

ENCOUNTER THE JOY
OF THE **GOSPEL**
SET THE WORLD ABLAZE



Pastoral Plan for the Catholic Diocese of Richmond

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Preface

*E*ncounter the Joy of the Gospel and Set the World Ablaze is the Diocese of Richmond’s pastoral plan for announcing Jesus’ joyful Good News far and wide. It is a five-year plan that is more about becoming vibrant witnesses to His amazing love story than it is about time or programs. The plan calls for individuals and parishes alive in the Spirit, sharing the Gospel in both word and deed. Both are necessary in this skeptical age. The plan is about unleashing the Spirit promised by Jesus, about unbinding rigid ways as Jesus unbound His beloved friend Lazarus, and about unlocking the doors so that this joyful message can flow freely into hearts and homes, counties and countries. This pastoral plan is our way of encountering the Risen Christ anew.

This is a pastoral plan which enfleshes Christ’s vision of a people set apart, different from others because they have met Him, been healed, and then sent forth to tell their stories. The plan hopes to inspire a re-thinking of “business as usual” in favor of individuals and whole parishes finding new ways to unleash the stories of justice, mercy, compassion, and of a kingdom coming now, even as we wait for it to come in fullness. Let us dare to suffer through the kind of self-examination that precedes transformation, just as Jesus showed us. Let us trust the Spirit’s white-hot fire to burn away that which is not fruitful, and thus leave our parishes ready for this new life in Christ to flower.

This five year plan is both unique and challenging. What is unique about this pastoral plan is that to implement it is to first stop, to pray and reflect on our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. Then it calls for a time of honest individual and communal discernment with regard to the degree to which our relationship with Jesus is transforming how we relate to others. Jesus told us the measure of our love for God is how well we love our neighbors, and Pope Francis is making it abundantly clear that we must have particularly tender hearts for the most vulnerable and the poor. Once we have honestly assessed our personal and communal practices using the Great Commandment, we then begin to listen to the Spirit's call to change. This is a conversion journey, not a program to be implemented.

What is challenging about this pastoral plan is that the Lord is calling everyone affiliated with a parish to this work. Pastors, lay ecclesial ministers, parish leaders, and all those who call our parishes "their" parishes have a role, a call, a vocation to share the joy of the Gospel and set the world ablaze. This is not the work of a few, nor can it be carried out with the implementation of a program. It is a way of life; it is Jesus' Way. Its transformative power will rest in the degree to which each baptized believer's heart is touched by the Lord Jesus, and they are then given methods, opportunities, and encouragement through the work of the parish so that they share the joy of the Gospel in word and work.

Encounter the Joy of the Gospel and Set the World Ablaze is a vision anchored in Jesus' joyful message, an echo of the call of His Holiness Pope Francis and a local adaptation of the United States Bishop's *Disciples Called to Witness*. It captures the joy of the Gospel re-imagined in two movements: the internal conversion of individuals and parishes and the external proclamation of this Good News to the world. Inside you will find:

Chapter One: A Call to All the Faithful

Chapter Two: An Overview of the Pastoral Approach

Chapter Three: Implementation – Principles and Pilgrimage

The Commission for the New Evangelization offers you this first work in its mission to shout from the rooftops the Good News of Jesus Christ! We look forward to working with and for you to make this vision live across the Diocese of Richmond.

The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Call to All the Faithful

“We’ve all heard the phrase, “they’re on a mission” and we know it to mean they are determined, focused, prepared, and intent upon accomplishing it. That’s what the baptized are: on a mission.”

Jesus Christ explicitly expressed the compulsory nature of His mission when He said, “I must proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God.”¹ The Church, the living sacrament of Christ is, in turn, to share in this very same mission. “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.”² On the tenth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI wanted to emphasize this dynamic imperative: “We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church.”³

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This is a missionary imperative not simply given to a specialized caste within the Church. The net is wide. What Jesus made clear is that **all** who follow Him are called to participate in the work of evangelization. The concept is simple.

While some of the baptized are sent to mission lands or hear an awe-inspiring call to service, each of us is called to witness to the person and message of Jesus in the daily tasks of our lives. All of us are sent to have a sense of urgency, to be singularly focused and live in the fire of Pentecost. This is the kind of witness that will accomplish the mission and it is everyone's responsibility.⁴

“I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting Him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”.^[1] The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that He is already there, waiting for us with open arms.”

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paragraph #3.

At the same time, it remains true that those called to evangelize in the Church include those we call missionaries, as well as the clergy and religious who serve the church. The net includes those among the laity who directly serve the church as lay ecclesial ministers and as volunteers. What the New Evangelization seeks to highlight is the truth that once gathered into the household of God through the waters of baptism, the mandate to share the Good News becomes the mission of all the faithful.⁵ The words of the great commission are spoken not just to a few within the Church but to all disciples of the Risen Lord,⁶ and by it we **all** share in the vocation of Jesus Himself.⁷

What's "new" about the New Evangelization?

“The New Evangelization gets its newness from its focus on the participation of all the faithful in its call to conversion and action, from its identification of an audience only recently identified, and from its call to a new ardor, new methods, and new expressions.”

