



# *The* MESSAGE

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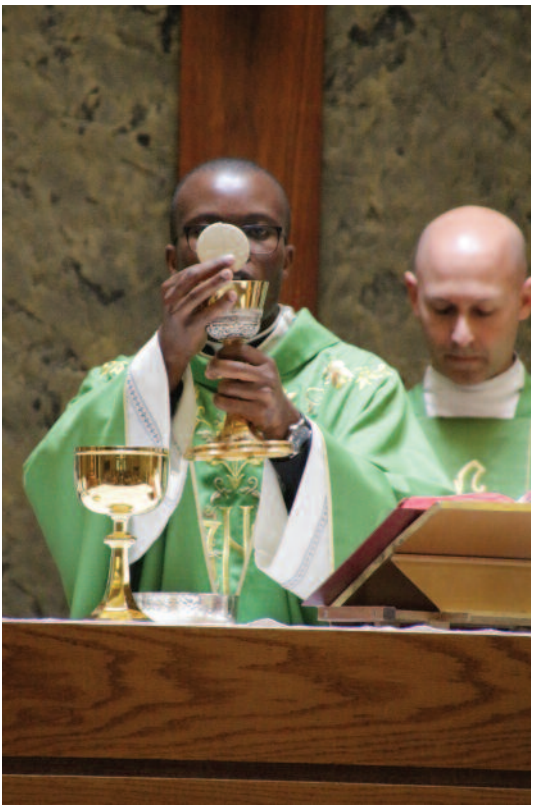
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## *Called to Missionary Discipleship and Conversion*

A PASTORAL LETTER  
ON CATHOLIC IDENTITY & MISSION IN SOUTHWEST INDIANA  
2016







# Called to Missionary Discipleship and Conversion

## A PASTORAL LETTER ON CATHOLIC IDENTITY & MISSION IN SOUTHWEST INDIANA 2016

### Introduction

I take this occasion to greet you in the words and spirit of St. Paul to the Corinthians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God. For as Christ’s sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis draws out the nature of each diocese and the bishop’s role in service to the diocese. He states:

Each particular Church, as a portion of the Catholic Church under the leadership of its bishop, is likewise called to missionary conversion. It is the primary subject of evangelization, since it is the concrete manifestation of the one Church in one specific place, and in it *the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic* Church of Christ is truly present and operative. It is the Church incarnate in a certain place, equipped with all the means of salvation bestowed by Christ, but with local features...To make this missionary impulse ever more focused, generous and fruitful, I encourage each particular Church to under-take a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform.<sup>i</sup>

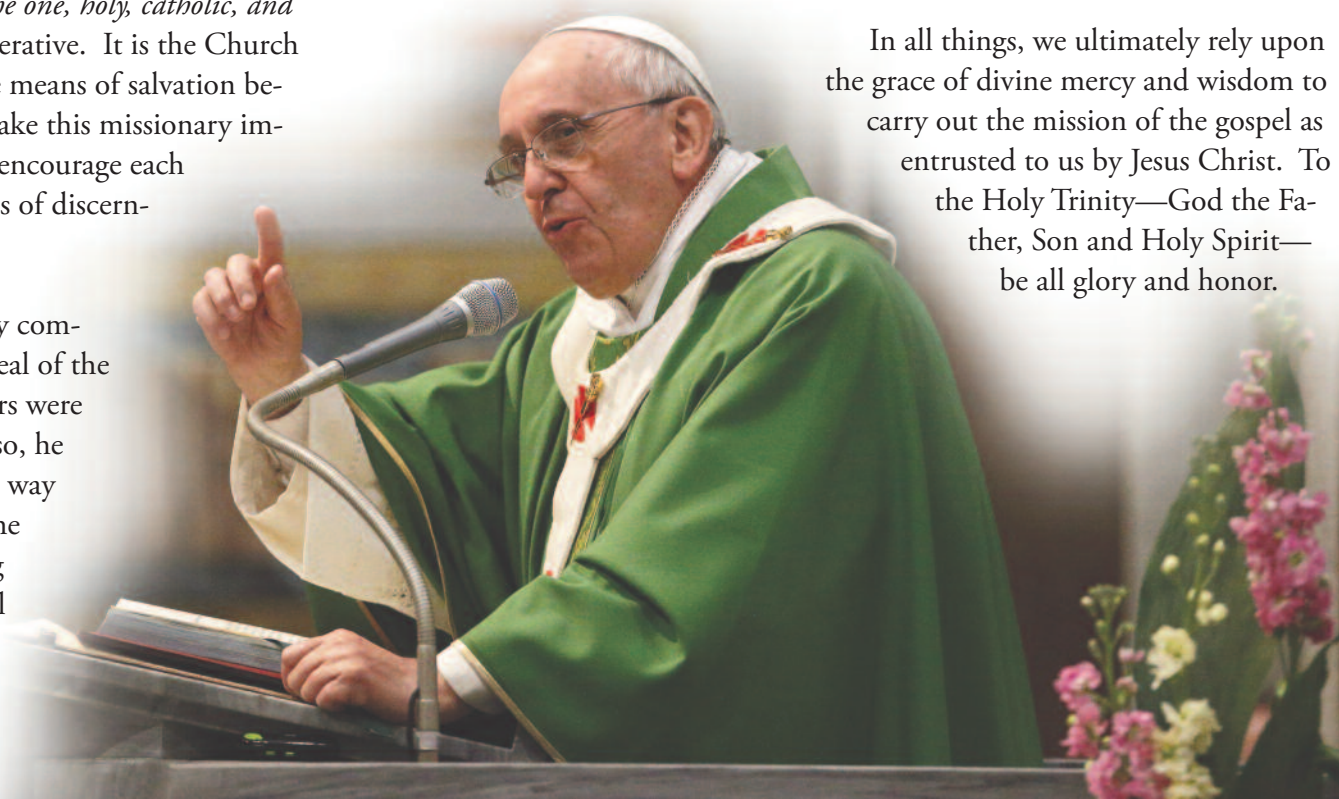
The bishop must always foster this missionary communion in his diocesan Church, following the ideal of the first Christian communities, in which the believers were of one heart and one soul (cf. Acts 4:32). To do so, he will sometimes go before his people, pointing the way and keeping their hope vibrant. At other times, he will simply be in their midst with his unassuming and merciful presence. At yet other times, he will have to walk after them, helping those who lag behind and—above all—allowing the flock to strike out on new paths. In his mission of fostering dynamic, open and missionary communion,

he will have to encourage and develop the means of participation...and other forms of pastoral dialogue. . . Yet the principle aim of these participatory processes should not be ecclesiastical organization, but rather the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone.<sup>ii</sup>

