

Archdiocese of New Orleans
7887 Walmsley Avenue
New Orleans, Louisiana 70125

November 5, 2007

Reverend Monsignor Kenneth J. Hedrick
Pastor
St. Angela Merici Parish
901 Beverly Garden Drive
Metairie, LA 70002

Dear Monsignor Hedrick:

I write to you following the good visitation of St. Angela Merici parish. Enclosed you will find a report which Monsignor Taormina and I are making available to you as a follow-up to the two days of visit to the parish.

I want you to know how much I appreciate the exemplary way in which you have assumed the responsibilities of pastor. You have truly nurtured a collaborative style of leadership. You lead but you also consult and you benefit by the wisdom that is shared by others.

May I ask that you bring this report to the Parish Pastoral Council and review the goals that you have identified for yourselves for the next three-five years. I would encourage some refining of these goals in light of the recommendations contained here. For purposes of follow-up to the visit, I ask that the focus be on one goal in each of the areas to ensure appropriate implementation.

Please express to those who share pastoral ministry with you and the lay leadership in the parish my great appreciation for the serious committed and faith-filled ways in which they work with you in service to the parishioners.

May God continue to bless you and bless St. Angela Merici parish.

Sincerely in the Lord,

Most Reverend Alfred C. Hughes
Archbishop of New Orleans

Enclosure

c: Very Rev. Michael Jacques, S.S.E., V.F.
Rev. Msgr. Andrew Taormina, V. F.

**Parish Visitation Report
St. Angela Merici
September 21 and 22, 2007**

On September 21 and 22, 2007 Archbishop Alfred Hughes and Monsignor Andrew Taormina, Dean of the East Jefferson Deanery, visited St. Angela Merici Parish. The pastor, pastoral staff and leadership of the parish extended a marvelous welcome.

On Friday, Archbishop Hughes visited the classrooms of the school children, celebrated Mass for the entire school community, met with the principal and pastor together, and finally, with the faculty and members of the school board. On Saturday, subsequent to that, Archbishop Hughes met with the pastor, parochial vicar, three deacons, Director of Religious Education, celebrated the Vigil Mass and then together with the Dean met with members of the Parish Pastoral Council, Finance Council and School Board. It is obvious that St. Angela Merici Parish is a prayerful, vibrant and engaged parish.

I. The following are the special commendations and recommendations for the pastor, leadership and parishioners of St. Angela Merici.

1. Ministry of Worship

1.1 Commendations

- The Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated with reverence and strong parishioner participation.
- The parish has an active and engaged liturgical.
- The liturgical ministries are available to parishioners.
- Those who participate in liturgical ministries are obviously given helpful formation. This is true for the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, cantors, ushers, altar servers. Parishioners, too, have been formed in the best way to participate in the Eucharistic mystery.

- A genuine effort has been made to develop music that is appropriate to the liturgy being celebrated and engaging for the parishioners.
- The parish makes a genuine effort to include young people in the celebration of the Eucharist and has plans for an alternate Liturgy of the Word for young children.
- The parish offers each of the sacraments with appropriate preparation and reverent celebration.
- The parish offers a range of devotional opportunities including a weekly novena, rosary before daily Mass, Stations of the Cross in Lent, a May crowning and Mornings of Reflections for various groups in the parish.

1.2 Recommendations

- That an effort be made to help the parishioners to appreciate and access the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. This may be done at those times of the year when conversion is the central theme of the liturgical message. It might provide an opportunity to offer basic instruction in how best to approach the sacrament and opportunity to visit the reconciliation room.

2. Ministry of Word

2.1 Commendations

- St. Angela Merici regards the school as a primary ministry of the parish.
 - The school with approximately 450 students is large enough to be financially viable and small enough to provide a family atmosphere.
 - Mrs. Colleen Remont offers a truly competent and effective leadership as principal of the school.
 - There is a remarkable stability in the teaching staff and a truly collaborative spirit among the teachers.
 - The quality of education is recognized in the recent securing of SACS accreditation.

- The school uses religion textbooks that have been given by the Bishops a judgment of conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- The special education students are incorporated into the life and work of the school.
- The parish contributes to the support of the school.
- The school has an active, engaged and effective school board.
- St. Angela Merici offers religious education through a collaborative effort with St. Clement of Rome. Sr. Paula Marie Derise, O. Carm. is an able Director of Religious Education and cooperates with St. Clement of Rome in this effort.
- The parish offers an Adult Faith Formation Program. Sr. Paula Marie Derise, O. Carm. also has responsibility for this and has developed a five-year plan.
- Certification encouragement is being given to the teachers in the elementary school.
- Appropriate sacramental preparation is offered to those preparing for sacraments and their parents.
 - Deacon Nicholas Chetta and his wife ably handle the baptismal preparation program.
 - Deacon Gil Schmidt does the same for couples preparing for marriage.
- The parish offers an RCIA program in conjunction with St. Clement of Rome.
- The parish offers a Bible Camp in the summertime for a significant number of children.
- The parish offers a Lenten Mission each year.

