



# Missionary Disciples *for* Life

## **DRAFT**

### **Parish Community Pain Point Assessment for Missionary Disciples for Life**

Why do a Parish Community Pain Point Assessment?

Change is a constant in every life and in every community. What does not change is our God, who is with us, in us, and working through us. When faced with a question or issue, a faith community begins with its members' relationship with God and God's desire for the community.

(Making the Church relevant...) Are parish corporal and spiritual works of mercy ministry efforts aligned with its community's most significant and common "pain points" and spiritual wounds? Put another way, is the parish offering ministries or support groups that address the common wounds that many in its community experience that keep them from knowing the love of Christ and His Church?

In order to be relevant as Missionary Disciples in our broad parish community, we must know our community. Then we pray and ask, "What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do?" and "How can we best do it?"

This leader's guide is intended to provide a process and ideas to discover important information about the parish community. This knowledge will help the apostolate identify common challenges and potential wounds that many in the community may be experiencing. Once the apostolate is aware of the significant pain points in its community, it must be prayerfully open to letting the Holy Spirit guide the best response.

Come Holy Spirit!

#### Community Assessment – Leader's Guide

##### Step One:

Familiarize yourself with the question or concern the group is seeking to discern. In this instance, you are considering:

*What are the most significant and common pain-points or wounds within our parish boundary community that create division from Christ and His Church? Does our parish have ministries or outreach to address these pain points? What corporal or spiritual works of mercy can we do to reach the vulnerable and marginalized within our parish boundary to better know the love and mercy of Jesus?*

Step Two:

Gather important data about your parish community relevant to the question.

1. Understand the demographics of your parish community such as age, income level, marital status, family size, etc. The Archdiocesan Stewardship and Development Office has access to Mission Insights, a community demographics software tool. If your parish is not already using this program, contact the office to register to gain access.
2. What are some of the key institutions and organizations within your parish boundaries that by their nature may impact the culture of the community or be a source of certain challenges/pain points?

Consider:

- Universities
- Major employers
- Prisons
- Military bases
- Rehab centers
- Government offices
- Planned Parenthood facilities
- “Adult” stores and clubs
- PayDay Lenders
- Others?

3. What are some key descriptors or characteristics of the community that may cause potential pain points?

Consider:

- Rural or Urban
- Dense Population
- Prominent Housing Type
- Blighted neighborhoods
- Frequent Violence
- Gang Activity
- Significant Pollution
- Homelessness
- Accessibility to Resources
- Other?

4. Are there community service organizations or faith based ministries providing services in the community? Specifically, what activity is Catholic Charities doing in the community if any?

### Step Three:

What are potential pain points that are often associated with the prominent demographics or institutions in the community? An example might be, if your community population is mostly elderly, loneliness might be a significant pain point.

Consider:

- What community issues keep parish members up at night?
- What general topics does the pastor continue to hear in confession
- What issues do the school principal and/or counselor often see or hear that are affecting families?
- What do community service organizations say are the biggest challenges and needs?
- What issues are the police commonly facing?

Remember to consider “silent” issues that are known to be significant pain points but that may not be openly discussed.

Consider:

- Unexpected or Challenging Pregnancy
- Abortion
- Addictions – Pornography, Substance, etc
- Social Media
- Others?

### Step Four:

Make an updated list of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy ministries of the parish.

- What does each ministry do?
- Who do they serve?
- How many people are being served?
- How many are actively volunteering?
- What are the key fruits coming from the ministry?
- What are the key needs of the ministry?

### Step Five:

Identify where there are insufficient or gaps in services addressing the key needs and pain points of the community. Present findings to the apostolate and to the Pastor. Pray and discern an area or two of ministry focus for the apostolate.