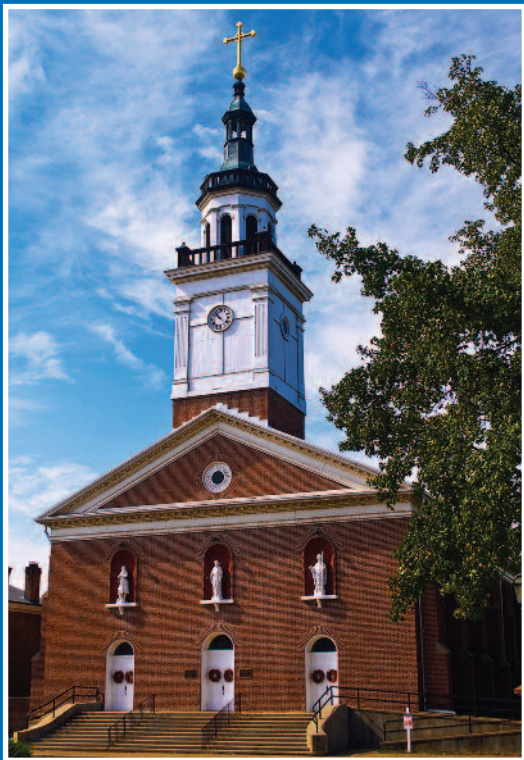
Thus, this pastoral letter is presented for the very purpose of seeking to foster missionary conversion and communion in this particular Church known as the Diocese of Evansville. As directed by the Holy Father, this presentation of a revised Diocesan *Mission Statement* and *Pastoral Plan* seeks to begin an undertaking of “a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform”<sup>iii</sup> toward making the “missionary impulse ever more focused, generous and fruitful”<sup>iv</sup> throughout the twelve counties of southwest Indiana comprising this particular Church.

Please allow me to take this opportunity to express special appreciation to those who served on the steering committee to oversee the process of our Diocesan Pastoral Planning. We made every effort to provide the broadest range of representation from across the diocese while maintaining a workable number of members.

In all things, we ultimately rely upon the grace of divine mercy and wisdom to carry out the mission of the gospel as entrusted to us by Jesus Christ. To the Holy Trinity—God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—be all glory and honor.







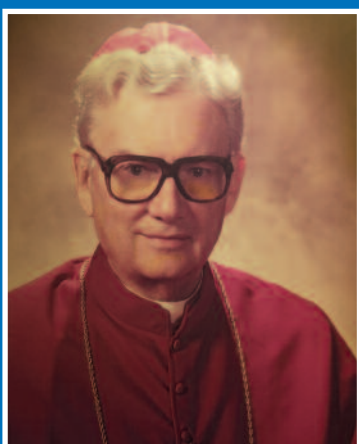
Minor Basilica of St. Francis Xavier, Vincennes



Bishop Henry J. Grimmelsman



Bishop Paul F. Liebold



Bishop Francis R. Shea



Bishop Gerald A. Gettelfinger

## A Brief History

Catholic identity and mission has a rich history in southwest Indiana. Pope Clement X established the Diocese of Quebec, in 1674, which included the territory known today as Indiana. Sacramental records began being kept at St. Francis Xavier Church, in Vincennes, in 1749. In 1770, Father Pierre Gibault became the pastor of Vincennes. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 guaranteed religious freedom throughout the territory. In 1789, Vincennes came under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Diocese of Baltimore. The Indiana Territory was established in 1800, with Vincennes being designated as its capital.

### History at a Glance

Established on Nov. 11, 1944, by decree of Pope Pius XII

Encompasses 12 counties and more than 5,500 square miles in Southwest Indiana

First Bishop – Most Rev. Henry J. Grimmelsman, served 1944-1965

Second Bishop – Most Rev. Paul F. Liebold, served 1966-1969

Third Bishop – Most Rev. Francis R. Shea, served 1970-1989

Fourth Bishop – Most Rev. Gerald A. Gettelfinger, served 1989-2011

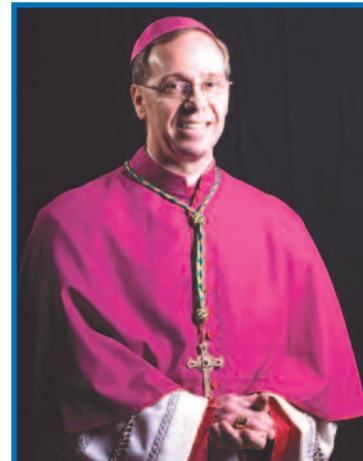
Fifth Bishop – Most Rev. Charles C. Thompson, installed June 29, 2011

The Diocese of Bardstown, in Kentucky, was established on 8 April 1808, which included all of the Indiana Territory. Flaget Elementary School, the current Catholic grade school in Vincennes, is named after the first Bishop of Bardstown, Joseph Benedict Flaget. Bishop Flaget was the first known Catholic bishop in the Indiana Territory, in 1814, administering the Sacrament of Confirmation in Vincennes. In 1816, Indiana became the nineteenth state.

The Diocese of Vincennes was established in 1834, which included all of Indiana as well as the eastern third of Illinois (including Chicago), with Fr. Simon Bruté being named the first Bishop. Bishop Bruté served for five years until his death in 1839. There would be four more bishops appointed and several parishes established until the Diocesan See was transferred to Indianapolis in 1898. The first four bishops are buried in the crypt of St. Francis Xavier Basilica, in Vincennes.

The Diocese of Evansville, encompassing 12 counties and just more than 5,000 square miles, was established by decree of Pope Pius XII on 11 November 1944, followed shortly thereafter with the consecration of the First Bishop of Evansville, Henry J. Grimmelsman, on December 21 of that same year. The first Diocesan Synod of Evansville was held in 1948. Bishop Paul F. Liebold became the Second Bishop of Evansville in 1966. Just three years later, in 1969, he became Archbishop of Cincinnati. In 1970, Bishop Francis R. Shea became the Third Bishop of Evansville. Also in 1970, Pope Paul VI elevated the Old Cathedral of St. Francis Xavier, in Vincennes, to the status of Minor Basilica, an honor reserved for only the most historic of churches. In 1972, both Arch-

bishop Liebold (age 57) and Bishop Grimmelsman (age 81) died. Ordination of the first class of Permanent Deacons for the Diocese of Evansville took place in 1977. Reverend Monsignor Gerald A. Gettelfinger was ordained and installed as the Fourth Bishop of Evansville on 11 April 1989. A Diocesan Synod was held in 1993. In 1994, the first Diocesan Pastoral Council was formed, while Bishop Shea (age 80) died in August of that same year. In 2007, the Basilica of St. Francis Xavier (the Old Cathedral) celebrated its 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I was ordained the Fifth Bishop of the Diocese on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, 29 June 2011.



Bishop Charles C. Thompson

A very extensive parish reorganization process, stemming from December 2008 to the present, involved the merger of several parishes while maintaining the current 69 churches as worship sites. In November 2013, the Diocese welcomed its first missionary priest. Including seven missionary priests (one from Nigeria, one from Kenya, three Heralds of Good News from southern India and two diocesan priests from northern India), there are 44 priests serving in the Diocese of Evansville. We are blessed with the long-standing presence of the Benedictine monks of St. Meinrad Archabbey as well. The Diocese of Evansville continues to be blessed with wonderful priests, deacons, religious women and men, as well as lay ministers in service to the Church.

