



## **Archdiocese of Seattle Launches Strategic Pastoral Planning to Revitalize Parishes Partners in the Gospel Will Place Parishes into Families**

**SEATTLE, January 22, 2023** – With a vision of renewing parish life for the next generation, the Archdiocese of Seattle announced Partners in the Gospel, an archdiocesan-wide strategic pastoral planning process that will take place at every parish over the next four years. Partners in the Gospel will place most parishes into a new parish family under the leadership of one pastor and one or more parochial vicars.

“The mission of the Catholic Church is at the heart of strategic pastoral planning,” said Archbishop Paul D. Etienne. “To achieve our mission, we must reinvigorate the faith of our people and re-envision how we live our faith in our parish communities, which includes adapting to our current reality so that we can strengthen our relationship with Jesus, accompany one another in faith and credibly proclaim the Gospel.”

### **Today’s Reality**

The population in Western Washington continues to grow, while the number of practicing Catholics continues to decline. This is evident with fewer registered households and fewer people attending Mass, celebrating the sacraments and engaging in parish life. This is further exacerbated by fewer overall resources, including priests, lay leaders and finances. Today the archdiocese has 80 diocesan pastors for 174 locations but predicts around 66 diocesan pastors in 2036.

“With all of the changes that we’re facing today – globally, culturally and within the Church – it’s very clear the status quo is no longer an option,” said Archbishop Etienne. “Partners in the Gospel is a plan for how we embrace these realities with hope and confidence.”

“We need Partners in the Gospel because we’re living in a time that’s different from the past,” said Caitlin Moulding, chief operations officer for the Archdiocese of Seattle. “We have churches that were built for many more people than are attending Mass, and most parishes have constrained resources with significant expenses to maintain facilities. Many smaller parishes have fewer resources, so they can’t invest in the programs and the staff needed to bring people together and re-enliven their faith.”

### **Planning for the Future**

After significant research, discussions with other dioceses and discernment, the Archdiocese of Seattle developed the Partners in the Gospel strategy to reflect the needs, diversity, geography and realities of local communities across Western Washington.

While there is no predetermined outcome, Partners in the Gospel will bring most parishes together into a new family structure with two or more other parishes under the leadership of one pastor and one or more parochial vicars. The pastor, parish leaders and parishioners will determine how this new family may share resources, such as staff, ministries, outreach efforts and facilities. Over time, they will decide how to best join together to carry out the mission of the Church as one canonical parish.

“We have a full year of consultation planned as part of this process,” said Moulding. “We want to hear from our priests, deacons, religious sisters, lay leaders, school leaders, parish employees and the people of God throughout the archdiocese. This year of consultation will allow us to get everyone’s perspective in crafting a plan for the future.”

### **Forming Parish Families**

We chose PartnersEdge and their proven methodology to facilitate our archdiocesan-wide data gathering, current reality analysis and structural redesign process. The consultation timeline is below:

- January 2023: Public launch
- Spring 2023 Parish and archdiocesan consultation
- Fall 2023: Public invitation to provide input on parish families
- Early 2024: Final parish family structures announced
- July 2024: Parish families go into effect with one pastor
- 2024–2027: Parish families journey together
- 2027: Parish families become one canonical parish

“We need to adapt to times. The worst we could do is remain not doing anything about it and just seeing the numbers in our church decrease,” said Jesús Gómez Sánchez, a member of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and a parishioner at St. Joseph Parish in Vancouver. “I’m willing to take action. Partners in the Gospel is a way for us to get there.”

To learn more about Partners in the Gospel, please visit [www.archseattle.org/partners](http://www.archseattle.org/partners).

### **About the Archdiocese of Seattle**

The Archdiocese of Seattle encompasses all of Western Washington, stretching from Canada to Oregon and from the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. There are 72 Catholic Schools and 174 parishes, missions and pastoral centers in the archdiocese, with more than 500 weekly Masses celebrated in eight languages. Archbishop Paul D. Etienne leads the archdiocese with his auxiliary bishops, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo and Bishop Frank Schuster. For more information about the Archdiocese of Seattle, visit [www.archseattle.org](http://www.archseattle.org).

Helen McClenahan

[helen.mcclenahan@seattlearch.org](mailto:helen.mcclenahan@seattlearch.org) | 206-375-5679

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