The New Evangelization is not a new gospel. It is a call to proclaim the Gospel anew. The New Evangelization gets its newness from its focus on the participation of all the faithful in its call to conversion and action, from its identification of an audience only recently identified,⁸ and from its call to a new ardor, new methods, and new expressions.⁹ It is clear that the call to evangelization is a call to all the baptized. The new ardor springs from a fresh focus on each person's individual relationship with Jesus Christ, a relationship from which flows peace and joy.¹⁰ What also flows from this transforming relationship is the desire to share the source of this peace and joy. Christ's personal love and healing touch is the source of the new ardor, an ardor so necessary because, as Aristotle noted, "People only

Chapter One

listen to an excited speaker.”¹¹ Therefore, what is new about the New Evangelization is the focus on those already coming to Church who may have become as Pope Francis warned, lukewarm in their faith.¹² They are called to a new ardor for Christ that emerges as they deepen their personal relationship with Him. They are also called to a new commitment to engaging the culture with the inspiration and insight of the Gospel.¹³

There is yet another audience for the New Evangelization. They are categorized as inactive parishioners, those alienated by the Church, and those who are unchurched. But no matter how they are classified, they are those who need to encounter the joy of the Gospel. This audience may be comprised of those deeply loved by parishioners: spouses, children, extended family members, friends, and neighbors. The New Evangelization has a deep concern for those sons and daughters of God who are described as having “lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the church and live a life far removed from Christ and His Gospel.”¹⁴ The New Evangelization places a special emphasis on welcoming back to the Lord’s Table all those who are absent because they are greatly missed and are needed to build up the Body of Christ.¹⁵ The New Evangelization is a work of hospitality, healing, embrace, and reconciliation. It is the living work of the merciful Jesus who in this instance is embodied in the Church, waiting, watching, and seeking the return of His lost children.

“It is mercy I desire, not sacrifice. Hosea 6:6”

Finally, the New Evangelization calls for new methods and expressions suitable to the cultures and circumstances of modern society. Two of these necessary expressions include:

- Asking Jesus' disciples to discover hospitable, creative, and life-giving ways to beckon the lost home to the authentically human life found in Christ; to the embrace of Christ in the sacraments of Penance/Reconciliation and Eucharist; and to faith, hope, love, and the gift of new life in Jesus Christ.¹⁶
- Asking the Lord's disciples to enter into a dialogue with those who have stopped listening to Christ and the Church.

The how of this work will challenge ardor, method, and expression as it calls for the Church to go out and listen to the ways in which the Spirit is already at work in the lives of those who have wandered from home, and in that listening to affirm whatever is good and holy.¹⁷ To do this, the faithful will need to become fluent in the culture, language, and values of those with whom they are called to listen in order to open potentially transformative dialogue. This is not an easy process nor is it a process simply focused on engaging new technology or media. Learning the language of love, learning to listen with Christ's heart, and learning to speak with Christ's wisdom, that is learning the dialogue of evangelization and will require a significant shift in method, metaphor, and medium. However, it is an invitation from the Lord to put out into deep waters and trust Him for the bounty of the catch.¹⁸ It is an invitation from the Holy Spirit to trust that we are empowered to do just as Jesus did, and even greater things than those.¹⁹

“In every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to cooperate with Him and who leads us on by the power of His Spirit. The real newness is the newness which God Himself mysteriously brings about and inspires, provokes, guides and accompanies in a thousand ways. The life of the Church should always reveal clearly that God takes the initiative, that “He has loved us first” (1 Jn 4:19) and that He alone “gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:7). This conviction enables us to maintain a spirit of joy in the midst of a task so demanding and challenging that it engages our entire life. God asks everything of us, yet at the same time He offers everything to us.”

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paragraph #12

Why would the Church undertake a New Evangelization? While the answer is simple, the work is arduous. The reason why: to open a path to communion of life between God and those elements of our human family who have grown resistant to that path. “To evangelize means; to show this path – to teach the art of living. . . This is why we are in need of new evangelization – if the art of living remains an unknown, nothing else works. But this art is not the object of science – this art can only be communicated by [one] who has life – He who is the Gospel personified.”²⁰ The faithful engage in the dialogue of evangelization with those who may have stopped listening because the Gospel ultimately is how we live a truly human life.

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How do we proceed? Five lenses through which to plan and evaluate

As we look to incorporate an explicit emphasis on the New Evangelization into diocesan and parish life, it is fitting to ask where it fits within the framework of “We Walk by Faith.”²¹ During the last several years we have been using the biblical categories of Word (Kerygma), Worship (Leitourgia), Service (Diakonia), and Community (Koinonia) as a framework to analyze our diocese and our parishes. The focus on the New Evangelization must be explicit. It has its own unique characteristics that also have a biblical basis. For those two reasons, explicit attention and unique characteristics, this document adds a fifth category of Witness (Martyria) to the four already in use to guide parish life and work. The challenge implicit in this choice is both to weave elements of the New Evangelization into each of the other four categories and at the same time, to recognize the very explicit nature of Witness.

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All five of these offices of the church are visible in the model Jesus gives in the resurrection appearance to the disciples on the road to Emmaus.²² Jesus helps the disciples to understand how the events in Jerusalem fit within God's saving plan (Kerygma). He listens to them in their grief (Diakonia). Jesus is revealed to them in the breaking of the bread (Leiturgia). Community is created when they prevail upon Him to stay with them (Koinonia). Finally, they rush back to share what they have experienced (Martyria). This gospel can provide a rich model for us as we seek to live out the New Evangelization within our own diocese.