## Current Snapshot of Ministries and Services in the Diocese

The Diocese of Evansville is one of five dioceses in the state of Indiana. A Catholic presence of ministries and services is maintained in all twelve counties of the Diocese. In addition to its 69 churches or worship sites, comprising 46 parishes, the Diocese boasts 26 Catholic schools, including four Catholic high schools (i.e. two in Evansville, one in Vincennes and one in Washington). In addition to our parishes and schools, we have a number of diocesan offices and staff who provide service throughout the Diocese, including Catechesis, Catholic Charities, Catholic Schools, Communications, Finance, Hispanic Ministry, Tribunal, Vocations, Worship, and Youth & Young Adults. Each office oversees a number of areas, such as the oversight of Catholic Charities for the family, respect life and outreach to our Latino communities. The people of the Diocese are served by two Catholic hospitals, namely, St. Mary's Health System Services in both Evansville and Warrick County, and Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center in Jasper. The Newman Centers at the University of Southern Indiana and the University of Evansville remain very active. We are blessed with the wonderful presence and witness of a number of religious women and men in the Diocese. Of particular note are the Benedictine Sisters of Monastery Immaculate Conception, in Ferdinand, the Daughters of Charity at Mater





Today

The Diocese of Evansville includes:

**77,000 Catholics**

15 percent of the total population of its 12 counties

**46 parishes**  
with 69 churches and worship sites

**26 Catholic schools**, including four high schools

**Two Catholic hospitals**

St. Mary's Health System in Evansville and Warrick County, and Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center in Jasper

**44 priests**  
active in pastoral ministry

Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Benedictine Sisters

Active Catholic movements and organizations include, but are not limited to, Christ Renews His Parish, Cursillo, Knights of Columbus, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and others

Seton Residence in Evansville, Daughters of Charity

No fewer than five parishes regularly celebrate weekend Masses in Spanish

Newman Centers for Catholic campus ministry at the University of Evansville and the University of Southern Indiana

Monastery of St. Clare in Evansville, Order of St. Clares

Diocesan offices include, but are not limited to, Catechesis, Catholic Charities, Catholic Schools, Hispanic Ministry, Tribunal, Vocations, Worship and others

Dei House, in Evansville, and the Monastery of St. Clare, in Evansville. Additionally, a number of Catholic organizations and movements continue to be very active in the Diocese; some of these include the Knights of Columbus, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Communion and Liberation, Source and Summit, TEC, Cursillo and Christ Renews His Parish. At least five parishes regularly celebrate Mass in Spanish on Sundays. The Catholic population of approximately 77,000 makes up 15% of the total population in the Diocese. The Catholic population is approximately 9% of the total population in the state of Indiana.

### Diocesan Mission Statement & Pastoral Planning

A Diocesan Pastoral Planning Committee was formed in March 2014 to begin addressing the need of a cohesive direction for Catholic identity, presence and witness throughout the Diocese, particularly in regard to the various ministries and services provided by the Church. The task of this committee was to assist the bishop in developing a shared vision for the Church in southwest Indiana, especially in terms of mission. The following Mission Statement was adopted for the Diocese:

*We, the Catholics of the Diocese of Evansville, are committed to continuing the mission of Jesus Christ in the world today by joyfully living the gospel, ministering to all in justice and charity, and inviting people into a personal encounter with the living God through Word, Sacrament and Service.*

From this point, the committee set out to identify particular goals, objectives and action steps as a means of enabling all—clergy, religious and laity—to fully embrace our Diocesan Mission Statement. The ultimate goal, of course, is the Kingdom of God and Salvation of Souls. All else flows from our faith in *God's* Kingdom and *Our* Salvation being brought about by the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### **WE, THE CATHOLICS OF THE DIOCESE OF EVANSVILLE**

Before considering each of our goals, along with the respective objectives and action steps, we do well to reflect on the Diocesan Mission Statement. As the first words carefully denote, being Catholic necessarily involves a clear understanding and appreciation of belonging to something greater than oneself. As noted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the word “catholic” means “universal,” “in keeping with the whole.”<sup>v</sup> The “Church is catholic,” it adds, “because she has been sent out by Christ on a mission to the whole of the human race.”<sup>vi</sup> By establishing the Church, Jesus reveals that God sought to save us as community rather than mere individuals.

Throughout the gospels, Jesus makes clear that one's relationship with God cannot remain in isolation to one's relationship with others. Take, for instance, Jesus' response to a scribe who asks about the greatest commandment: “You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31) Elsewhere, in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus teaches that what we do or fail to do for the least of His brothers and sisters, we do or fail to do for Him. (cf. Matthew 25:31-46) Obviously, active participation in the life of the Church, the Body of Christ, includes carrying out my responsibility to others rather than merely being about what I may get out of the experience. A diocese is not merely a system of individual parts operating in isolation of one another. A diocese, also referred to as a “particular church,” is “a community of the Christian faithful in communion of faith and sacraments with their bishop...”<sup>vii</sup>

**“You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31)**

Goal #2, to *Build upon Catholic Identity and Mission, within and beyond the Catholic Community*, especially focuses on what it means to be Catholic. At the heart of being Catholic, as the objectives of the goal strive to make clear, is the sense of belonging and understanding one's faith. As Catholics, we understand conversion as an ongoing process that is rooted in a lifelong process of formation and education. Through cultivating the relationship between faith and reason, we are better able to enrich our identity and mission as Catholics.

What does it mean to “be Church”? From reading the Acts of the Apostles and his letters, it is clear that St. Paul understood the notion of Church as being more about the community of believers than particular structures or buildings. This would seem true for the other apostles as well. As Pope Francis has repeatedly reminded us, particularly in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”), the Church's nature is missionary and its task is evangelization: “The Church, an agent of evangelization, is more than an organic and hierarchical institution; she is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way to God. She is certainly a mystery rooted in the Trinity, yet she exists concretely in history as a people of pilgrims and evangelizers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary.”<sup>viii</sup> He adds: “The Church is sent by Jesus Christ as the sacrament of salvation offered by God...Being Church means being God's people. . .”<sup>ix</sup> The Church, of course, is not an end in itself. It exists, as instituted by Jesus Christ, to carry out His saving mission to the world. Religion is obviously an essential component of the Church, which is geared toward the spiritual enrichment of its members.

*We, the Catholics of the Diocese of Evansville, are committed to continuing the mission of Jesus Christ in the world today by joyfully living the gospel, ministering to all in justice and charity, and inviting people into a personal encounter with the living God through Word, Sacrament and Service.*



Religion is to spirituality what navigational instruments are to a ship or plane. Thus, given this essential interconnectedness, it is difficult to understand how one might claim to be spiritual without being religious. Proper relationship with God is impossible apart from proper relationship with others. It is through the witness and tradition of the Church that God has chosen to preserve and transmit the faith over the course of history. It must be kept in mind that the Head (i.e. Jesus Christ) and the Body (i.e. the Church) are inseparable.

