

To : Those responsible for parishes, pastoral associates and DPC members
From : +Paul Marchand, S.M.M.

Dear collaborators,

In the August Infobox (#64) I announced the pastoral theme for the 2009-2010 year. It's a theme that involves the continuation of the 2008-2009 theme, namely **My Story of Belonging**.

On September 26th members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council gathered to discover some concrete ways to facilitate the process for action and reflection in the parishes. The following will give you a general idea of the result of our deliberations:

. Parish leaders should encourage people to 'TELL' THE STORY OF THEIR BELONGING with all of the animation, tact and local initiatives which that implies.

. **Testimonies** from people expressing their reasons for belonging and their ways of showing it would have a very great impact. These testimonies could be shared verbally or put on a DVD;

. **A more academic and formal reflection** could also have a place. There are so many things to learn on such a rich and inspiring theme!...

. **A beautiful liturgical celebration** to celebrate our belonging to our Church and to our parish could also have much meaning, depending on the circumstances.

But what caught our attention above all is a series of 'nine' **questions** that would appear one after the other in all parish

bulletins for each of the next nine months from October 2009 to June 2010 inclusive. It would be up to the parish leadership to ensure that the '*question of the month*' is clearly evident in their parish bulletin, to introduce it from the pulpit before the dismissal rite, to encourage people to pay special attention to it and to start a dialogue about it during the week with other people, be they members of their family, people from groups they belong to, friends, neighbours etc., not forgetting to include the youth as much as possible in their sharing. At the end of the other masses in the same month there will a reminder about the current question and if possible, people will be invited to say a few words about what they have experienced. Remember that this questionnaire must not in some way be perceived as a 'survey' but as a personal and community experience that is seeking to build an ever more vibrant community and more real belonging.

We are hoping for much from this new pastoral experience. The theme of *belonging* falls right in step with present circumstances. Again all of our energy and creativity must be put to work with the assistance of our parish councils.

The preceding lines as well as the paragraph on this subject in the August Infobox seem to me to have everything necessary to inspire you in the presentation of this theme at the beginning of October.

I wish you a joyful and interesting pastoral experience.

Yours fraternally,

+Paul Marchand, S.M.M.

Here are the nine questions that we are proposing to you. Feel free to formulate them differently or to discover others in them according to the rhythm, intensity and quality of the process.

October 2009: I belong to different groups or organizations:

- . Which ones?
- . That *requires me* to what?

November 2009: When I am asked: *What religion do you belong to?* I reply: *I am Catholic.* What is my personal way of showing that I am Catholic?

December 2009: I may be asked: *What parish do you belong to?*

- . What signs show that I belong to such and such a parish?
- . How would I describe my connection to my parish?

January 2010: I have often felt obstacles to my belonging to the Church and to my parish. What are they?

February 2010: There are events and circumstances in my life that have strengthened my feeling of belonging to the Church and to my parish. What are they?

March 2010: If I had to express a few wishes to my Church and to my parish that would promote my feeling of belonging, what would they be?

April 2010: Experience shows that my feeling of belonging increases to the extent that I put forth a personal effort. In what way do I get involved in my Church and in my parish?

May 2010: Belonging brings me immense joy. I identify a few great joys that I have discovered by virtue of my belonging to the Church and to my parish.

June 2010: In what way has my participation in this process concerning belonging helped me?

What have I retained in a more particular way?