The lens of Witness is now the primary lens for all parish life and work. The degree to which individuals and parishes embrace Jesus' call to metanoia, to a new and higher mind, and the degree to which they yearn, as Jesus did, to draw all people to Himself in One Body²³ is the degree to which Jesus' call to go and make disciples is being carried out. Further, Jesus makes it clear the weakest among any community are the most in need of His witnesses. Further, the Lord yearns for all who have wandered to come home, to hear His voice, and to commune with Him. The Lord came to proclaim good news to the poor. And today, Pope Francis is leading the entire Church toward a joyful journey of faith, challenging all the faithful to seek change within and then allow that change to become an offer of rest and comfort to those who are weary.²⁴

An Overview of the Pastoral Approach

The disciples on the road to Emmaus²⁵ were discouraged, disappointed, and confused. They had left the company of others who thought Jesus was the messiah, the long-awaited one. The two disciples were traveling by themselves, headed back to what they knew. In some ways, they are the prototype of the very people the efforts of the New Evangelization are trying to reach. They have gone away, headed in a different direction, and the Lord wishes them to come back... to know Him anew and to rejoin the disciple community of the Church.

With this biblical text in mind, this pastoral plan lays out a five-year commitment to re-awakening a vibrant faith within those already engaged with our parishes and to welcoming back those who have wandered away. This yearly “theme” format offers a guideline, a way to think about the work of conversion and homecoming that is at the heart of the New Evangelization. The schema is inspired by the methods used by Jesus and by the spirit of the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. May it inspire your efforts, guide your footsteps, and give you a glimpse of the joy and wonder of those two disciples when they recognized the Lord, right there with them.

Chapter Two

Each year has a theme that builds upon the years that have gone before it and presumes that there is no such thing as “finished” with the previous years’ work. The pastoral plan is not a list of tasks to check off as much as it is a way of infusing parish life with efforts, intentionally undertaken and entrusted to the Spirit’s power to yield fruit. During each year, parishes are expected to:

- Share with one another effective methods, igniters of new ardor, and signs of the Holy Spirit’s fire;
- Set measurable goals for the year, after studying the pastoral plan and discerning the Spirit’s call to growth;
- Be prepared to report those goals, steps undertaken to reach the goals, and signs of the Spirit’s movement.

Each year, the Diocese will support parish efforts by:

- Providing prayerful support and prayer resources;
- Providing resources tied to each year’s theme;
- Sharing inspiring practices already happening within the Diocese, so the fire of the Spirit spreads; and
- Supporting parish efforts with mentoring from members of the Evangelization Commission.

Together we will draw nearer to the Risen Christ and offer His life to others.

Year One

Personal Encounters with Jesus Christ²⁶

1

Time and time again in the Scriptures we see that the best evangelizers, the best witnesses, the best storytellers about Jesus are those who had a personal, transformative encounter with Him: the disciples on the way to Emmaus²⁷; the Samaritan woman at the well²⁸; the first apostles²⁹; and the Saints, ancient and modern. A personal encounter with Jesus changes everything and compels a person to accept the invitation to “come and see!” For this reason, the theme for the first year of the diocesan pastoral plan is the personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

Year One envisions a parish focused inward on those already coming through the doors, already celebrating Mass and other sacraments, already giving their time, talent, and treasure in support of the Church. Yes! Year One is a focus on us, for one of the elements that distinguishes the “New” Evangelization from evangelization in general is this initial internal focus. What the Popes, beginning with Blessed John Paul II and continuing now with Pope Francis, are concerned about is lukewarm faith. Pope Francis said it this way in a May, 2013 homily:

“When the Church loses courage, the Church enters into a ‘lukewarm’ atmosphere. The lukewarm Christians, a lukewarm faith, without courage ... That hurts the Church so much, because this tepid atmosphere draws you inside, and problems arise among us; we no longer have the horizon, or courage to pray towards heaven, or the courage to proclaim the Gospel.³⁰”

This internal focus also concerns Catholics who have a relationship with the church but have not fallen in love with Jesus. Pope Francis reminded the youth participating in the Way of the Cross during World Youth Day celebrations that, “The cross of Christ is an invitation for us to fall in love with Him and to then reach out and help our neighbors.”³¹ The New Evangelization seeks first and foremost to offer to every Catholic who comes through the doors of the parish both the challenge and the opportunity to encounter the Risen Lord, personally, deeply, and profoundly.³² The New Evangelization seeks to offer those already identifying themselves as practicing Catholics opportunities to recognize Emmanuel, God-with-us, and to celebrate those encounters in various ways. The New Evangelization is first and foremost about us!

“Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God’s love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?”

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paragraph #8

We realize that for many Catholics, this thrust toward a personal relationship with Jesus Christ will seem very “Protestant” and will take them outside their comfort zones, comfort zones characterized by habits, practices, and activities. That is the very point! The New Evangelization seeks the kind of transformative encounters with the Risen Christ, who is still with us, alive in our midst, which will change everything! Jesus said He came to set the earth on fire and we are looking for that new fire.³³ Until those already attached to the Church allow this fire to be lit in their spirits, it is not possible for them to go out and gather in the lost³⁴, it is not possible for them to yearn for the lost to return with the passion of Jesus who wept over Jerusalem³⁵. Until this fire blazes within, is it not possible for them to offer the very best the parish has to offer to everyone: seeker, inactive, alienated, or unchurched, knowing they might be entertaining the Lord Himself, as Abram and Sarai once discovered.³⁶ The fruit of year one: Genuine, transformed, impassioned disciples. Attention to this work does not stop even as the second year unfolds.