### COMMITTED TO CONTINUING THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE WORLD TODAY

Who are those “committed to continuing the mission of Jesus Christ in the world today”? The answer to this question lies in the Church’s theology on the Sacraments of Christian Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist—which provide the very *foundation* of Christian life. The call to discipleship is rooted in the vocation of each and every baptized member of the Church. Baptism and Confirmation (as well as the Sacrament of Holy Orders) confer grace as well as a sacramental *character* or “seal” by which a Christian shares in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and is made a member of the Church according to various states and functions. In his *First Letter to the Corinthians*, St. Paul writes; “As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body....” (1 Corinthians 12:12-31) The conferral of Confirmation, involving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (e.g. gifts), completes and deepens baptismal grace, strengthens inner union with Christ and perfects the common priesthood of the faithful.<sup>x</sup> The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life,” in which the other sacraments, as well as all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up and are oriented toward it.<sup>xi</sup> In sum, the Holy Eucharist is the “efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being.”<sup>xii</sup>

This foundational understanding for the Sacraments of Initiation in Christian life is fundamental to Goal #5, to *Build up strong and sustainable vocations*. At the heart of discerning

one’s vocation is the appreciation of what it means to be a fully initiated member of the Church, with rights and responsibilities involved in one’s participation in the life and mission of the Church. Community, especially with regard to the family and parish, is essential to the cultivation of vocations.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (“The Joy of Love: On Love in the Family”), Pope Francis states, “The Church makes her own the attitude of the Lord Jesus, who offers his boundless love to each person without exception.”<sup>xiii</sup> He adds, “There are two ways of thinking which recur throughout the Church’s history: casting off and reinstating. The Church’s way, from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement...The way of the Church...is to pour out the balm of God’s mercy on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart....”<sup>xiv</sup>

The emphasis on “today” reminds us that we are building on witness, ministry and service of those who have gone before us while keeping in mind those who will come after us. We are part

...it is the mission of Jesus Christ, rather than one’s own agenda, that deserves our stewardship of time, talent and treasure.

of the continuum of the mission initially entrusted by Jesus Christ to those first disciples, particularly the apostles.

Thus, we are *one, holy, catholic and apostolic*. Above all, we must keep in mind that it is the mission of Jesus Christ, rather than one’s own agenda, that deserves our stewardship of time, talent and treasure. In a word, we must remain Christ-centered. Our gaze must remain on Him, drawing on the notion of the Catholic “Both/And,” in worship and service. Though situated in a particular time and culture, the disciple belonging to Jesus Christ must remain “in” the world while not “of” the world.

### BY JOYFULLY LIVING THE GOSPEL

Our commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ is to be done “by joyfully living the gospel.” Authentic commitment to the gospel demands that we be intentional rather than half-hearted disciples. We must shape culture by the witness of faith rather than be shaped by culture. This necessarily implies the need for

the art of respectful, ongoing dialogue. In fact, noting that the Church is missionary by her very nature, Pope Francis stresses the need for missionary discipleship to authentically evangelize.<sup>xv</sup> This requires one to not merely accept but to embrace the gospel and the cross. The word “gospel” means *Good News*. The very title of the Holy Father’s Apostolic Exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel,” makes clear that one’s attitude is key to effective evangelization. A joyful witness attracts. True joy, despite hardship and difficulties, stems from conviction in the Good News of Jesus Christ. In order to bear the fruit of joy, the disciple’s conviction necessarily includes a deep and profound awareness of God’s unconditional love and mercy. Joyful living involves both words and actions. Many are aware of the saying attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: “Preach always. When necessary, use words.”

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation “The Joy of Love,” points out that, “in proposing to the faithful the full ideal of the Gospel and the Church’s teachings, the Church’s pastors must always treat persons with compassion.”<sup>xvi</sup> He warns, “At times we find it hard to make room for God’s unconditional love in our pastoral ministry. We put so many conditions on mercy that we empty it of its concrete meaning and real significance. That is the worst way of watering down the Gospel.”<sup>xvii</sup>

### MINISTERING TO ALL IN JUSTICE AND CHARITY



We carry out the mission of Jesus Christ, as our mission statement states, by “ministering to all in justice and charity.” Ministering, of course, means that we act on behalf of Jesus Christ and the Church (i.e. the Head & Body) rather than out of our personal agenda or for personal gain. The “all” is not limited to only Catholics. On the contrary, just as the Son of God was sent to offer salvation to all, so the Church is concerned about each and





With the Ten Commandments as primary foundation, the seven key principles of Catholic Social Teaching also provide a basis for justice. These include:

- 1. Life & Dignity of the Human Person
- 2. Call to Family, Community and Participation
- 3. Rights and Responsibilities
- 4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- 5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
- 6. Solidarity; and
- 7. Care for God’s Creation.



every human being of every nation and people. Here, we do well to keep in mind the Church’s preferential option for the poor. As in the societal progress, the Church’s witness is only as effective as its care for the dignity and wellbeing of the poor, marginalized and most vulnerable. To this end, as Pope Francis often reminds us, dialogue, accompaniment and integration are essential to authentic evangelization.<sup>xviii</sup> While complementary and interconnected, justice and charity might be considered as representing two sides of the same coin. Canonical equity, representing the pastoral application of Church norms, is understood to mean “justice tempered with the sweetness of mercy.”<sup>xix</sup> Closely aligned with this notion of canonical equity is the Church’s commitment to proclaiming “Truth in Charity.”<sup>xx</sup> Justice and truth are not mutually exclusive of mercy and charity. In fact, one might consider them as existing in creative tension in the various forms of Church ministry. While demands of justice must not be relegated to the realm of charity, we must keep in mind that charity extends beyond the demands of justice.

Nestled between His teaching on loving one’s enemies and not judging others, Jesus presents us with the golden rule of thumb for justice: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31) Note that we are to treat others as we want to be treated, and not merely as they might treat us. With the Ten Commandments as primary foundation, the seven key principles of Catholic Social Teaching also provide a basis for justice. These include: (1) Life & Dignity of the Human Person; (2) Call to Family, Community and Participation; (3) Rights and Responsibilities; (4) Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; (5) The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; (6) Solidarity; and (7) Care for God’s Creation. This seventh principle is the topic of Pope Francis’ recent Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si’* (“Praise Be”), on the care of our common home, namely, the earth.<sup>xxi</sup> In order for the Church to carry out its ministries of charity and services of justice, the right of religious freedom is essential. It is important for all to understand that legitimate religious freedom, in both natural law and constitutional law, is not merely a privilege but a right. As such, any attempt by government or any other entity to hinder that right is itself an unjust act. Certainly, religious liberty is not a license for self-justification, acting unjustly or getting around legitimate laws. Here, it is worth referencing the Indiana Bishops’ Pastoral Statement on *Marriage as a Covenant Between One Man and One Woman*, dated 4 December 2013, as well as the Indiana Bishops’ Pastoral Letter, *Poverty at the Crossroads: The Church’s Response to Poverty in Indiana*, dated 18 February 2015, for further reflection on the Church’s understanding of what it means to be just and charitable by the simple formula of *See, Judge and Act*.<sup>xxii</sup>

Catholic Social Teaching permeates Goal #3 of our pastoral plan, namely, to *Build up a sus-*

Along with prayer and fasting, the other disciplines found in both Old and New Testaments, almsgiving is considered to be at the heart of Christian discipleship.

*tainable system of outreach and service that honors human dignity, promotes engagement, heals wounds and transforms hearts.* This goal is predicated on the proper balance of virtues (i.e. justice and charity), as well as the principles associated with dialogue, engagement and respect.

