

-- DRAFT --**Guidelines for Sister Parish relationships *within* the Diocesan Partnerships between St. Cloud, Homa Bay and Maracay**

Sister Parish relationships within the larger Diocesan Global Solidarity Partnerships enhance the experience of walking together as one body in Christ; allow more access to the global relationships; and deepen the experience and thus the benefits received by both partners. While the St. Cloud Sister Parish Statement and documents such as “Called to Global Solidarity” and “Sharing Gifts in the Global Family of Faith” serve as guides for Sister Parishes, we present here a few additional guidelines for Sister Parishes *within the broader Diocesan Partnerships*. These relationships remain a part of the broader Diocesan Partnership, and therefore work within the guidelines set up through the Diocesan Partnership Committees/Teams, and recognize that their activities have implications and effects on that broader relationship. The Guidelines follow:

Sharing Spiritual Resources

- **Philosophy:** Years of work and communication have gone into developing relationship and solidarity-based faith partnerships that are mutual, uphold the dignity of all, and recognize the gifts and needs of *both* partners. The relationship is not one of sponsorship, conversion, one-sided-giving, projects or travel, nor is it to be just about travel or “religious tourism” without other relational activities happening as well.
- **On-Going Reflection:** Sister Parishes engage their committees and larger parish communities in on-going education and reflection, and contribute to the on-going development of this model of partnership. The Mission Office, in conjunction with Diocesan committees/teams will provide for periodic Learning Sessions, approximately every 18 months, to allow for the sharing of knowledge and opportunities for additional formation among and between diocesan and parish based partnership groups.
- **Clear Purpose of Faith Relationship:** As with the diocesan relationships, the purpose of these global solidarity partnerships is to build-up the faith of all involved, through the mutual evangelization and growth that comes through the relational aspect of our faith, modeled on the Trinity and exemplified in the Eucharist. In order for this to be understood clearly, all parish based partner groups are encouraged to engage in a process with their parish partners that will clearly define the purpose, goals and objectives of the partnership. This would result in such things as: a joint Mission Statement; a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); a Sister Parish Prayer; or other such guiding documents; all these documents should be reflected upon and reviewed regularly by both partners together.

Sharing Relational Resources

- **Leadership:** As in the Diocesan Partnerships, leadership should come from full committees rather than individuals, including diverse representation on committees, rotating membership with a few consistent core leaders (can also rotate), etc. Support on

the parish level (parish staff, budget line, etc) are also crucial if the relationship is to be truly owned by the parish and sustained over the long-term.

- **Delegations/Individual travel:** Mindful that personal contacts are a vital means of forging the ecclesial bonds in a Global Partnership, partnering parishes are encouraged to invest the time and attention needed to arrange visits/delegations. However in every case when planning a delegation, traveling in either direction and/or arranging individual representations between the parishes (when approved by the diocesan committee/team), the decision to do so must be made through a process that is truly mutual. This means that the purpose and intent of a visit, be it a group or individual, should be arrived at together and mutually embraced. Thus those responsible for promoting and maintaining the partnership (e.g. Parish Partnership Committee) should never unilaterally decide to send a delegation or individuals. And when a decision is made that both parishes deem would be helpful to the partnership, follow-up planning should utilize the norms developed by the Diocesan Partnership committees/teams for travel exchanges. This includes host/housing guidelines, orientation/preparation requirements, etc. The process and timeline for all delegations and individual travel should be as follows:
 - **Step 1: Initial Planning:** This includes contacting the Mission Office with the intention and time-frame for travel, so that the Diocesan Partnership Committee/team can add input on the feasibility and safety of that time of and plan for travel.
 - **Step 2: Application:** All individuals wishing to travel, either alone or as part of a delegation, are asked to fill out an application form, which is to be submitted to the Sister Parish Committee in their parish. This committee will then discuss applicants and offer a recommendation or concerns, along with a copy of the initial application form, to the Mission Office for review by the Short Term Missioner Review Committee. Upon approval, travelers (or the sister parish committee in the case of delegations) will be asked to fill out the Stage 2 Missioner Form, with proof of practical concerns arrangements being completed.
 - Note that in the case of diocesan delegation travel years, interested persons from the sister parish should submit their application to the sister parish committee, who should make a recommendation of which one or two delegates they see as being most beneficial and appropriate representatives from their community to journey as part of the diocesan group. This recommendation should be turned in along with the required diocesan application form to the diocesan selection committee by the set deadline for their final decision.
 - **Step 3: Preparation/Orientation:** All travelers, whether in a group or as an individual, are expected to be prepared for their journey, in terms of cultural differences as well as mission/partnership philosophy. In Sister Parishes, those members of the parish who have previously gone through the Diocesan orientation process are encouraged to offer orientation to those new applicants looking to travel, with support/resources from the Mission Office. A list of reading materials and discussion topics will be provided by the Mission Office to

ensure all bases are covered. Following this orientation in their parish, the traveler(s) will be asked to meet with a Mission Office staff member or Diocesan Partnership team/committee representative for one final meeting to ensure all questions are answered and everyone is comfortable with the spiritual and physical journey ahead.