Year Two

Focusing on the Domestic Church³⁷

2

Time and time again in the Scriptures loving human relationships drew people to seek Jesus. Whether it was Mary and Joseph, Mary and Elizabeth, the first apostles, the centurion pleading for his son³⁸, or the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, human relationships can draw people toward the Lord. Those relationships can be the places where people share their encounters with Jesus and others learn about Him from witnesses. They can also provide the yearning for healing, hope, and love that drive people toward Jesus. In either instance, those close human relationships are avenues to the Lord Jesus. Year Two will focus on these close human relationships.

“It is through family life that countless unplanned encounters with the Risen Lord, with the beauty of the Paschal Mystery, and with the mystery of love incarnate take place.”

According to the Second Vatican Council’s *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, “The family is, so to speak, the domestic church.”³⁹ This means that it is in the context of the family that we first learn who God is and how to prayerfully seek His will for us.⁴⁰ It is in and through family life that the wondrous discovery of God-with-us can be made, over and over again. It is through family life that countless unplanned encounters with the Risen Lord, with the beauty of the Paschal Mystery, and with the mystery of love incarnate take place. They are extraordinary in their very ordinariness, and the New

Evangelization imagines the domestic church as the place where the unplanned wonder of God-with-us is recognized, named, celebrated, and shared. It is within the domestic church that the New Evangelization imagines daily encounters like those the disciples had with Jesus around the table, transformative encounters!

The New Evangelization seeks to help married couples develop their Trinitarian relationship with the Lord so that they can be living signs of His presence. Jesus created a new covenant, and sacramental marriage reveals characteristics of that covenant. The New Evangelization seeks to help develop the marriage covenant so that the domestic church is flourishing with Christ's presence: prayerful, merciful, and celebratory; that Christian homes are places of healing and havens for the stranger and the guest alike. It is in the daily activities of the domestic church that Jesus is present, opening the scriptures, and helping hearts burn. So, for this reason, the focus of Year Two is on the Domestic Church: Marriage and Family. The fruit of Year Two: Jesus encountered in daily life within the domestic church, so that the Holy Spirit gently blows upon the faith of everyone in the family, turning sparks to embers and embers to flame! The focus on personal encounters and families tending the fires of faith does not fade as the theme of Year Three begins.

Year Three

Equipping the Parish⁴¹

3

“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.””

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paragraph #28

The New Evangelization seeks to animate parishes with the Spirit’s fire. It seeks to empower parishes with the promise of Christ, really present when two or three gather in His name. Jesus made it clear that to follow Him is to belong to a community unlike any other.⁴² That community gathers in a parish. It is in and through the work of the parish that the Church where communities of believers become Christ’s Body, a people called out, set apart, like no other.

“The parish is where all people learn how to follow the Lord Jesus Christ more completely. It is an apprentice ground, offering companions on the journey, teachers, pray-ers, and systematic formation in missionary discipleship.”

The New Evangelization seeks parishes that are living signs of the witness of the early Christians, “See how they love one another!”⁴³ The parish is where all people learn how to follow the Lord Jesus Christ more completely. It is an apprentice ground, offering companions on the journey, teachers, pray-ers, and systematic formation in missionary discipleship. The parish offers opportunities to live out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and to co-create God’s Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven through the works of social justice. The parish binds us to our fellow disciples, across cultures, genders, economic strata, and educational levels, and teaches us how to love beyond our domestic church.

“Parishes are intended to be places of inordinate hospitality to the poor and vulnerable who dwell within a parish’s boundaries.”

The parish is a place that gives living witness to God’s kingdom coming here and now among Jesus’ disciples. It is also a living example of Jesus’ radical embrace of people whom other groups shun. Parishes are intended to be places of inordinate hospitality to the poor and vulnerable who dwell within a parish’s boundaries. Parishes are to embrace the unwed mother, the abused child or adult, the newly released prisoner, and those held captive by addiction. It is to be home to the undocumented worker, the migrant, the visitor, and the stranger. The waters of baptism join us to this holy community of God’s beloved and mission us to mercy and compassion for them. That is what it means to be called the Church. And so the Parish is the focus of Year Three.

It is this apprenticeship in loving neighbor across all potential boundaries and divisions that equips the disciples to go forth to the world. This is practiced in the parish where baptism has made us kin, where our relationships are bound together in the Trinity, where our very diversity is a testament to the glory of God. This is practiced in a parish whose doors are flung wide open to welcome the stranger, the poor, the immigrant, and the seeker. Parishes are living communities whose anamnesis includes the command from Leviticus, “You shall treat the stranger who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you, have the same love for Him as for yourself; for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.”⁴⁴

The parish is also where the Body of Christ unites itself with its Head, Jesus Christ, to celebrate His promise to be with us when we gather in His name.⁴⁵ It is where the faithful come to give thanks and praise to God and to encounter Christ, alive in our midst in the Eucharist. The parish is where the faithful prepare for, celebrate and reflect on these sacramental encounters with Christ and so is vital to nourishment and growth in faith. The parish is where believers strike the covenants of baptism and marriage. The parish is where the Body of Christ broken by sin meets Christ’s healing touch. The parish is where new members are initiated into life in Christ. It fosters vocations and unites the sick and suffering to Christ. It is the place where all who come may find the touch of the Risen Christ, here and now.

