

Parish AI Discernment Worksheet

For: _____

Date: _____

Team Lead: _____

Purpose

- Prayerfully and practically discern specific AI uses that enhance communion, hospitality, and pastoral care.
- Ensure any AI use protects dignity, privacy, and trust, and measurably improves ministry impact.

How to Use

1. Assemble a cross-functional team (*pastor/associate, pastoral care, communications, IT/data, youth/formation, finance/stewardship, representative parishioners*).
2. Open with Scripture (*suggestion: the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:29-37*) and prayer.
3. Read the grounding quotes aloud. Complete the checklists and Y/N questions together.
4. Decide next steps, then draft/update parish guidelines.

Grounding

“We are to be the builders of communion, rather than the architects of Babel.”

“Created for relationship, every human person is planned and willed by God to enter into communion with him, with others and with creation.” — [Magnifica Humanitas](#)

Enhance a pro-connection culture

- Favor uses that help notice and prioritize people needing personal attention (lonely parishioners, new families, bereaved, homebound).
 - Use AI to draft and surface insights; keep pastoral judgment and personal encounter primary—including in areas like homily preparation aids or sacramental communications.
 - Use AI to streamline administration, so staff/volunteers have more one-on-one time.
 - Treat every output as a first draft — pastoral voice comes from a person.
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References to consult:

Download [Called to Connect: Creating a Welcoming Parish in a Lonely World](#) at acstcatholic.com/guides.
Visit vatican.va to read Pope Leo’s Encyclical Letter [Magnifica Humanitas](#).

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STEP 1

Data Readiness (check all that apply)

- ☐ Parishioner contact info is current (emails, mobile numbers)
- ☐ Household records accurate (married children, separate households)
- ☐ Duplicates removed/merged
- ☐ Small groups/ministries tracked with up-to-date rosters
- ☐ Data access is role-based (least privilege)
- ☐ Staff trained in data privacy/security and phishing awareness
- ☐ Vendor/data-processing agreements in place for tools handling parish data
- ☐ Clear consent/opt-out practices for messaging and AI-assisted outreach

If three or more boxes are unchecked, prioritize data cleanup and security education before launching parish AI policy.

STEP 2

Discernment Questions (Yes/No)

Answer for the specific AI use you are considering (e.g., *newsletter drafting, identifying disengaged households, bilingual outreach, homily preparation aids, sacrament preparation communications, scheduling, analytics, accessibility*).

Mission and Communion

- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Does this AI use clearly advance our parish mission and foster real human connection (not just efficiency)?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Does it augment personal encounter rather than replace it?

Human Dignity and Pastoral Care

- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Will people feel respected and seen as persons, not data points?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Is a human-in-the-loop reviewing sensitive content or lists before outreach?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No: For liturgy/homiletics aids, is the preacher's voice and pastoral judgment primary?

Transparency and Trust

- ☐ Yes ☐ No: When appropriate, can we be transparent that AI assisted (e.g., "Reviewed by [staff name]")?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Is there a simple opt-out or feedback path for parishioners?

Equity and Inclusion

- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Have we checked for bias or exclusion (language, age, disability, digital access)?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Is content available in needed languages and accessible formats (plain language/audio/large print)?

Privacy, Safety, and Stewardship

- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Are we using only the minimum data needed for the pastoral purpose?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Are data protected (encryption, access controls) and is the vendor reputable?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Are costs proportionate to expected pastoral benefit and time savings?

Effectiveness and Accountability

- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Do we have clear success metrics tied to connection?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No: Is there a defined owner, start/end date, and review schedule for this AI use?

If any answer is No, name the concern and add a safeguard, revise the approach, or pause.

STEP 3

Safeguards to Apply (check all that strengthen fit)

- ☐ Human review for tone and appropriateness before sending sensitive communication
- ☐ Clear labeling when AI drafts content (e.g., "Reviewed by [Name]")
- ☐ Bias checks (test messages across languages/ages; plain-language review)
- ☐ Opt-out links or easy reply path to a human
- ☐ Data minimization (exclude sacramental notes or sensitive fields)
- ☐ Pilot with a small group before parish-wide rollout
- ☐ Documented process and audit logs for who sent what/when
- ☐ Vendor due diligence (security, data retention, faith-aligned usage terms)

STEP 4

Optional Goals and Measurements

- ☐ Increased personal follow-ups (calls/visits) within X days
- ☐ More first-time connections (new small-group signups, ministry inquiries)
- ☐ Faster response to care needs (avg hours/days)
- ☐ Re-engagement of inactive households (count/%)
- ☐ Event participation by previously underrepresented groups
- ☐ Pastoral “wins” captured as brief stories (qualitative)
- ☐ Fewer complaints about tone/impersonality
- ☐ Volunteer satisfaction or reduced burnout indicators

Sample Use Cases

- Drafting warm, bilingual invitations to small groups, reviewed by ministry leads
- Identifying households disengaged for 6–12 months for a personal call/visit
- Summarizing prayer intentions to notice patterns and follow up
- Creating accessible event summaries (simple language/audio/large print)
- Homily preparation aids that help research and organization while preserving the preacher’s voice
- First-draft sacrament communications (e.g., preparation reminders) with staff review



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