



Catholic
Church
of Montreal

Responsible Pastoral Ministry Pilot Parishes

St. Joachim Parish

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Some interesting numbers:

Parishioners: 75,000

Employees: 10

Volunteers: 55

Children enrolled in the catechetical program in 2018-2019: 137



Steps taken

Getting familiar – getting prepared – getting going

- We first informed our parishioners during a Mass that we had taken the necessary steps to get involved in this policy program, and we gave them the explanatory brochures from the archdiocese.
- We next explained to our volunteers working with vulnerable people the content of the diocesan Responsible Pastoral Ministry Policy. They were receptive and found that the screening process was suitable to all.
- We reviewed the description of volunteering positions and the risk assessment associated with each position. We then asked the staff currently working with children to fill out an application form and a criminal background check form.
- The screening process is now in use to recruit new volunteers and will be enforced for all new employees.
- We could really count on the support of the diocesan Responsible Pastoral Ministry team at all stages of development. It was an invaluable and comforting help.



Challenges that were faced

- The Screening Process
The first steps of the screening process apply to all parish employees and volunteers. To us, it means a rather great number of people. Implementing the process and ensuring its follow-up need consequently a lot of work.
- A "Delicate" Process
Investigating close colleagues is a delicate process. It can bring fear around the issue of finding a problem, and of altering the climate of closeness and trust developed over time. How would we share bad news should we come across some? How can we avoid bringing humiliation to an individual having his work responsibilities being retrieved? What would the consequences and the workers' reaction be?
- The Connection With Children and Young People
The fear associated with the misinterpretation of how someone might act or say to minors is challenging, especially in a friendly environment filled with spontaneity. "As a priest, I wish to be able to keep loving young people and to take part to their Christian education, pastoral activities and personal growth."
- An Ongoing Process
A responsible pastoral ministry takes time. It is a continuous process requiring discipline. Once the entire process is set, one must take into account its management, evaluation and follow-up.



Achievements

- We feel that we have done well to protect both the salaried staff and the volunteer, as well as minors, vulnerable people and their families.
By implementing the Responsible Pastoral Ministry in our parish, we were able to concretely:
- Reinforce teamwork for group facilitation;
- Improve the catechetical learning environment for children: the doors to our rooms now have panes. One look into the rooms and we see how meetings unfold. No need to keep the doors open anymore and risking the other groups being disrupted by the noise;
- Ensure that all catechists wear name tags with parish logos to meetings and activities.

The Responsible Pastoral Ministry Policy creates awareness around approaches and behaviours. As a result, we can manage our employees and volunteer more efficiently, and accurately plan retention of our records.