The fruit of Year Three: Parishes that are beacons, lighthouses, healing hearths, and radically and intentionally welcoming homes for the poor, the stranger, and the alienated. The work of Year Three continues as the call of Year Four is heard.

“Lastly, we cannot forget that evangelization is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to *those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected Him*. Many of them are quietly seeking God, led by a yearning to see his face, even in countries of ancient Christian tradition. All of them have a right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but “by attraction.””

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paragraph #15

Year Four

Missioning Disciples Locally⁴⁶

4

The New Evangelization seeks to transform the hearts of individuals and the life of the parish, but not for the sake of the individual or the parish. The New Evangelization is about igniting the faithful for the mission of gathering in the lost and forsaken⁴⁷, welcoming home the prodigal children, embracing the seeker, engaging the skeptic, and dialoguing with the atheist.⁴⁸ In other words, to be salt, light, and leaven!⁴⁹ Year Four seeks to enable those transformed by the personal love of Christ and apprenticed in missionary discipleship to be just like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. After they had encountered the Risen Lord, they scurried back to the shaken, the doubtful, the skeptical and hurting community left behind after Jesus' crucifixion. They encountered the Risen Lord, were transformed, and their hearts were burning so that they could not contain their excitement! They rushed back to Jerusalem to assure others of the magnificent truth: He is living, here and now, and we have seen Him!

“It is not possible to be a *genuine* follower of Jesus and refuse to engage His work of bringing others into this wondrous relationship of eternal life with God.”

Even a cursory read of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles makes it very clear that Jesus did not intend faith in Him to be a private affair. He said He came to proclaim that God's Kingdom is at hand⁵⁰ and that His followers are to share that good news with all people. In other words, genuine faith in Jesus Christ compels an outward focus. It is not possible to be a *genuine* follower of Jesus and refuse to engage

His work of bringing others into this wondrous relationship of eternal life with God.

“An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. *1 Jn* 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father’s infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet.”

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paragraph #23

To engage this work of being salt, light, and leaven to all the world⁵¹, the New Evangelization focuses on two specific audiences. The first are those the faithful encounter daily in their homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, and social venues who are no longer engaged with Christ and the Church AND those of other Christian denominations. Stated simply, the external focus of this fourth year has two audiences. It turns first toward Catholics who no longer affiliate with the Church. The second audience is Christians of other denominations. To begin, it is essential to capture Jesus’ vision for those who have wandered away, the ones He called lost sheep.⁵²

“ The New Evangelization seeks to create parishes full of people whose hearts break, as Jesus’ did, for those who are lost.”

The New Evangelization seeks to create parishes full of people whose hearts break, as Jesus’ did, for those who are lost. Jesus proclaimed that He will not lose any of those God has given to Him⁵³ and so one of the primary thrusts of the New Evangelization is to nurture this very desire not to lose any of God’s beloved people. However, yearning hearts must yield parishioners equipped to find those who are lost, to engage them in reconciling relationships, and to have the courage and the skill to invite them home to the heart of Christ which is the parish, where His people are preparing a banquet of welcome for them. Most parishes do not have to go far to find some of the lost or wandering, for they may well be within parishioner’s families. Young adult children, spouses or parents, and siblings may have wandered far from the heartbeat of Christ. Year Four is about forming parishioners who are eager, courageous, and prepared with word and spirit to welcome them back where God’s people are preparing a homecoming celebration! The work of Year Three, focusing on the parish, will help put into place the attitudes and activities that can provide the atmosphere necessary to welcome home the lost sheep, Christ’s beloved baptized who have wandered.

The second thrust of this fourth year of the New Evangelization is ecumenical. It is here that many people become reluctant to be seen as proselytizers trying to snatch people from their religion and “give” them ours. The New Evangelization imagines something far different from that kind of encounter. It imagines Catholic Christians well enough versed in Scripture and Tradition to be able to engage in meaningful dialogue with other Christians, to be able to build bridges, learn from one another, identify real differences, and live in community. It imagines Catholics afire with their faith, a fire warm and welcoming enough to invite others to “come and see” if they are curious, and to be able to help other Christians understand more fully Catholic beliefs and practices.

Within this fourth year is also a tie to the domestic church and ecumenism. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate reported in 2008 that 43% of Catholics are married to someone who is not Catholic.⁵⁴ These people are living the challenges of ecumenism if their spouse is a Christian of another denomination. They are living the challenges of inter-faith relationships and/or of relationships with agnostics or atheists if their spouse is not a Christian. The New Evangelization imagines equipping Catholics within these relationships with strong personal encounters with Jesus Christ, with nourishing welcoming parish homes, and with the tools to engage in shared prayer, work for charity and justice and intellectual growth to both sustain and share faith. This is the work of the fourth year. The fruit of Year Four: loving, animated, and accurate dialogues, open invitations to learn, grow, and serve, and the spiritual strength to maintain a relationship with Christ and His Church in these circumstances. This work will continue and be the fertile ground from which will sprout disciples sent to the world.