Charity, of course, is encouraged in practically every religion and culture. Unfortunately, human judgment tends to interfere with the compassion, gratitude and generosity that ultimately underlies being charitable—whether it be of our time, talent or treasure. Along with prayer and fasting, the other disciplines found in both Old and New Testaments, almsgiving is considered to be at the heart of Christian discipleship. With particular focus on the widow, the orphan and the alien, Sacred Scripture makes apparent that God’s concern is for the poor and vulnerable who often fall under the radar of cultural concern and societal norms. One only needs to think of the *Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (cf. Luke 16:19-31) or the story of *The Rich Official* (cf. Luke 18:18-23). In the former, the rich man failed to acknowledge, let alone assist, poor Lazarus, and paid the consequences in the after-life. In the latter, the rich man became sad when Jesus encouraged him to sell all he had, distribute it to the poor and follow Him.

The right relationship of justice and charity are predicated on a proper notion and appreciation for mercy. How blessed we are to be celebrating the *Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*, as proclaimed by Pope Francis. In his papal *Bull of Indiction*, dated 11 April 2015, declaring this special Jubilee Year of *Mercy*, the Holy Father remarked, “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy... We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity and peace. Our salvation depends on it... Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive.”<sup>xxiii</sup> Elsewhere he adds, “How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst!”<sup>xxiv</sup> Encouraging us to keep “our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze,”<sup>xxv</sup> Pope Francis especially exhorts

“Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God’s way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe.”

us to carry out the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*.<sup>xxvi</sup> He states, “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life... The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love... The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person... wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.”<sup>xxvii</sup> Referencing the grace of reconciliation, our Holy Father offers the following point of clarity: “Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God’s way of reaching out to the sinner, offering



him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

The Church’s commitment to justice and charity involves more than providing temporary relief to those in need. In fact, desiring to heal wounds and transform hearts, it seeks to eradicate the root causes of injustice and lack of charity. In the Indiana Bishops’ Pastoral Letter, titled *Poverty at the Crossroads: The Church’s Response to Poverty in Indiana*, four key areas to address the root causes of poverty were identified; namely, Family Life, Employment, Education and Healthcare.<sup>xxix</sup> The document is meant as a resource for dioceses and parishes to discern how best to make a real difference in the lives of individuals and families struggling to overcome the many layers of concerns related to poverty. With the attitude of Jesus Christ, relying on divine grace to fill up what is lacking in us, let us pray that the effects of our acts of justice and charity be without limit or bounds.

### INVITING PEOPLE INTO A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE LIVING GOD

The next point to consider in our Diocesan Mission Statement is the notion of “inviting people into a personal encounter with the living God.” Underlying the idea of invitation is the need for attractive witness. We seek to invite rather than coerce, humiliate or impose on others. Time and again, Pope Francis reminds us of the need to develop a sense of accompaniment. We must accompany one another along the way of life and faith, while respecting one another’s individual journeys on the path of faith. The most effective invitation, far more than giving lip service to the gospel, is the personal witness of consistently living the principles of our Catholic faith. It is amazing what one simple kind word or gesture can mean to another person. None of us can really know what another person is going through or dealing with at any given time in life. We are often prevented from reaching out to others in fear of not knowing what to say or do. Our role is not necessarily to solve every problem, but to be present and listen with the heart. In such situations, it is good to recall the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi: “Lord, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.” Invitation also requires that we take care to speak *truth in charity*. Pope Francis consistently shows how tone is as important as content when it comes to such invitation. It does little good for us to push away the very souls meant to be saved.

We must also be clear about the purpose of inviting people. The invitation is to a personal encounter with the living God, particularly in the person of Jesus Christ. In his Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (“God is Love”), published 25 December 2005, Pope Benedict XVI explained the ultimate purpose of evangelization at the very heart of the Gospel: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the

encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”<sup>xxx</sup> Time and again, Pope Francis speaks of the need for a “culture of encounter.”<sup>xxxi</sup> God desires an intimate, personal relationship with each of us, made possible in and through the person of Jesus Christ. We must take the time and energy to cultivate such a relationship with the Lord and one another. This is not possible without our willingness to make the effort of putting God first in our lives, ministry and service. As it is said, one cannot give to others what one does not possess. Without a profound awareness and personal appreciation for the grace of God’s unconditional love and immeasurable mercy, one lacks the full capacity to proclaim such grace of love and mercy to others. Finally, we must ask ourselves how such a personal encounter is possible.

The ultimate task of evangelization, as a number of popes have stressed, is a personal encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, Goal #1 of our diocesan pastoral plan is to *Build up a culture that promotes personal encounter with Jesus Christ*. Though faith is a gift of God, it is our task to cultivate a culture of encounter through the various objectives and action steps as outlined in the particular goal.

### THROUGH WORD, SACRAMENT AND SERVICE

A personal encounter with the living God, as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is made possible

“through Word, Sacrament and Service.” It is imperative that we pay close attention to the “and” in these last words of our Diocesan Mission Statement. All three—Word, Sacrament AND Service—are necessary to fully engage in an intimate, personal encounter with the

Lord. There is no substitute for any of the three.

The Word, of course, is the Word of God. Jesus Christ, the living Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18), is the sum of Sacred Scripture, as depicted in the *Transfiguration* (cf. Mark 9:1-8). Before proclaiming the Word, it must first be understood. Before it can be understood, it must first be heard. The bridges between hearing and understanding necessarily include study, meditation and reflection.

Complementary to the Word of God is the celebration of the Sacraments, which must be rooted in both personal and communal prayer. While divine grace is available and possible in various ways, the Sacraments are particular means of affecting God’s grace. God’s grace fills up what

is lacking in us. Consider the words of Pope Francis on the Sacrament of the Eucharist: “The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of the sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.”<sup>xxxii</sup>

Finally, the outreach of Service is the natural consequence or effect of the transforming grace of Word and Sacrament in the life of the believer. Authentic service stems from a spirit of stewardship, of giving back in thanksgiving for the many blessings and gifts of God in one’s life. Such service, as Pope Francis noted in his 2015 Lenten Message, requires the courage and humility to act in a manner contrary to a rather permeating worldly sense of a selfish attitude that contributes to a “globalization of indifference.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> As he explains, we cannot allow our own desire for wants and comfort to numb us from caring for the needs of those less fortunate.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Again, in reference to the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. 25:31-46), what we do or fail to do to the least of our brothers and sisters, we do or fail to do to Christ. To be Christ-centered, one’s attitude must be rooted in the virtues of courage, humility and generosity.

Vibrant parishes and intentional disciples are indispensable to carry out this three-fold task of Word, Sacrament and Service. This is the very focus of Goal #4 of our pastoral plan, to *Build up and maintain vibrant and evangelizing parishes that form intentional disciples*. Religion, like politics, is often “local.” It is at the parish level where the effects of ministry and service are most realized.

Catholic identity and mission are predicated on our embrace of these three—Word, Sacrament and Service. At the heart of Catholic identity and mission is the conviction that the light of Christ dispels the darkness of sin and death. The love of God pervades the shadows of hatred, fear, guilt and despair. Worldly chaos, like the cross, is transformed by the Holy Trinity—Father, Son and Spirit—giving way to the God’s victory over all forms of evil. Thus, as we profess in the Creed, we “look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”



“The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of the sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.”



# PASTORAL PLAN

With gratitude to the steering committee for its enthusiasm, commitment and dedication to answering our call to missionary discipleship and conversion, I am pleased to present our Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Publication of this letter represents formal adoption and intent to implement the plan, effective immediately.

