



TRUSTING IN CHRIST: A CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

A PASTORAL PLAN FOR EVANGELIZATION FOR THE DIOCESE OF YOUNGSTOWN

Implementation Report – Pentecost 2017

"One of the great challenges facing the Church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the Church's mission, and to enable them to fulfill that responsibility as missionary disciples, as a leaven of the Gospel in our world. This will require creativity in adapting to changed situations, carrying forward the legacy of the past not primarily by maintaining our structures and institutions, which have served us well, but above all by being open to the possibilities which the Spirit opens up to us and communicating the joy of the Gospel, daily and in every season of our life" (Pope Francis).

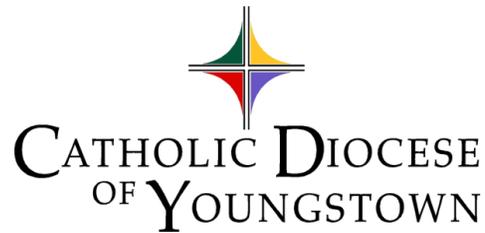
The above reflection was part of Pope Francis's homily at the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia, PA, on September 26, 2015. Earlier that year, our own Bishop Murry presented the pastoral plan for the Diocese of Youngstown, ***Trusting in Christ: A Call to Discipleship***. In the letter of introduction, Bishop Murry offered words of wisdom and encouragement similar to that of Pope Francis. Bishop Murry stated, "Each one of us who believes in Christ is called to be his disciple. Before returning to his Father in heaven, Jesus gave his disciple a mission: 'Go out into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation' (Mark 16:16). The original disciples have passed on that mission to us. Now, trusting in Christ, we must answer that call and be new and authentic disciples."

Since the release of ***Trusting in Christ: A Call to Discipleship*** in July of 2015, many new initiatives have occurred in our diocese. This report on the implementation of the Pastoral Plan for Evangelization allows the entire diocese to read about the progress that has been made by diocesan offices and individual parishes, as well as collaborative efforts. It also highlights areas we need to focus on in the future. The successes and ideas contained within the report can serve as inspiration for other new initiatives and collaborative relationships.

On this feast of Pentecost, may the Holy Spirit's fire of love inspire each of us to know and respond to our call as missionary disciples, answering the command of Christ to joyfully proclaim the Good News to all.

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OVERVIEW

- 46 of our parishes, as well as the departments and offices of the diocese, reported their progress to the Office of Evangelization and Pastoral Planning.
- This report includes initiatives that are in various stages of completion. Some have been completed, some are on-going, and some are still in the planning stages.
- At least one parish used this opportunity to formulate a parish evangelization plan and numerous parish councils used the framework of the plan to assess the strengths and challenges of their parish in each of the seven areas. The councils then formulated action plans based on the assessment.
- As one report noted, everything we do as a community of faith is part of the effort of evangelization. As such, this report gives a glimpse into evangelization at this moment in time. Like the plan in general, it gives each community and the diocese an opportunity to reflect on our strengths and challenges at this particular time and place in order to be more intentional about planning and acting in the future.
- This report does not include everything that was reported to the Office of Evangelization and Pastoral Planning, but rather provides an overview and focuses on select initiatives intended to inspire a creative approach to evangelization.
- Many initiatives addressed more than one area; for reporting purposes, initiatives were placed in the category that they fit the most.
- While there are numerous examples of parish initiatives, there was less evidence of collaborative actions, which should be an area of focus in continuing implementation of the plan.
- Christian Service was very evident, and many reports shared on-going parish efforts in this area. However, the recommendation to emphasize the connection between worship and service can be strengthened. In addition, there were numerous examples of direct charity, but little evidence of examining the root causes of poverty and homelessness.

- Evangelization was a primary focus for a significant number of the parishes that reported. While evangelization can be seen to encompass all aspects of parish life, many parishes were focusing on initiatives to become more welcoming and joyful congregations. In addition, there are many efforts underway to reach out to non-practicing Catholics and people who are unchurched. Youth and young adults are being empowered in leadership positions in many parishes.
- Family Life was another area that many parishes have focused on, especially in creating activities and support for a wide range of family situations. The action of challenging families regarding the balance of time, money and energy for religious commitments remains difficult to achieve.
- In the Worship and Prayer area, many parishes are recruiting and training more liturgical ministers, especially young people. Some parishes are offering more diverse forms of prayer. More work needs to be done on developing complementary mass schedules in local regions and in educating people on the communal nature of all the sacraments.
- The Discipleship-Faith Formation/Catechesis category includes some of the best examples of collaboration, including RCIA and Confirmation preparation, Adult Faith Formation (such as Dinner and Doctrine in Portage County as well as First Friday in Stark and Mahoning Counties, and Wine and Wisdom in Stark County), Young Adult Ministry (such as Theology on Tap and Spirits and Spirituality), and many examples of Youth Ministry Collaboration. However, difficulty remains in challenging society regarding Gospel values, especially the primacy of Sunday, as well as difficulty in adequately funding our Catholic schools as well as parish programs for adults, adolescents, and children.
- Very little was reported under the Finances area from the parish level; however, there were a few examples of parishes supporting new parish religious education staff and programs and other new ministries.
- Under Administration, some parishes are actively discussing alternative forms of parish leadership. Many parishes have used the diocesan materials to inform parishioners about Parish Leaders. Several parishes reported initiatives to foster a culture where vocations are encouraged and supported, but more can be done. Many parishes are improving their websites and moving into social media as a way to communicate with a larger audience.