Year Five

Missioning Disciples Globally⁵⁵

5

“If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, “those who cannot repay you” (*Lk* 14:14). There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message. Today and always, “the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel”,^[52] and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them.”

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paragraph #48

“I came to throw fire upon the earth, and what is my desire? Oh that it were even now kindled!”⁵⁶ Jesus’ vision stretches across all the earth, and so in this final year, the focus is on sending forth disciples globally. This comes as it does, as the last focus area for the diocesan pastoral plan for the New Evangelization, because it is the fruit of the work that has gone before it. A brief summary of each of the prior years will lay the foundation for the focus of Year Five: the global mission.

In **Year One**, the New Evangelization focuses on awakening the faith of the already baptized, giving both opportunities to enkindle hearts with the flame of faith, and opportunities to live more fully into the baptism the faithful have received. It is a year of hearts both burning in love for Christ and breaking for the suffering of others. It is a year to focus on Christ’s Sacred Heart,⁵⁷ loving all while also loving individually. Baptism created kinship relationships, and those kinship relationships were then the focus of years two and three. In **Year Two**, the pastoral plan for the New Evangelization turns to the domestic church, the role of marriage and family as signs of Christ’s loving, forgiving presence. Missionary discipleship depends on the daily nurturing and challenge of living life in Christ at home. This apprenticeship in the domestic church builds the capacity for agape love, and for living that love through justice and mercy. It lays the foundation for the deep concern for the little ones, the anawim, as they are called in the Scriptures, who are close to Christ’s heart.

Year Three extends the locus of the New Evangelization to the attitudes and actions of the parish. For disciples to continue to mature, they must have apprentice opportunities outside those provided by the domestic church. Parishes are the places committed to providing the invitation to and preparation for missionary discipleship. They are the first training ground, providing opportunities to practice love of neighbor across boundaries and to

reflect on how Christ is alive now. If this difficult work of adjusting long-held and perhaps dearly-held practices is not done, it will not be possible to birth disciples equipped for a global mission.

Year Four invites ever-growing disciples to extend compassion and justice to those they encounter outside of their homes and parishes. Now maturing members of the Body of Christ are equipped to speak of the source of their hope, and the joyful meaning of life in Christ. Now maturing disciples invite others to “come and see” and are equipped to enter into respectful dialogue with those who believe differently.

Each of these movements precedes the focus of Year Five: the sending forth of maturing missionary disciples across even greater boundaries and barriers. This part of the New Evangelization presumes that the following beliefs and practices have taken root:

- An ever-deepening personal relationship with Jesus Christ that results in a call to join Christ in crossing the boundaries of culture, nation, and politics, to live out His merciful care for the poor;
- An appropriation of the effects of baptism, especially the kinship with all other baptized people across the world, and the responsibility to be in a relationship to them through the Body of Christ, the Church;
- A sense of being called to embrace more concretely the marks of the Church as one, holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic;
- A call from God to go out to all the world to proclaim the Good News in word and deed;
- An embrace of Catholic Social Teaching and jubilee justice, with a passion for the dignity of all God’s beloved creation, especially humankind and a clear vision that God has provided enough for all of humanity to live in dignity across the globe;

- A sense of the urgency of this work for the Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven and as a measure of eternal judgment.

Year Five seeks to focus on Christ's love for all the world, Christ's redemption of all of creation, and Christ's call to set the world ablaze with His love. It is characterized by reaching across geopolitical and national divides, embracing cultures different from the dominant culture from which the disciple comes, and using the power of modern technology to build God's kingdom of mercy and compassion. This is where mature disciples seek to become advocates for various populations: refugees, immigrants, the unborn, the differently abled, victims of human trafficking and the sex trade, orphans, and those for whom famine has meant certain starvation, disease, and early death. Jesus said He came to set captives free⁵⁸ and **Year Five** seeks to focus on the various ways mature disciples engage this work, far and wide.

Year Five also seeks to capture the power of the wired world, the Internet and social media. These are tools of the New Evangelization, tools that make possible information that increases awareness, images that soften and enlarge the heart, and communication that can help build relationships. The fruit of **Year Five**: the earth ablaze with the love of Christ, the poor being cared for with Jesus' compassion, and God's Kingdom breaking forth in joy, experienced in and through the work of the parishes of the Diocese of Richmond. How shall we begin?

Implementation

Christ has called all those who love Him to proclaim what they have heard from the rooftops.⁵⁹ There is Good News to be shared with all peoples! The New Evangelization seeks to target two populations: those within the Church whose faith needs to be enflamed so that they can proclaim it with joy from the rooftops, and those baptized believers who have drifted away from Christ and His beloved Church and are longingly missed: inactive, alienated, and unchurched.

In keeping with the Holy Father's call to share our faith with joy, here in the Diocese of Richmond we feel the wind of the Spirit compelling us to serve both these populations through our pastoral efforts. What follows here are six principles to help guide the implementation of this document, principles grounded in Christ's expectation that all have received His saving love will share it with others.

