

How To Start a New Diocesan Recovery Ministry

for alcoholism, drug and other addictions
...or Breathe New Life into an Old One



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The principle role of Recovery Ministries is to educate our parish congregations and clergy and encourage them to support recovery from the destructive illnesses of alcoholism, drug addictions and other compulsive afflictions, and to celebrate with those who have been reclaimed by God's grace.

Critically important to the creation and success of a *Recovery Ministry* in your Diocese is the support of your Diocesan Bishop.

If this is not already in place, make an appointment with the bishop to explain the realities of the problem, nationally and in the Church. Seek Diocesan endorsement of the Mission of *Recovery Ministries*. Ask the Bishop to appoint an upper-level staff person as *Coordinator* with the diocese.

Don't be bashful. Ask the Bishop to set aside a modest first-year budget to help you get started. The diocese should join the national Recovery Ministries if it is not already a member. The cost is \$200 a year.

There should be some money to take on small scale initial projects similar to those that will be described later on here. You'll want some printed materials available from the national office. Hopefully, there could be funds found to send a couple of your people to the "*Gathering*" of RM each spring.

Help the Bishop identify a *Diocesan Convener* for the new group. Most likely this will be someone in recovery, with some significant period of time in a 12-Step Program, stable, with excellent leadership qualities, communication skills and experience, and a devotion to this calling. We are talking about a real "fireball" here!

Identify members of the new ministry: active Church members, devoted to recovery as a mission. They most likely will be members of AA, NA, Al-Anon, OA, GA, SLA or any of the 12-Step recovery programs. Perhaps there will be a couple professionals in the field. Ask these folks to commit to an active role in the formation of the new *Recovery Ministry*.

Encourage each one of them to join the national Recovery Ministries as an Individual Member. The cost is \$25 a year.

Gather the initial members for a first meeting

- Have enough *RM* materials on hand that they can be reviewed, and each member can have a full sampling and a small inventory.
- Discuss the purpose and mission of *Recovery Ministries*
- Explore the scope of the problem in your diocese and what you think they need to know about the issues, and how you can begin to educate clergy and laity about them.
- Discuss how best to communicate with one another, and with the parishes and the diocese.

- The *Convener* should have researched what kinds of programs and projects other dioceses have done or are doing to move toward the mission effectively, and then be prepared to lead a discussion on these programs and projects.
- Brainstorm the kinds of ideas, programs, and undertakings that might be useful in your diocese to educate the clergy and people about the “isms” and the hope for recovery.
- Identify the most potent ideas and commence to design how to accomplish them.
- Prioritize and work out logistics.

Here is a sampling of some successful ventures:

❖ Retreat for Recovering People

Retreats usually begin on a Friday and run through Sunday noon. They might include three or four AA/Al-Anon/OA type recovery speakers, usually telling their own story, and music, worship, nature walks, and celebrations of various kinds. Sites vary from rural to hotel settings. Costs are kept as low as possible, but the retreat is normally nearly self-supporting, though scholarships are usually available.

❖ Celebration of Recovery Sunday

Celebrations are staged at parishes, usually as the principle service, and may include recovery-oriented sermons, music, and perhaps the Eucharist incorporating the Twelve Steps. Christian education for all ages may be focused on recovery education, and sometimes special classes or seminars are offered throughout the day about the topic.

❖ Monthly Celebrations Rotating Among Parishes

Parish Celebrations are similar to a Recovery Sunday but on a smaller scale. Offered throughout a diocese, these move from parish to parish, frequently held on a Saturday evening with a potluck supper, discussion/teaching, fellowship, Eucharist, and an open Twelve-Step meeting. Local recovery groups and the entire congregation are invited.

❖ Develop Parish Resource Persons

The development of a cadre of carefully screened persons knowledgeable about addictive illnesses and recovery who are willing to be available to clergy encountering addiction issues in the parish family. They may be made known by publication of a directory for the clergy.

❖ Christian Education Curricula

A number of very helpful, sensitive and accurate curricula are available to incorporate into otherwise standard Christian Ed classes for all ages.

❖ **Convention Workshops**

Some diocesan annual conventions provide time for topical workshops for attendees. They are great opportunities to present short seminars about the nature of these afflictions, and the hope for recovery.

❖ **Convention Exhibits**

If an annual diocesan convention has commercial and ministry exhibits, they are a fun and profitable means to make available recovery literature to a broad audience. It is also fun to watch some folks cross the aisle to avoid the “alcohol” table!

❖ **Build a Parish “Advocates” Group**

Parishes can create an “advocates” group – a few folks who have a heart for those who suffer these diseases, and are willing to learn more about addictions, and become active in helping the congregation learn about the process of illness and recovery and accept responsibility to offer the Church’s pastoral support.

❖ **Monthly Mailings to Clergy**

A wide selection of printed materials, from the literature of Recovery Ministries and AA pamphlets, can be mailed to clergy on a regular basis to continue to “flash the lights” and call attention to these very difficult health problems that demand their attention.

❖ **Twelve Step Eucharist**

The use of the Eucharist incorporating the Twelve Steps is used in many places and circumstances where recovery is a focus. A CD of five variations of such Eucharists is available from Recovery Ministries.

❖ **Diocesan Brochure**

A simple tri-panel brochure that describes the vision of Recovery Ministries and the Diocese in responding to the very present reality of the suffering caused by these illnesses and charge to the Church to respond with compassion and effectiveness. They are used as handouts, placed in tract racks, and mailed to the clergy.

❖ **Cooperation with Other Diocesan Ministries**

A diocesan Recovery Ministries group will find many opportunities to join forces with diocesan ministries such as Christian education, singles, ethnic oriented work, youth, prison/jail ministries, college chaplaincies, and many others.

Don't be afraid to ask for some money to fund the initial needs of the new ministry. The possibilities are endless, limited only by your own imagination.

Break open the box!

It's important.

We'll help.

Call the Recovery Ministries office toll free number: 866 306-1542

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