- Note that in the case of diocesan delegation travel years, all delegates from sister parishes and otherwise, are required to participate 100% in all orientation and follow-up sessions; these usually consist of four sessions prior to travel and two after the journey.
- Typically the preparation and planning time for group and individual travel takes *a minimum* of 9 months for someone traveling to their partner for the first time, and 6 months for returning guests.
- It should be noted that throughout this entire process, should at any time the Sister Parish Committee, Mission Office, or Diocesan Partnership Team/Committee, or the delegates themselves, see a concern with the pending travel that would jeopardize the health and well-being of the pilgrim, their partners overseas or the partnership as a whole, the right to request a cancelation of plans is always a possibility, even after the “recommendation” and “approval” of committees.
- **Sharing Human Resources:** *(finalized written version yet to be completed)*

Sharing Material Resources

- **Project Guidance:** It is important to keep uppermost in mind the goal of upholding the dignity of all and emphasizing mutuality in the giving and receiving of gifts, be they material, spiritual, human; but special care is to be taken when it comes to material gifts. Any Sister community relationship should be well-established, having been in formal relationship for a *minimum* of four years, before any discussion of material gift-sharing or projects should be considered. After such time, small parochial projects that enhance the faith community (as opposed to large development projects) may be considered. In determining whether or not a material project is right for the relationship, the following should be taken into consideration, under the guidance of the Diocesan Partnership team/committee:
 - **Education** on what kind of aid is and is not helpful: Regardless of best intentions, the truth is that considerable research and experience has shown that some gifts and projects do more harm than good. This varies from circumstance to circumstance, culture to culture, project to project; therefore, all material plans should be discussed in length with the Mission Office, and possibly CRS or other “experts” in the field of mission and development, before committing to anything.
 - **Process** for determining projects: All Sister Parish projects need approval from 1. The Parish Community (meaning support for the project comes not only from the consensus of the sister parish committee, but also parish staff, to ensure it will not falter or come up against barriers after being committed to); 2. Both partners (the sister parish committee in your partner community must also agree to the project, including whatever their own investment or responsibility will be for following

through with the project or gift); 3. Leadership Committee/team in both Dioceses (in the case of Homa Bay, this may also include CRS-Kenya). Only then should a material proposal be gone-ahead with.

- **Reporting:** Reporting on the outcomes of material gifts/projects should be done in a similar fashion as the approval process – including regular and transparent reporting done within the parish community, between partners, and to the Leadership in both dioceses (including CRS when applicable).
- **Participation in Diocesan and Church-wide Initiatives:** Our global faith partnerships help all of us open our hearts and minds to the richness of our human family around the world. We also enter in with full recognition that parts of our human family are suffering more than others. We are all one body in Christ, so when one part hurts, we all hurt. As we enter into relationship with a particular people, it is important that this relationship make us all even more catholic (*universal*), more open to the common good of all. When we allow our special relationship to become exclusive, closing us off from others, locally or globally, it produces the opposite result that is desired. It can also produce division and conflict within regions where one parish may have a Sister Parish and another does not. Therefore, to promote solidarity at a broad level at home and abroad, it is important that Sister Parishes also participate in the diocesan-wide initiatives developed by the Diocesan Partnership Committees/Teams. Furthermore, participation in the global initiatives of the broader Church, such as the World Mission Sunday collection in October, the Catholic Relief Services collection during Lent, and MCP program, should be supported and emphasized by all faith partnership groups. There are many places in the world that lack a special connection elsewhere, and these dioceses and parishes must enter into our circle of connection and compassion as well.
- **Partnership Funds:** All funds between Sister Parishes go through diocesan committees/accounts, not directly to the parish, meaning funds given to the Mission Office to be wired to the partner diocese account, and from there dispersed to the sister parish; cash is not to be carried to sister parishes directly. A percentage of funds sent through the St. Cloud Mission Office will be retained for administrative and general fund needs, and possibly also by the coordinating entity in the partner diocese, according to the agreement of the Diocesan committee/team. All funds transferred through the dioceses to sister parishes will be given to the sister parish partners at the best exchange rate possible.
- **Communication:** It is ideal to have representation from each Sister Parish Committee on the Diocesan Partnership committee/team, in both dioceses. This may not always be possible, in which case the continued copying of minutes from both sides' meetings, as well as other communications between Sister Parish partners, will be helpful in keeping the Diocesan Leadership in the loop. The sharing of minutes with Diocesan Leadership should be done even if there is also a representative on the diocesan committee/team.

Addendums:

1. Sample application form(s) for delegates (1-page), as well as for individual pilgrims (4-pages)
2. Recommendation form from Sister Parish Committees for delegates/individual pilgrims
3. Expected orientation outline/list for all pilgrims
4. Travel Insurance Recommendation and Information