After developing and refining the diocesan mission statement, the steering committee met in smaller groups to develop (1) a set of goals to work toward in achieving the diocesan mission; (2) a set of objectives for use in attaining each goal; and (3) suggested actions steps that could be used in working toward meeting each objective.

The plan presented here includes our diocesan mission statement, and the goals, objectives and suggested action steps.

**Mission Statement** – *We, the Catholics of the Diocese of Evansville, are committed to continuing the mission of Jesus Christ in the world today by joyfully living the gospel, ministering to all in justice and charity, and inviting people into a personal encounter with the living God through Word, Sacrament and Service.*



## Goal 1

### Build a culture that promotes a personal encounter with Jesus Christ

Objective 1.1: Invite, engage and support our youth and young adults in knowing Jesus Christ and living their faith. *Suggested action steps:*

- Develop a multifaceted communication plan to foster an intentional relationship with Jesus Christ through engagement in evangelization, prayer, service and formation.
  - Develop Social Network Portfolio Growth (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
  - Create a text messaging system.
  - Incorporate measurable quality through links to social media, Scripture and Catholic Tradition and links to opportunities that support and build an encounter with Jesus Christ, e.g., TEC, Scouting, Parish Religious Education Programs, and sacramental preparation, for youth and young adults.
- Identify and train one adult from each parish with the skills necessary to relate to and understand young people and young adults to serve as mentors.
  - Develop resource packet and training materials for adult mentors, enabling them to identify, train, and guide youth mentors in each deanery to offer peer support to youth in their faith journey.
  - Assess participation at special youth events in the deanery.
  - Assess recruitment, training, and effectiveness of adult mentors and youth mentors.

Objective 1.2: Invite, engage and support Catholic families in knowing Jesus Christ and living their faith. *Suggested action steps:*

- Develop a multifaceted communication plan that engages Catholic families in building a culture in the home grounded in Catholic faith and relationship with Jesus Christ.
  - Use existing parish and diocesan communication tools and events such as social media, bulletins, and parish socials to promote resources and opportunities for families.
  - Use existing parish and Catholic School events such as summer socials, Scouting, and athletic programs, and diocesan events (e.g., CFM, NACFLM, USCCB Office of the Family, and foryourmarriage.org), to share resources and opportunities with families.
- Identify and empower leadership within a deanery to facilitate and deepen encounters with Jesus Christ for families.
  - Identify a Family Faith Coordinator in each parish.
  - Develop a resource packet and training materials for the Family Faith Coordinator.
  - Connect families into smaller support groups.
  - Match families with mentor families.
  - Coordinate welcoming families into the parish.





Objective 1.3: Invite, engage and support all Catholics in knowing Jesus Christ and living their faith.

*Suggested action steps:*

- Develop a multifaceted communication plan to reach active and inactive Catholics who feel marginalized or unwelcome.
  - Create an intentional and simple resource for Catholics attending funerals, weddings and other liturgical or sacramental opportunities.
  - Develop guides to traditional Catholic prayers (e.g., the rosary) and forms of prayer (e.g., praying with scripture) and make available at liturgical and parish functions.
  - Create and disseminate throughout the liturgical year (e.g., Lent and Advent) a message of welcome and inclusion to invite engagement in parish life of all Catholics, using print, online and in- person communication tools.
  - Establish small communities and formation programs that equip parish members and staff to know and effectively talk about their faith.
- Identify and empower leadership in parishes to facilitate opportunities that support and deepen encounters with Jesus Christ for all who identify as Catholic.
  - Identify, train, and develop training and resource material for a Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator for each parish. The Coordinator's responsibilities would include:
    - ◆ Ensuring that everything offered by the parish is communicated in some way to all Catholics.
    - ◆ Training people who would be willing to reach out to those who feel marginalized or unwelcome.
    - ◆ Assessing needs and finding ways to include the following:
      - ✓ Divorcees
      - ✓ The disabled
      - ✓ The elderly
      - ✓ The infirm
      - ✓ People who are diverse by way of culture, language, or lifestyle

Objective 1.4: Invite, engage and support all people in knowing Jesus Christ and experiencing the Catholic Church as a home for living their faith. *Suggested action steps:*

- Develop a multifaceted communication plan that reaches out to the larger community to develop an understanding of the Catholic faith that supports a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.
  - Use social media to clearly communicate Catholic Church teaching, using common language.
  - Provide information that illuminates the richness of Catholic faith and practice and the ways these can enrich life through encounters with Jesus Christ.
  - Use all media options for inviting the larger community to socials, celebrations, and parish and diocesan activities.
  - Initiate and develop relationships of invitation and accompaniment to share Catholic faith and practice (e.g., door-to-door evangelization and St. Vincent de Paul).
- Identify and empower leadership in parishes that creates opportunities to support and deepen an encounter with Jesus Christ for all people through service and relationship.
  - Identify opportunities for service to the larger community (e.g., Habitat for Humanity, Evansville Christian Life Center, and Ozanam Family Shelter, that enable interaction and engagement among Catholics and others).
  - Identify interfaith opportunities (CAJE).
  - Build upon ecumenical relationships with other churches and faith communities.
  - Identify opportunities for service to the global community, e.g., Bread for the World, CRS, and sister parishes, that enable engagement among Catholics and others.





## Goal 2

### Build upon Catholic identity and mission within and beyond the Catholic community

Objective 2.1: Help people embrace that Christ is uniquely present in the Catholic Church. *Suggested action steps:*

- Reach out to inactive and non-practicing Catholics where they are through a multimedia campaign similar to (or using) the “Catholics Come Home” model.
  - Advertising in print and broadcast media, and online
- Create an entry point for use in responding to the campaign.
  - Create and staff a toll-free number for people to use in contacting the diocese anonymously (initially) for more information and/or to ask questions.
  - Create an “FAQ” document for use by those taking these initial calls.
  - Generate basic information from callers for use in referring them to the parish that serves their area.
- Work with parishes to create local welcoming committees for those who respond to the campaign.
  - Use St. Vincent de Paul volunteers from parishes to fill the committees.
  - Create and implement a plan for ongoing contact and follow-up.
  - Create and provide resources for committees use (see below).
- Create resources in hard copy and digital format for use by parish welcoming teams; examples include:
  - An FAQ brochure on “coming home”
  - A brochure/map with parish locations and Mass and personal confession times
  - A “one sheet” with links to websites for the diocese, *The Message*, Catholic Charities, and the local St. Vincent de Paul, and useful phone numbers (diocese, Charities, etc.)
- Create parish-based programs that are as welcoming and friendly as they are educational to help welcome those home who wish to return; examples include:
  - Catholicism 101
  - Session addressing “what has changed since I left”
  - Session addressing marriage-related issues

Objective 2.2: Help people see and understand the true unity and diversity of the Church. *Suggested action steps:*

- Develop and launch a diocesan app (optimized for English and Spanish and possibly other languages), with access via links from social media pages, that provides access to:
  - Ways to find parishes and their schedules for Masses and sacraments
  - Opportunities to volunteer
  - Contacts
- Create opportunities such as the following for Catholics to experience the unity and diversity of the Church across the diocese:
  - Bilingual Masses
  - Multi-ethnic Masses by deanery
  - Presentations by international missionary priests
- Create a more robust youth community across the diocese, especially for college-age young adults, through the following:
  - Social media accounts (e.g., Twitter and Instagram) with the “handle” @EVDIOyouth
  - Parish-level ministry fairs targeting young adults (i.e., high school and college ages)
  - Opportunities for involvement by these age groups that focus on the Corporal Works of Mercy
- Develop additional diocesan-wide Masses such as the annual “White Mass.”
  - Bring back the “Red Mass.”
  - Work to identify other possibilities for diocesan-wide Masses.
- Create opportunities such as the following, by deanery, for parish communities to come together:
  - Worship events (e.g., Masses, Vespers, and other prayer events surrounding major dates on the Church and liturgical calendars)
  - Educational events (e.g., speakers, seminars, and ongoing classes)
  - Social events







Objective 2.3: Help people see and understand the true elements of Catholic teaching.

