you to present a realistic picture for reflection.

Example: Youth ministry Assessment

When assessing the youth ministry consider (a) Total number of youth in the diocese and % youth covered under the youth ministry. (b) Number of parishes with youth ministries. (c) Parishes that run planned youth ministry programs throughout the year (d) Does the youth ministry activity cover the spiritual and faith formation aspect besides service/outreach, fellowship and instruction/development activities.

It is understood that every ministry needs to have a vision, mission and goal to operate effectively. This is the first check point. In general consider the number of activities, the frequency, the number of people covered and the quality of the activity to meet the goals of the diocese. Sometimes an activity may be conducted 10 times and the same 10 people may attend every time or an activity may be conducted once a year and 100 people may attend. In both cases the assessment may be considered low in a diocese of 500 families

If parts of the overall assessment appear to be inaccurate or inconsistent with your feeling, go with your feeling. This is the most important and often assessing all situations objectively may not be possible. If after reflection, the information still seems to be at odds with your overall feeling and experiences, you might discuss the information with some people who know the situation well.

This review is meant for reflection by ALL – Bishops, priests, nuns, laity and others as the participation of all are required to move towards a more vibrant church. To derive maximum benefit from this exercise, you will probably want to read the document several times before making assessments.

Diocese Review Template

Extract: Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church

This document is meant for appreciating the current situation of a diocese functioning. Please rate the parameters under each of the 3 sections using the following scale:

- 1= Absence of any visible activity
- 2= Minimum evidence of activity
- 3= Moderate evidence of activity
- 4= Considerable evidence of activity
- 5=Optimal evidence of activity

Diocese:	Name (Optional):	Date:
Overall Diocese Assessment		
Sections		Rating
Diocesan Bishops - Section 1		
Diocesan Functions- Section 2		
Diocesan Ministries - Section 3		
Overall Diocese Rating		
Comments (Please give comments in the rows below)		

Diocesan Bishops: An Assessment Template –Section 1

The mention of ‘Bishop’ in the sections below may be read as the person responsible for the specific activity. It could be the Bishop himself or a person he has appointed to manage the role. The appointed person would report to the Bishop periodically. The Bishop however would be ultimately responsible for all activity in the diocese.

Area of Activity	Question	Rating
1. In exercising his duty of teaching does the Bishop announce the Gospel of Christ to men and women, calling them to a faith in the power of the Spirit? Is this done enough, frequently and through different channels available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence of this being done effectively? 	
2. Does the Bishop present Christian doctrine in a manner adapted to the needs of the times? Using liturgy resources for common homilies in all parishes on specific Sundays. Example on the Family Synod, Year of Youth, Faith, etc.		
3. Does the Bishop ensure that catechetical instruction becomes a vital, explicit and effective force in the lives of men women and children? Is Faith formation at different levels and through different channels performed effectively?		
4. Does the Bishop strive to review and renew or at least adapt in a better way the instruction of adult catechumens? Is formation provided throughout life and not at different stages only [i.e. pre-marriage, pre-baptism, pre sacraments] Example After school and before marriage.		
5. In exercising his office is the Bishop seen to be one who stands in the midst of his people as a person who serves? Who is a good shepherd who knows his sheep and whose sheep know him? (considering the rating of the 4 sub points below give an overall rating for point No. 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence of this being done effectively? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Bishop embrace priests with a special love thus building a strong, united, well-coordinated and effective clergy community? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Bishop strive to look more closely to the welfare of the faithful according to the condition of each one? Does he try to become duly acquainted with the needs in the social circumstances in which they live? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Bishop continuously employ suitable methods, especially social research to know and understand his flock better? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Bishop manifest his concern for everyone, no matter what their age, condition, or nationality, be they natives, strangers, or foreigners? 		
6. Does the Bishop encourage the apostolates in the whole diocese to coordinate and work in an integrated manner? Are all undertakings and organizations be they catechetical, missionary, charitable, social, family, educational, or anything else pursuing a pastoral aim, directed towards harmonious action? Is the unity of the diocese evident?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence of this being done effectively? 	
7. Does the Bishop show special concern for those among the faithful who, on account of their way of life, cannot sufficiently make use of the common and ordinary pastoral care of parish priests or are quite cut off from it. Among this group are the majority of call centre workers, migrants, exiles and refugees, seafarers, air-travelers, tribal, and others of this kind. Are suitable pastoral methods being promoted to sustain the spiritual life in these faithful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence of this being done effectively? 	
Overall Rating (Of all points 1 to 7 above)		

Comments (Please give comments in the rows below)

Diocesan Functions: An assessment template –Section 2

When rating this section please consider the 3 questions below:

- Is the focus and direction proper?
- Is the time, effort and plans adequate?
- Is the desired outcome as expected?

Areas	Rating
1. Worship Is the Word of God proclaimed and broken (explained) effectively (in terms of socializing and contextualizing for coverage and impact) through preaching, homilies, and by other means?	
Comments-Worship:	
2. Pastoral Care Is the care for the families and individuals through different programs and channels effective? (in terms of socializing and contextualizing for coverage and impact)	
Comments-Pastoral Care	
3. Education Is the training of the people for ministries relating to worship, catechesis, education, administration, service besides others being carried out effectively? Are the operational end results assessed?	
Comments-Education	
4. Outreach Is there enough and proper leadership and participation of the Bishop and clergy to serve the wider community? How well are the laity engaged in outreach?	
Comments-Outreach	
5. Administration Is the governance of the diocese being done effectively in terms of managing the finances, ministries and functions of the diocese? Is there an assessment of ministries at the parish level?	
Comments-Administration	
6. Participation in the Wider Church Does the diocese participate fully in global, national and local church initiatives? Does the diocese propagate and provide the required support for these initiatives? Is the Laity engaged in	
Comments- Participation in the Wider Church	
Overall Rating (Considering the 6 points above please give an overall rating)	
Comments - Overall	

Diocesan Ministries: An assessment template –Section 3

Ministry	Rating	Reasons
1. Youth Ministry/Vocations To priesthood/religious life		
2. Faith Formation/Sunday School/Regular schools		
3. St. Vincent de Paul		
4. Legion of Mary/Other groups e.g. Charismatic		
5. Social Justice		
6. Family Apostolate		
7. Care of the sick/aged/ Differently abled		
8. Care of different language Groups/		
9. Building Small Christian Communities		
10. Evangelization at Popular Shrines in the diocese		
Overall Rating		

Please feel free to add other ministries as applicable.