News



Detroit Archbishop Allen Vigneron speaks during the spring general assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore June 12, 2019. (CNS/Bob Roller)



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The U.S. bishops June 12 gave a provisional OK to development of a new set of strategic priorities to guide the work of their conference from 2021 through 2024.

The 213-8 vote, with four abstentions, paves the way for the committees, secretariats and departments of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to continue work on how to carry out the priorities. A new vote will be taken when the bishops meet again in November, with an expectation the 2021-24 priorities would receive a final vote for implementation at the U.S. bishops' conference November 2020 meeting.

A working group of bishops under the aegis of the bishops' conference Committee on Priorities and Plans – following two rounds of consultations with the bishops, one round with the conference's National Advisory Council, with recent input from five bishops' conference standing committees – identified four priorities:

- "Evangelization: Form a joyful band of missionary disciples."
- "Life and dignity of the human person: Serve the common good as the leaven in a free society."
- "Protect and heal God's children: Restore integrity, foster virtue."
- "Vocations: Equip all Christ's disciples for mission."

Within each priority, there are four to six bullet points.

Under evangelization:

- "Evangelize a culture in need of hope, especially the religiously unaffiliated."
- "Invite and empower youth/young adults to become missionary disciples."
- "Foster an evangelizing focus in catechesis and Catholic schools."
- "Communicate more effectively how the faith transforms lives."
- "Offer our society an account for the hope that is within us."
- "Acknowledge and welcome the gifts and talents that the Hispanic community brings to Christ's church."

Under human life and dignity:

- "Work to heal the scourge of hatred based on race and/or religion."
- "Protect and defend the dignity of migrants and refugees, of the poor and those on the peripheries."
- "Defend the right to life for all people especially the unborn, elderly, sick, dying and persons with disabilities; and fight the advance of abortion, infanticide, assisted suicide, euthanasia and the death penalty."
- "Defend and secure religious liberty and freedom of association."
- "Foster reverence for God's creation, our common home."
- "Articulate a convincing anthropology of the human person, male and female, as proclaimed by faith and affirmed by science and right reason."

Under protect and heal God's children:

- "Create and maintain safe environments through sound policies and procedures."
- "Extend and ensure effective collaboration with the laity."
- "Cultivate an ever-deepening spirituality of chastity and virtue."
- "Nurture courageous and transparent reflection and leadership."
- "Accompany survivors and embrace their witness."

Under vocations:

- "Foster lifelong discernment and formation to fulfill one's God-given vocation."
- "Prepare for and sustain the living out of marriage and family life."
- "Create a culture that nurtures consecrated life and holy orders."
- "Encourage the laity in their mission to evangelize society."

According to U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops statutes, the bishops' strategic plan is to be reviewed and revised as needed every four years.

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The process got under way during the bishops' conference fall general meeting last November, where bishops in their regional meetings were asked to give input on strategic priorities for 2021-24, and an electronic survey distributed to bishops in January, according to Archbishop Allen Vigneron of Detroit, who is secretary and

chairman of the Committee on Priorities and Plans.

Vigneron, in a message to his fellow bishops, said timing was critical to adopt the strategic priorities, so that the development of operations by the bishops' conference committees, subcommittees and departments can begin in July. "Operational plan development can move forward constructively only if informed by the 2021-24 strategic priorities," he added.

In remarks prior to the vote June 12, he called the priorities "ordered and well-articulated." "These are our formulations of the material we heard from you, from what we heard form the body of bishops and what we head from the National Advisory Council through the consultations," he said.

Vigneron described the timeline in place with an affirmative vote now in place.

Beginning in July through January, committees, secretariats and departments will develop draft operational plans. Starting next February through June 2020, the Committee on Priorities and Plans and the bishops' conference general secretariat will conduct a review of the draft strategic plan. The bishops' conference Executive Committee's review and approval will take place between July and September 2020. In November 2020, the full U.S. bishops' conference will conduct a vote on whether to approve the 2021-24 priorities.

This story appears in the **USCCB Spring Assembly 2019** feature series. View the full series.