*Suggested action steps:*

- Develop a new model, enabled by enhanced parish-level training, for ongoing adult formation that includes:
  - Weekly sessions that are part of parishes' weekend schedules
  - Lesson plans by age group that enable people to progress as they go through public/parochial school
  - Focus on a pastoral approach
- Develop resources to assist pastors
  - Homily Helps that focus on important elements of Catholic teaching
- Develop educational resources that target non-Catholics who visit Catholic parishes for liturgies such as funerals and weddings:
  - Educational pamphlets available at entries and/or in pews
  - Focus: "What Catholics do during Mass and other liturgies, and why," in a basic format, with content digitized for connection to the resources outlined in suggested action steps under Goal 2.1 above
- Develop a group of parish volunteers to assist at liturgies such as funerals and weddings.
  - Assume usher-like responsibilities
  - Welcome visitors and provide the resources outlined in Action Step 2.3.C above, etc.
- Encourage celebrants at liturgies such as funerals and weddings to explain elements in "real time"; examples include:
  - Readings
  - Preparation of the gifts
  - Beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer
  - Beginning of Communion Rite

### Goal 3

**Build up a sustainable system of outreach and service that honors human dignity, promotes engagement, heals wounds and transforms hearts**

Objective 3.1: Deliver information and educational programming that increases the understanding of and participation in building a just society, as envisioned in Catholic Social Teaching, Pope Francis' *Joy of the Gospel* and *Laudato Si*. *Suggested action steps:*

- Design a three-year program to educate the faithful to the call for justice.
- Conduct an inventory of justice ministry and educational programming throughout the diocese.
- Deliver a variety of programming (including activities for parishioners and professional development for diocesan/parish staff) to increase awareness of the Call for Justice and systemic family and societal changes that result in community stability and strength.
- Organize an advocacy/action effort around a central theme such as environment, employment, education, health or strong families.

Objective 3.2: Increase strategic outreach efforts of parishes, using best practices, to provide basic human needs of community members in response to the baptismal call. *Suggested action steps:*

- Conduct an inventory of community and Catholic services that address corporeal needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and other essentials of daily living. Develop a mechanism for parishes to report their Catholic outreach programs' outputs and outcomes.
- Build awareness of the Christian mission for Catholic and community service providers to address corporeal needs in their communities. Utilize the Evansville Diocese inventory developed in year 1 and any other desirable outreach programs.
- Assess the need for corporeal care services throughout the 12 counties of the diocese.
- Develop and begin implementation of a 3-year plan for strategic participation in corporeal care efforts in local communities. Include goals to increase by 20 percent the number of parishioners involved in service to community members and the number of service hours provided.

Objective 3.3: Provide pastoral care and support systems that are directed at healing the woundedness of community members by increasing well-being in ways that honor human dignity. *Suggested action steps:*

- Develop a system to identify and summarize the types of woundedness being experienced within each parish, e.g., exclusion, family dysfunction and dissolution, or loss (particularly from parish mergers, unemployment, and death).
- Conduct an inventory of community and Catholic services that address the woundedness.
- Share best practices for educating and assisting individuals and families in healing woundedness.
- Develop and begin implementation of localized programs and services to respond to individuals and families experiencing woundedness.



## Goal 4

### Build up and maintain vibrant and evangelizing parishes that form intentional disciples

Objective 4.1: Provide or develop opportunities for lifelong parishioner involvement toward the goal of “intentional discipleship.” *Suggested action steps:*

- Survey diocesan parishes for present “Best Practices” (programs, workshops, etc.) that develop or promote intentional discipleship.
  - Develop a short survey (survey monkey) to note and collate a list of “best practices.”
  - Send survey to pastors and parish secretary.
  - Collate responses and prepare survey results for potential parish distribution by the Diocesan web-site.
  - Prepare an article in *The Message* to support the information gathered.
- Research other dioceses for resources that generate/promote intentional discipleship.
  - Gather a list of key dioceses that promote intentional discipleship.
  - Make a list of contacts to solicit information.
  - Contact the designated person(s) to solicit information.
  - Collate responses for potential use in the Evansville diocese.
- Form an ad-hoc committee to review survey findings for potential implementation of intentional discipleship considering the various audiences (youth, faith formation, young adult, etc.).
  - Develop plans for implementation of intentional discipleship initiatives/workshops for various audiences such as youth, young adult, bi-lingual, etc.
  - Invite existing prayer groups to pray for the success of the intentional discipleship initiative.
- Explore the viability of deanery or diocesan-wide workshops/programs on the formation of intentional discipleship.
  - Research and recommend deanery and/or diocesan-wide workshops/programs.
  - Assist in the planning, staffing and implementation if requested.
  - Develop an evaluation tool to be used for all initiatives.
- Consolidate resources (books, websites, blogs, CDs) on Intentional Discipleship and list these on the diocesan website.

Objective 4.2: Ensure a welcoming environment that encourages parishioner engagement.

*Suggested action steps:*

- Develop a New Parishioner Committee whose tasks might include:
  - Call or visit new parishioners
  - Create new parishioner gift packages
  - Provide information about the school if applicable
  - Connect with new parishioners several times a year
  - Offer bi-lingual resources if needed
- Utilize and keep current website, social media, print material, etc. in a way that provides information on the following:
  - Diocesan and deanery events
  - Opportunities for participation in faith formation, outreach, community service
  - School
  - New parishioner information
  - Youth group
- Establish an Evangelization Committee whose tasks might include:
  - Contact parishioners who seldom attend Mass
  - Extend RCIA classes to current fallen-away Catholics
  - Establish dialogue with non-Catholic religious affiliations in the community
  - Provide outreach opportunities, keeping in mind various groups (youth, young adult, seniors, married, single, Pre-Canas, etc.)
- Celebrate special events as a parish including multi-cultural celebrations.





Objective 4.3: Create a wider sense of community among parishes within deaneries.

*Suggested action steps:*

- Collaborate within deaneries on events such as:
  - Formation opportunities
  - Prayer bulletins/chain – utilize technology
  - Vacation Bible Schools
  - School Masses (if applicable)
  - Deanery resources
- Provide training on how to utilize technology to enhance communications and participation in events with deaneries, e.g. Skype, webinars, GoTo Meeting, etc.
- Create and share a list of people within a deanery who could offer support and/or be mentors for those in need, e.g. individuals facing a marriage crisis or faith issues, depression, etc.