The Principles

1. **Enter into this work not because it is imposed, but because it is a free and heartfelt response to the God who loves us and expects us to follow Christ's example of giving Himself freely to the Father's work.** "With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, He [Jesus] makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew. Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than His life, which impels us onwards!"⁶⁰
2. **Know the theological and ecclesial ground upon which this call rests.** From the universal Church's call through Pope John Paul II at the turn of the millennium for all the faithful to share the Gospel with "the enthusiasm of the very first Christians,"⁶¹ and so is born a call for a "new ardor," through Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's eloquent reminder that evangelization "... is the most precious service that the Church can render to humanity and to all individuals who are seeking the profound reasons to live their life to the full,"⁶² to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization* in which we are all asked, "How often do we fail to realize that we are called to be Christ's witnesses to the world? Do we realize that our Baptism, Confirmation, and reception of the Eucharist bestow on us the grace we need to be disciples? Are we like the disciples staring at the sky rather than inviting those around us to experience Christ's love and mercy through the Church? How often do we reach out to our missing brothers and sisters by inviting them to join us at Mass or by asking why they no longer feel welcomed at the Lord's Table?"⁶³, and most recently through the voice of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, this call to

witness to Christ's love remains fervent, abiding, and urgent. In this regard, there is nothing new. This is a return to the fervor of the early Church and reclamation of that focus on sharing the Good News, on witnessing to one another, and learning how to take that witness to the world.

3. **Trust that catechesis, being a particular moment in the work of evangelization, can provide other areas of parish life inspiration and methods.**

The third principle to guide the implementation of this document concerns the relationship between evangelization and catechesis. Catechesis is a moment in the work of evangelization. In his apostolic exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, Pope John Paul II said,

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* of December 8, 1975, on evangelization in the modern world, rightly stressed that evangelization - which has the aim of bringing the Good News to the whole of humanity, so that all may live by it - is a rich, complex and dynamic reality, made up of elements, or one could say moments, that are essential and different from each other, and that must all be kept in view simultaneously. Catechesis is one of these moments - a very remarkable one - in the whole process of evangelization.⁶⁴

Since all catechesis has as its primary aim an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ⁶⁵, it is clear that the first year's focus on personal encounters with Jesus Christ will draw heavily upon the work of catechesis.

4. **Work together to implement these initiatives and so indicate to the world that the parishes in the Diocese of Richmond recognize themselves as Christ's Body, united in one work.** Working together to implement this document gives an outward sign of our belief that we are part of Christ's Body, and so uniquely called and gifted to be most effective in proclaiming Christ's loving embrace when we work as His Body. Working together to implement this plan, sharing ideas, resources, personnel, and witnessing to Christ's work among us, we are concrete signs to all the world that Christ's living body is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. We become witnesses to the resurrected Christ.

5. **Trust the Holy Spirit gifts of understanding, right judgment, and courage as you implement this document.** Since each parish is unique, it is rightfully the responsibility and the duty of the local pastor and lay leadership together with the Holy Spirit to discern which of the implementation strategies the Holy Spirit is calling for next. Some parishes will have already done a number of effective evangelization activities while others have yet to specifically target activities to evangelization. The suggestions contained in the implementation resources to be provided annually are meant *to lead to an abiding attention being paid to the New Evangelization*, but the choice and order of actions belongs to each parish, cluster, or LPA.

That said, some of the suggestions will be organized in a specific order, and when they are, parishes, clusters, and/or LPAs are strongly encouraged to follow the order of the steps so as to make the best use of resources, research, and wisdom. Some of the resources are best used collaboratively, and so you are encouraged to share insights, planning, and resources as you focus attention on the New Evangelization. Above all, see these

implementation resources as they are intended: to encourage and empower your parish!

6. **Implement elements of the new evangelization as an integral part of parish life.** The sixth and final principle that is to guide the implementation of this document is accountability. Every parish is expected to focus on the audiences specified by the New Evangelization (those already among you whose faith may have lost its ardor and those Catholics who have drifted and/or disconnected from Christ's presence in His body, the Church: the present but lukewarm, the inactive, the alienated and the unchurched) and to align efforts and resources to the work of creating witnesses who are ablaze with the Living Christ and compelled to bring His Good News to the world. When Bishop DiLorenzo makes his visit to your parish, he will be looking for the activities and efforts you have applied to "Martyria" in addition to the work you are doing with Word, Worship, Community, and Service. Building a culture of witness (Martyria) will be a fifth category in that assessment, and so you will be expected to both weave it into all the other areas of parish life intended to enable conversion to Christ, and to have some specific initiatives designed to enhance missionary discipleship.

Simply stated, the "what" of the New Evangelization is outlined in this document. The "how" is offered to you through implementation strategies. The methods and resources are to be seen as inspiration, impetus, descriptions, and resources. But the guiding principle that is part of implementation is that you are expected to implement elements of the new evangelization on an abiding basis, as part of parish life. There is to be change in the status quo! Jesus commanded it, the Church expects it, and the Bishop will look forward to seeing the many creative ways you are leading others to discipleship and witness. The fruit of this

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accountability will be an intentional fidelity to the joy of the Gospel setting the world ablaze.