2.2 Recommendations

- That the parish continue to encourage and support the certification, not only of those who teach religion, but all the elementary school teachers.
- That the five-year plan for the Adult Faith Formation Program move forward with special consideration being given to incorporating the use of the *United States Catechism for Adults* (USCA).

- That the school board review on an annual basis the responsibilities listed below to ensure appropriate fulfillment of the role entrusted to them.

3. Ministry of Service

3.1 Commendations

- St. Angela Merici Parish offers a wide spectrum of ministries and services, reaching out to people across the whole spectrum of life and need in the parish.
- The parish has recently revived a youth ministry program. Father Ray Hymel serves as the liaison for this ministry. The leaders of this ministry have developed excellent strategies for the development of this effort.
- St. Angela Merici is well represented in outreach to the sick at East Jefferson Hospital in the very significant ministry of Deacon Ray Heap and the provision of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

3.2 Recommendations

- That the plan to align the work of parish organizations with the parish mission move forward. The strategies identified in the self-study are excellent.
- That the parish explore ways of entering into an evangelization effort of those who may be on the margins of church life or need to be invited to consider becoming a member of the Catholic Church (a significant list of potential persons to contact could be derived from those engaged in preparing couples for marriage or preparing couples for the baptism of their children or the receiving of children into the school).
- That the plan to expand pastoral outreach to special needs elderly move forward and be implemented.

4. Ministry with Resources

4.1 Commendations

- The parish has an excellent mission statement.
- The Parish Pastoral Council has embraced its role of pastoral planning in an exemplary way.
- The Finance Council of the parish also has taken very seriously its responsibilities.
- The Business Manager, Mrs. Jacqueline Appleton, has assumed her responsibilities effectively.

4.2 Recommendations

- That the parish consider re-introducing the stewardship program in order to be able to retire the parish debt in a timely fashion.
- That the parish move forward with the development of a new master plan for facilities.

5. Ministry of Cooperation

5.1 Commendations

- The pastor has introduced into the parish a truly collaborative approach to leadership.
 - The parish team composed of the two priests, three deacons, Sister Paula, Mrs. Jackie Appleton, Mr. Peter Weilbaeher and the school principal, Mrs. Colleen Remont meet regularly to address a collaborative approach to church service.
 - The pastor and the principale have developed a truly constructive working relationship.
- The parish has a collaborative relationship with St. Clement of Rome to provide religious education of the few children not in Catholic Schools and a RCIA program.

5.2 Recommendations: that the parish continue to explore ways of collaborating with surrounding parishes in offering ministry that can better be done together rather than separately (e.g. in addition to religious education and RCIA possibly youth ministry and more opportunities for penance services).

6. Ministry in Support of Vocations

6.1 Commendations

- The parish has developed a Vocations Committee
- Strategies identified in the Parish Report are excellent.

6.2 Recommendations: that the strategies identified in the report be pursued in support of an environment to encourage church vocations.

II. A Checklist for an Annual Review of the Work of the Parish Pastoral Council:

- Have we continued to review the fulfillment of our Mission Statement?
- Have we engaged in appropriate pastoral planning?
 - By entering into a pastoral needs assessment for the parish.
 - By reviewing existing ministries and services for effectiveness.
 - By proposing possible modifications, reductions or expansions of existing services.

III. A Checklist for Parish Finance Council:

- Have we attended to the following responsibilities?
 - To assist in the development of an annual budget.
 - To ensure adherence to this budget by a regular review of parish finances.
 - To give counsel with regard to any major expenditures not included in the annual budget or any capital campaign.
 - To ensure that the parishioners receive a financial report once a year.

- To review the archdiocesan audit of the parish after the audit report and management letter are supplied.
- To ensure that the financial internal controls required by the archdiocese are observed in the parish.

IV. A Checklist for School Board:

- Have we reviewed fulfillment of the mission of our school on annual basis?
- Have we entered into responsible long-range planning?
- Have we focused on the development of general school policies in our deliberations?
- Have we monitored and provided for the appropriate financing of the school (including tuition and any subsidy)?
- Have we reviewed on an annual basis the performance of our principal as executive officer of Board?
- Have we respected the distinctive and separate role of internal administration that belongs to the principal of the school?
- Have we provided for public relations efforts to create a better appreciation of Catholic education?

V. Goals for the next three to five years:

The goals that have been identified by the Parish Pastoral Council, Finance Council and School Board are exemplary. Monsignor Taormina and I now ask that the pastor and Parish Pastoral Council review this report in relation to those goals to determine how they might be refined in order to enter into a responsible follow-up of the visit. You may focus on simply one goal in each of the areas to make the implementation more manageable. Please submit the refined goals, objectives and time-line to Father Michael Jacques, withing three months of receipt of this report.

Conclusion:

The visit to St. Angela Merici Parish was truly inspirational. It is obvious, that under the good leadership of Monsignor Hedrick, the parish is very alive to faith, prayer, ministry and service. The lay leadership is competent and committed. There is a true family atmosphere pervasive in the parish community. Archbishop Hughes and Monsignor Taormina are grateful for the kindnesses and assistance rendered to them. May God continue to bless St. Angela Merici Parish.