

## **PASTORAL PLAN NEEDS WELL-INFORMED PEOPLE**

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“Do you know what social analysis is? Can you tell me what deacons are? ...and what is Gospel sharing? Who started this thing called the Pastoral Plan?”

Ignorance is always bad, but is particularly harmful when the church embarks on a new path. “I don’t know what is going on in my church” are painful words. This becomes tragic if at the same time, Church leaders try to talk, to write, to preach, to explain...but cannot get through.

The pastoral Plan aims at community building, where people feel they belong and that they have equal dignity.

How can I feel equal if one of the group has all the information and I don’t get it?  
How can I get up and involve myself if I don’t know what it is all about? Why should I do something and how it is done?

The Pastoral Plan wants us to “serve humanity”. I will remain suspicious of serving humanity until I understand what this phrase means and why it should be our motto. My friends in the parish ask me to accept a leadership role, a ministry, But I will be afraid unless I know others will always be at my side, will keep me informed and will support me. It is clear that we need efficient communication on parish level and channels of information from the bishops’ Conference to parish leaders, from the diocesan offices to one another within parishes.

### **Practical suggestions to aid communication:**

1. The Secretary of the Commission of the Laity suggests each Parish pastoral Council appoint a person who will keep members of the council informed. That person will try to get information, select the important items and think of ways of presenting them in a manner most easily absorbed and remembered. (The basic rule is that the only information that matters is that which is actually perceived at the other end).
2. Training sessions in simplification require that a few leaders meet to learn ways of presenting difficult information in an easier way. All might take the same text and each one invent a way of presenting it in an easy way to one another for comparison. The most efficient ways are similar to those used during television newscasts. Symbols, key words, contrasting key words, cartoons, examples, case-stories, visible objects, show that the weakest presentation is that of a long talk, of spoken words alone or using many complicated words.
3. Training sessions in reading usually leads to the realisation that there is information, which is missed because we read using primitive methods. Get together a number of (Catholic) newspapers (in the languages used by the people,) and give every person one or more pieces to read in ten minutes. Exchange interesting articles. Using the same amount of time many people discover a great deal of important information, while others get lost in one unimportant story.

4. Presenting samples of several Catholic papers and periodicals to local leaders who are versatile in English, will probably result in a few subscribing to one or other paper.
5. Advanced study sessions call for leaders to read a periodical and briefly present what he or she has found to be important.