

# Writing Priorities and Objectives

Diocesan Research and Planning Office  
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## Priorities or Goals

Parish priorities are brief, clear statement of desired direction or activities, expressed in broad, general terms. The priorities should:

- be guides to action — stated as a desired outcome, desired condition or result;
- be general in their direction;
- be both challenging and inspiring;
- call for investment and involvement;
- provide a long-range time line (3-5 years);
- be tied to the mission of the universal or diocesan Church, the mission of the parish or the Indicators of Parish Vitality; and
- be able to be attained through objectives and strategies.

**Examples of Suitable Priorities.** The following priorities follow the above guidelines.

1. *To increase the experience of community within the parish, especially within the Sunday Eucharistic assembly, so that we might better live out our faith in support of, and supported by, one another.*

2. *To increase the participation of young adults (ages 18-25) in active parish life, so that they may live out their baptismal commitment and the parish may receive their gifts and talents.*

**Examples of Deficient Priorities.** The following priorities are deficient in several areas.

1. *To get more money.* (Is not inspiring nor tied explicitly to the mission of the Church. Issues of financial resources should use the concepts and language of stewardship.)

2. *To make sure the parking lot is plowed in the winter.* (Is too specific in direction; is neither challenging nor inspiring; is not tied to the mission of the Church; seems like a strategy.)

3. *To give everyone a conversion experience.* (Is not attainable through objectives and strategies. One cannot manufacture a conversion experience, though one can establish programs or occasions through which participants can better hear the gospel call.)

4. *To get Father to give better homilies.* (Is too specific in direction. It would be better to mention homilies within a larger context, e.g. a priority of improving all aspects of the liturgy.)

## Objectives

The objectives are specific, time-oriented and realistic statements of what a parish is going to do, for whom, and when it will be done. The objectives are the concrete steps that a parish takes to move towards fulfilling the priorities. The objectives should:

- begin with “to” and be followed by an action verb;
- produce just one result;
- specify for whom or with whom an action is done;
- have a specific target date, preferably in the near future;
- be quantifiable and measurable;
- be clear and understandable;
- be realistic and attainable in light of the parish’s human and fiscal resources; and
- link with at least one priority.

**Examples of Suitable Objectives.** The following objectives follow the above guidelines.

1. *Beginning in 2000 to provide young adults who are receiving preparation for either their marriage or the baptism of their children with a brochure which lists the opportunities for involvement in our parish.*

2. *By autumn 1999 to discuss with neighboring churches, both Catholic and Protestant, the feasibility of sponsoring a joint food pantry for the needy.*

**Examples of Deficient Objectives.** The following objectives are deficient in several areas.

1. *To practice the corporal works of mercy in our parish.* (Is too general; is not measurable as specified; is not intended to produce one result; does not have a target date).

2. *To be in harmony with the universe.* (Is neither clear nor understandable; is not measurable; is not realistic; does not have a target date)

3. *To increase vocations to the priesthood by having a spaghetti dinner with spumoni ice cream for all male alter servers on St. Joseph Day.* (Is much too specific — seems like a strategy; unlikely the action will produce the desired result).

4. *To get Father to give better homilies.* (Does not have a target date; is difficult to measure; may not be realistic. This objective is doomed to failure unless Father has taken ownership of the need for improvement. If so, the objective should be written to demonstrate the ownership, e.g. *by the end of 1999 Father will take a homiletics workshop offered by \_\_\_\_\_.*)

## Strategies or Tasks

It is not necessary to write strategies for the pastoral plan. Nevertheless, they are presented here for completeness. Strategies are the specific actions which need to be taken in the attainment of an objective. A group of strategies is an “action plan” specifying how an objective will be

reached. After a pastoral plan is accepted, a parish may wish to formally write strategies for itself to make sure everything gets done. The strategies should:

- name the individual(s) who are responsible for a specific action;
- name the specific action for which they are responsible;
- specify the date by which the action should be completed;
- be linked to a specific objective; and
- be tied in with other strategies.

An example of a proper strategy is: *by April 10 Robert Bernstein will meet with the finance council chair to determine a budget for the pastoral council workshops and communicate the response to Mary Jones.*