Jesus commanded the faithful to be salt, light, and leaven for the earth. The Church is the visible sign of the resurrected Christ. In this moment in the Diocese of Richmond, we join the universal Church's work of setting the world ablaze with Christ's love. To that end, our united efforts are to be focused on creating a culture within each parish that takes this to heart. Together, guided by the Spirit, this document and our shared good work let us work to be salt to those whose faith may have become bland, and to be lights of welcome to those who belong with us. This is not a program we are implementing; it's a way of life, a culture of vigorous faith and expansive hospitality. May these principles guide us as together we go forth into this ancient, yet ever new work of the Church:

1. Embrace the work with the freedom of the children of God.
2. Know you stand on solid historical, theological, and pastoral ground.
3. See evangelization as intimately tied to all the works of the parish, as it is intimately tied to catechesis.
4. Link yourselves to other parishes, the Diocese, and the universal Church through these efforts and so give strong evidence to the Church's unity.
5. Receive the implementation guide as a gift to encourage and empower your parish to work with the Holy Spirit to choose its most fruitful avenues to achieve the New Evangelization's vision.
6. View accountability as fidelity to Christ and His mission of the Kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven.

The Pilgrimage

The pilgrimage to implementing this document has a beginning map and many travelers. Pilgrims on the journey include the Commission for the New Evangelization, Pastors, Parish Evangelization Coordinators and their Teams, and of course, all those across the Diocese who are united with the Holy Father in this work. This is what the journey looks like as it begins:

1. The Road: The thematic years will follow the liturgical year (1st Sunday of Advent to Christ the King) each year. It is possible that a parish will need more than a single year in which to focus efforts and see growth. The Commission for the New Evangelization will assist parishes in following the Spirit's lead in this discernment.
2. The Pilgrims:
 - a. The Commission for the New Evangelization will release Implementation Guides near the start of each year to guide the parish efforts and continue to expand on this pastoral plan.
 - b. In the first year, the parish is to identify a Parish Evangelization Coordinator who will be responsible for coordinating evangelization efforts in conjunction with the Pastor, Parish Staff, and parish leadership. This Coordinator will be the point of contact for the Commission for the New Evangelization's mentor/guide.
 - c. The Parish Evangelization Coordinator is not expected to work alone. Given the manner in which the New Evangelization touches each facet of parish life, each parish will need to have a Parish Evangelization Team that will serve to inspire, inform, and encourage this work throughout the parish.

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3. The Map: The Parish will create a pastoral plan with benchmarks, and where appropriate, actual metrics indicating how it plans to be intentional about evangelization efforts across the parish. This plan will be submitted on a yearly basis to the Commission for the New Evangelization.

Conclusion

The New Evangelization is a way of living the Gospel. It seeks to focus on enflaming the faith of those who are already part of our parishes, to make sure their hearts are burning from personal, transformative encounters with the Risen Christ. The New Evangelization seeks to create love stories between the faithful and Jesus so that they then create homes that are fertile ground for discovering God-with-us. From those homes they will come to create parishes that are both beacon and hearth for God's beloved who have wandered or been made outcast, for they know the joy of the Gospel and are compelled to share it. The New Evangelization takes seriously the witness of parish life and the command Jesus left us to make disciples of all the world, starting first with those we encounter in our daily lives. Finally, the New Evangelization imagines a great sending forth of maturing disciples who have met the Risen Lord, been formed in faith and apprenticed in homes and parishes, and who are equipped with the tools of the wired world. This sending forth crosses geopolitical and national boundaries, cultures, and dares to advocate for the weakest and voiceless. This final part of the pastoral plan embodies Jesus' vision to go out to all the world and *make disciples*.⁶⁶

It is a mighty task, but Jesus promised to be with us always,⁶⁷ to send us an Advocate⁶⁸, and to empower us to do as He did and even greater things.⁶⁹ He reminded us that with God all things are possible⁷⁰ and so it is with faith, hope, and love that we offer this five year missionary discipleship vision, trusting God to lead the way!

Yearly Themes

Year One (2014): Individuals transformed by encounters with Jesus Christ

Year Two (2015): Marriages and families wherein the flame of faith is tenderly blown upon by God's Spirit.

Year Three (2016): Parishes that are beacons, intentionally guiding the lost home to God's embrace

Year Four (2017): Disciples enabled to engage in loving dialogue, learning, service, and gaining spiritual strength

Year Five (2018): Disciples setting the world ablaze as they live joyfully and care for the poor, creating God's kingdom now while they wait in joyful hope for its coming in fullness.

Appendix

A Prayer for Evangelization

EVER PRESENT GOD,

we give You thanks for the gift of Your Son, Jesus.

We thank You for the unity we find in Him.

We ask You to send Your Holy Spirit upon us

...that we might boldly proclaim Your love

...that we might courageously speak Your truth

...that we might humbly live as Jesus did,

ever faithful to You, ever joyful in Your service, ever hopeful that Your Kingdom will burst forth in this moment.

Send us valiantly forth with the Good News that in this place, in this parish, Jesus is alive, welcoming the lost and leading us all to lives of merciful compassion!

We ask this through Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit as one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Members of the Diocesan Commission for the New Evangelization

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|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Father Michael Boehling | Vicar for Vocations and Pastoral Services | Diocesan Pastoral Center |
| Father Rolo Castillo | Pastor | Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Waynesboro |
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| Father David Cupps | Pastor | Portsmouth-Chesapeake Cluster Parishes |
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| Michael School | Director, Office for Evangelization of Youth and Young Adults | Diocesan Pastoral Center |
| Andrew Waring | Catholic Campus Minister | Old Dominion University, Norfolk |

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³ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), n.14. (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation)

⁴ Maureen Kelly. “The Mission of the Baptized”. *Pastoral Liturgy*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2006.

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