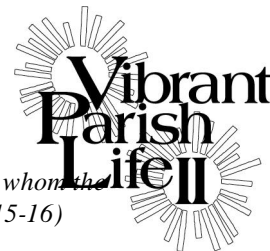


The Heart of the Matter

Convictions Underlying *Vibrant Parish Life* – Part 1



“Living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into Him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body...brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love.” (Ephesians 4:15-16)

In his pastoral letter, *Vibrant Parish Life*, Bishop Pilla wrote about his hopes for the church of the Diocese of Cleveland in the years to come, recognizing the challenges we face. This pastoral letter describes three key convictions or guiding principles in planning for the future: *communio*, *subsidiarity*, and *collaboration*. This article will focus on *communio*.

What is *communio*?

- *communio* is the Latin word for “communion,” “to be in union with” another
- to act “in *communio*” means to do things in ways that deepen our relationship and sense of community
- the opposite of acting “in *communio*” would be to do things that splinter and pull us apart so people in the community become more divided or separated

What are indications of people working together in *communio*?

- a growing sense of being the “Body of Christ” in the group, with the Body building itself up and realizing Christ as the head
- a deeper appreciation and sense of “being one” with others: other people, other parishes, our whole diocesan church
- a growing commitment to the common good of the whole community, and not the particular interests or the good of one group or part of the community
- a spirit of prayer in the group and seeking God’s will together in every step of whatever planning is done
- a growing sense of unity in the group as planning is done, which fosters deepening relationships and a spirit of love and fellowship

Convictions shape what we do and how we do it. Therefore, to state from the beginning that our future must contain *communio* sets a clear priority for the importance of the spirit of “oneness” the church must hold. The foundation of this process is building a spirit of unity among the people of the church.

JEREMIAH 29: 11 -14

“Yes, I know what plans I have in mind for you, Yahweh declares, plans for peace, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. When you call to me and come and pray to me, I shall listen to you. When you search for me, you will find me; when you search wholeheartedly for me, I shall let you find me, Yahweh declares.”

Going Deeper:

1. Explain how the term “*communio*” fits into your basic understanding of what it means to be a healthy parish community.
2. Can you give examples of an occasion or a period of time when you saw your parish or another parish community living out this spirit of *communio*?
3. Describe what a parish is like that has a strong sense of *communio* in it. What kinds of activities or ministries might be strong in that parish? What might their major goal be in any of the ministry work they do?