



## 7 Signs of Parish Vitality

- Review the 7 signs of vitality and some of the benchmarks suggested.
- Give your own quick assessment of how visible the signs are in your parish.

SIGN OF VITALITY	BENCHMARKS	Often Visible	Sometimes Visible	Not Often Visible
<p><b>1.</b> <b>We bring people to Christ: Evangelization</b></p>	<p><i><b>In an evangelizing parish...</b></i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The witness of parishioners draws others to encounter Christ</li> <li>• Christian family life is supported and nurtured</li> <li>• Parish leaders proclaim the joy of the Gospel in simple, understandable language</li> <li>• The parish radiates hope even in the midst of serious societal concerns</li> <li>• Parishioners know and practice their responsibility to be welcoming and inclusive</li> <li>• The preaching is relevant and those who preach work hard to improve their style</li> <li>• You will always find a number of catechumens and candidates in RCIA</li> <li>• The wider community will know and trust the parish for its concern for the poor, the elderly, the immigrant, etc.</li> <li>• You will find disciples who are prepared to accompany others on the journey of faith and conversion</li> <li>• The focus on mission is never diminished because of internal parish concerns</li> </ul>			
<p><b>2.</b> <b>Lifelong Formation: Catechesis</b></p>	<p><i><b>In a parish where lifelong formation is a priority...</b></i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are opportunities for faith –sharing</li> <li>• The RCIA is a yearlong process, not on a school calendar</li> <li>• The catechetical methodology uses up-to-date media and technology</li> <li>• There is a long range plan for adult education / formation</li> <li>• Catechetical approaches take into account different age groups, backgrounds and cultural factors</li> <li>• You will find family inclusive catechesis</li> <li>• Children and youth participate in larger venues like Holy Fire</li> <li>• There are forums which foster dialogue between life experience, social concerns and Church teaching</li> <li>• Catechesis helps to interpret the signs of the time and cultivate a healthy Catholic spirituality</li> </ul>			
<p><b>3.</b> <b>We encounter Christ and receive nourishment through prayer and worship</b></p>	<p><i><b>In a parish with vibrant liturgy and a healthy prayer life...</b></i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The faithful will be well-catechized in the spirit of the liturgy</li> <li>• Connections are made between liturgy, life and mission</li> <li>• The parish is truly a “school” of prayer</li> <li>• You will find full, active and conscious participation on the part of all</li> <li>• All liturgical ministers are well trained</li> <li>• Masses are well prepared in every detail</li> <li>• Preaching is a high priority and preachers are committed to developing their effectiveness</li> <li>• Worship is supported by an effective sound system, good lighting, a clean and beautiful environment, etc.</li> <li>• Worship is reflective of the culture of the congregation and not the personality or liturgical style of the priest</li> </ul>			
<p><b>4. We build bonds among each other to sustain our life in Christ: Communion</b></p>	<p><i><b>A parish with a genuine spirit of communio...</b></i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a sense of joy and welcoming from the moment one walks through the door</li> <li>• Parishioners have a wider understanding of Church that enables them to relate to other parishes and the mission of the universal Church</li> <li>• Parishioners are frequently reminded that the source of their unity is in Christ</li> </ul>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The level of parishioner engagement is high and parishioners take it upon themselves to reach out to include others</li> <li>• Responds to conflict with charity, patience, and respect for one another</li> <li>• Celebrates their diversity</li> <li>• Finds ways to bring the community together so that good relationship &amp; trust can form</li> <li>• Stays focused on mission so that the myriad of other parish issues do not sidetrack its vocation as missionary disciples</li> </ul>			
<p>5. We transform the lives of others through service as Christ's missionary disciples</p>	<p><i>In a parish where service as Christ's missionary disciples is evident...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missionary discipleship goes beyond "volunteerism" to a way of life</li> <li>• There is someone designated to "broker" mission opportunities within and outside the parish</li> <li>• There is a noticeable concern for the poor, the disadvantaged, refugee and immigrant</li> <li>• Parishioners are catechized in Catholic social teaching</li> <li>• Vocations to the priesthood, religious life and the diaconate are consistently fostered</li> <li>• There is less concern about minor internal affairs and more interest and energy invested outward in mission</li> <li>• The wider community is aware of the impact of the parish on the culture</li> <li>• Formation in mission begins with children in the parish school, the religious education program, and the home</li> <li>• Connections are made in preaching and praying to the mission field of the parish</li> </ul>			
<p>6. We respond to the call to holiness by journeying together with Christ</p>	<p><i>In a parish where the call to holiness is fostered...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are parishioners who are prepared to accompany others on the path to holiness</li> <li>• There is a rich variety of spiritual opportunities to choose from</li> <li>• You will find spiritual programs such as parish retreats offered for individuals at different levels on the spiritual path</li> <li>• The parish website provides a number of opportunities to explore the spiritual life</li> <li>• Special consideration for building a wholesome spirituality is given to young families and the domestic church</li> <li>• Neighboring parishes join together to plan major conferences with well-respected speakers in the spiritual life</li> <li>• Homilies frequently and explicitly address growth in the spiritual life ground in the Scriptures and the liturgy</li> <li>• Vocations to the priesthood and religious life are more common than in other parishes</li> <li>• You can sense a holiness of life in the congregation the moment you step through the doors</li> <li>• The priests and lay staff and leadership model spiritual discipline by attending retreats and other spiritual conferences</li> </ul>			
<p>7. We take responsibility for administration and leadership of the parish as good stewards of the gifts Christ has entrusted to us: <i>Spiritual Stewardship – Leadership – Administration</i></p>	<p><i>In a parish where Spiritual Stewardship, Leadership, and Administration are strong and vital...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish leadership builds trusting relationships among staff and parishioners</li> <li>• <i>[In parishes that have completed Parish Transformation]</i> Parish leadership has followed up on the strategies to which they committed themselves in Parish Transformation</li> <li>• There is a competent and active Pastoral Council and Finance Council</li> <li>• The pastor keeps the community focused on their vision and mission</li> <li>• The parish is able to produce accurate financial reporting</li> <li>• The parish maintains a balanced budget while allocating resources that support the mission</li> <li>• There is a technology plan in place and equipment and programs are up to date</li> <li>• The pastor follows appropriate hiring, salary, and personnel policies, holds regular staff meetings, and employs a regular performance review process for all staff members</li> <li>• Parishioners and callers are able to make easy contact with a reasonable office schedule, and it is clear on the grounds where the parish office is found</li> <li>• There is a communication plan that keeps parishioners and others informed</li> </ul>			