## Goal 5

### Build up strong and sustainable vocations

Objective 5.1: Provide education that explains and clarifies Church teaching on the meaning of “vocation” and the baptismal call to respond. *Suggested action steps:*

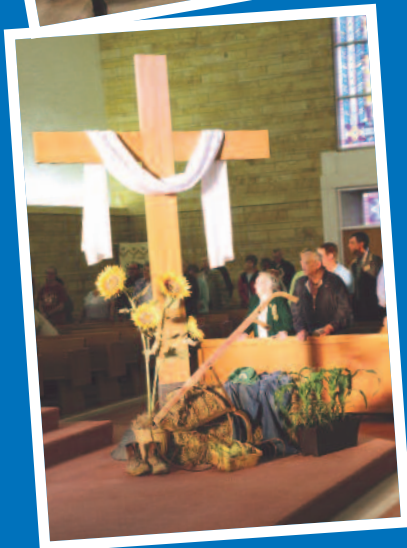
- Create Homily Helps and sample intercessions to be distributed to priests/pastoral staff that elaborate on all vocations.
  - Distribute quarterly.
  - Survey Parish Vocations Committees (PVC) regarding parishioner receptivity.
  - Design intercessions to harmonize with and reinforce Homily Helps.
- Create a Vocation Prayer book for parish households to be used during the Advent season (a time intrinsically focused on vocation).
  - Focus resource on daily prayer/reflections related to discerning and more fully living out all vocations in the Church.
  - Share resource via Google Sites to guarantee parish availability.
- Encourage families/individuals to create their own Vocation Mission Statement.
  - Focus on asking: “What is God’s purpose for my life/our lives together/the lives of our children?”
  - Publish samples of individual and family Vocation Mission Statements as helps.
  - Encourage use of Vocation Mission Statements as discussion resource.
  - Utilize the Family Vocations Mission Statement as an on-going resource for family prayer and discussion of how the youth of the family perceive God to be strengthening their sense of call over time.
- Conduct curricular review regarding how “vocation” is addressed and explained in Catholic educational materials, marriage preparation, and marriage enrichment.
  - Review and re-release the current vocations curriculum already in existence.
  - Review and modify websites to reflect and educate on all vocations.
  - Create links so that diocesan vocational material is easily accessed from parish websites.

Objective 5.2: Foster an environment within families, parishes, schools, and communities where all vocations have the opportunity to flourish. *Suggested action steps:*

- Advise parishes to establish Parish Vocation Committees (PVCs) that assist in supporting all vocations and promote a culture of vocations.
  - Train PVCs to create and evaluate the parish plans to carry out vocation objectives of the diocesan plan.
- Identify concrete ways parishes can support those preparing for marriage and those newly married.
  - Send parish wedding card at key intervals/anniversaries that list resources available to assist couples as they grow in their vocation.
  - Advise parishes in the creation of local mentor-couple program and resources.







- Create and implement one annual parish goal to foster a culture of vocation and evangelize the community.
  - Guide PVCs in assessing and setting an achievable annual goal.
  - Identify non-parish community entities that may assist with the goal.
  - Assess impact of the goal and measure achievement.

**Objective 5.3: Support each baptized person to discern and to respond to the call that arises from a relationship with Jesus Christ within the Catholic Church. *Suggested action steps:***

- Invite Catholic school/parish leaders to dialogue, among themselves and with parents, about how they can prepare young people for marriage by strengthening remote (birth through teen years) and proximate (when serious dating begins) marriage preparation.
  - Help young people who realize that they have a desire to marry prepare for marriage in the Lord.
  - Assess how marriage, interpersonal communion, and friendship are conveyed and taught to young people in parish and school; identify strengths and areas that need improvement.
  - Collaborate with adults/parents to explore the lessons that young people learn from the marriages to which they are daily exposed.
  - Encourage collaboration between Parish/school leaders and parents to build on strengths and address areas that need improvement.
- Encourage parishes to host periodic vocation information nights for those who have discerned a call to each vocation (priesthood, consecrated life, marriage, single life).
  - Publicize in bulletin.
  - Distribute assessment tool to participants.
- Encourage and assist the development of discernment groups for all vocations.
  - Assist all young people to think vocationally by engaging a community of others experiencing a similar call.
  - Provide ways for young single adults to meet and develop healthy relationships.
- Generate a list of spiritual directors able to assist others in discerning their vocation.
  - Promote Spiritual Directors as being valuable to all, not merely those pursuing Holy Orders or consecrated life.
  - Encourage Spiritual Directors to minimize personal bias in discernment.
- Ask current leaders of diocesan programs/initiatives for youth and young adults to assess how they promote vocations and consider how they could enhance these efforts.
  - Identify programs/initiatives able to promote vocations (e.g., TEC, RCIA, Newman Centers).
  - Work with each group to identify resources these groups would need to assist them.
  - Connect to PVC.

## Conclusion

Entrusting all of our efforts in the endeavor of carrying out this diocesan pastoral plan, echoing the words of blessing by St. Paul upon the Thessalonians, I pray:

May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will accomplish it. Brothers and Sisters, pray for me too. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-25)

Given in Evansville, at the Catholic Center, on 29 June, the Solemnity of Saints Peter & Paul, in the year 2016.



+ Charles C. Thompson

The Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, D.D., J.C.L.  
Fifth Bishop of Evansville





ENDNOTES

- <sup>i</sup> Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, The Joy of the Gospel, 24 November 2013, no. 30, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 105/12 (2013), English version in Vatican Press.
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- <sup>iii</sup> Ibid., no. 30.
- <sup>iv</sup> Ibid., no. 30.
- <sup>v</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition, 1997, no. 830 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1997).
- <sup>vi</sup> Ibid., no. 831.
- <sup>vii</sup> Ibid., no. 833.
- <sup>viii</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 111.
- <sup>ix</sup> Ibid., nos. 112 and 114.
- <sup>x</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1302-1305.
- <sup>xi</sup> Ibid., no. 1324.
- <sup>xii</sup> Ibid., no. 1325.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, The Joy of Love, 19 March 2016, no. 250, as yet unpublished in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, English version in Vatican Press.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.,no. 296.
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- <sup>xvi</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 308.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Ibid., no. 311.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 169-173.
- <sup>xix</sup> John M. Huels, “Ecclesiastical Laws,” in New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law, ed. John P. Beal et al. (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000) pp. 78-79.
- <sup>xx</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in Veritate*, on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth, 29 June 2009, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 101/8 (2009), pp. 641-709, English version in Vatican Press.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si’*, Praise Be, 24 May 2015, as yet unpublished in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, English version in Vatican Press.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Catholic Bishops of Indiana, Pastoral Letter, *Poverty at the Crossroads: The Church’s Response to Poverty in Indiana*, 18 February 2015, p. 1.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, *Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*, 11 April 2015, nos. 1-3, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2015).
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Ibid., no. 5.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Ibid., no. 8.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Ibid., no. 15.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Ibid., nos. 10, 12.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Ibid., no. 21.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Catholic Bishops of Indiana, *Poverty at the Crossroads*, p. 7.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, God is Love, 25 December 2005, no. 1, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 98/3 (2006), English version in Vatican Press.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Pope Francis, Message for the 48<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day: Communications at the Service of an Authentic Culture of Encounter, 1 June 2014.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 47.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Pope Francis, Message for Lent 2015, Introduction.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Ibid., no. 3.

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