

Christ is our Hope

Cristo Es Nuestra Esperanza

DIOCESEOFJOLIET.ORG
NOVEMBER 2014

GO OUT AND MAKE DISCIPLES

“The Framework for Pastoral Action” Focuses on
Discipleship, Evangelization and Charity

INSIDE:
THE GIFT OF
CHRISTMAS:
BRINGING HOPE
TO THOSE
IN NEED

SPECIAL ISSUE



**Bishop R. Daniel
Conlon,**
Diocese of Joliet

Ready, Advance

I remember once seeing a cartoon featuring a dauntless military commander ordering his troops, “Ready, advance!” In the next frame, he moved forward on his horse, while several other soldiers moved off in a variety of directions, none forward. As we prepare to adopt the “Framework for Pastoral Action” for the Diocese of Joliet, I think of that commander and am a little nervous.

Of course, the framework is not my idea. It has come about as the result of a lengthy, involved process of consultation. Fortunately many people throughout the diocese have contributed their ideas, and my sense is that much praying has occurred.

The framework is just that. Much work has yet to be done to put meat on the bones. Three pillars have been identified, along with several areas of focus to go with each pillar. In the next months, the pastors – working at the deanery level and in consultation with their parish pastoral councils, along with the curia (diocesan office staff) – will need to agree on some concrete strategies for addressing those pillars and areas of focus.

That will be the first test to see if the “troops” advance with some semblance of unity. Implementing the strategies will be the real test.

Without being a pessimist, I can already hear the grumbling. Some people will not find the pillars, areas of focus and strategies consonant with their own priorities. Maybe there will be no argument with the pillars: discipleship, evangelization and charity. But the more specific the plan becomes, the greater the risk of dissension. Even wording can be problematic.

Let me say two things here.

First, the Church is involved in many activities, all good, and her members are blessed with a multitude and variety of gifts, all good. For the sake of effectiveness, though, setting priorities and giving focus, without denying or ignoring anything important, are essential. Second, as with any group, not everyone can have his way; some degree of compromise is required on everyone’s part.

Next to outright disagreement with the framework, the greatest obstacle to its success is people ignoring it. In other words, diocesan offices, parishes and pastors might simply go about their business as usual, as though nothing has happened. For a diocesan plan to work means that everyone in the diocese is aware of it and consciously makes decisions with the plan in mind.

That involves asking some significant questions about the use of resources: how do we use our time, talent and treasure? It also means taking a look at the various programs currently in place, some of which have been in operation for years, with little change. Perhaps most important are the questions people ask about themselves, their spiritual and apostolic lives.

Maybe the most radical dimension of the “Framework for Pastoral Action” is its diocesan

scope. People tend to think and act parochially most of the time: parish, school, university, special ministry, etc. That is perfectly understandable, since working on a smaller scale is natural. The framework in no way negates the value of that scale of operation. The question is: Can we act parochially but think more globally? If our smaller, more local efforts are joined together in a common effort, the potential for effectiveness increases.

I am grateful to the Pastoral Planning Committee of the Diocesan Pastoral Council that has provided leadership for this project. Of course, this is just a beginning. Many, many people will need to be involved in fleshing out the “Framework for Pastoral Action” and even more in implementing it in the years ahead. Then there will be evaluation and updating.

One final word. Just as Jesus is the true shepherd of our flock, so the Holy Spirit is the true commander of our troops. While I am honored and humbled to share with them in those tasks as diocesan bishop, the success of our pastoral planning and action does not depend upon me. Prayer, discernment and courage in action are needed by all of us. It is the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit that we are ready to advance.

“Prayer, discernment and courage in action are needed by all of us. It is the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit that we are ready to advance.”

Yo recuerdo una caricatura demostrando a un comandante militar ordenando a sus tropas, “Listos, avancen!” En la proxima escena, el se movio hacia adelante en su caballo, mientras varios otros soldados se movieron en una variedad de direcciones. Mientras nos preparamos para adoptar el “Plan de Accion Pastoral” de la Diócesis de Joliet, yo pienso en ese comandante y yo estoy un poco nervioso.

Por supuesto, el marco no es mi idea. Se ha producido como resultado de una larga, involucrado proceso de consulta. Afortunadamente muchas personas a lo largo de la diócesis han contribuido sus ideas, y mi sentido es que muchas oraciones han ocurrido. El marco es justamente eso. Pero todavia hay mucho trabajo que hacer para poner carne en esos huesos. Tres pilares han sido identificados, junto con varias areas de enfoque que van con cada pilar. En los proximos meses, los pastores – trabajando con la curia (personal de la oficina diocesana) – van a necesitar estar de acuerdo en algunas estrategias concretas para hacer frente a esos pilares y areas de enfoque.

Esa sera la primera prueba para ver si las “tropas” avanzan con alguna aparienciade unidad. Implementar las estrategias va a ser la prueba real.

Sin ser pesimista, ya yo puedo oír las quejas. Algunas personas no encontraran los pilares, las areas de enfoque y estrategias en consonancia con sus propias prioridades. Quizas no va a haber ningun argumento con los pilares: discipulado, evangelizacion y caridad. Pero mientras mas especifico el marco se convierte, mayor es el riesgo de discordia. Incluso la redaccion de este puede

ser problematica.

Dejame decir dos cosas aqui. Primero, la iglesia esta involucrada en muchas actividades, todas buenas, y sus miembros son bendecidos con una multitud y variedad de regalos. Pero para ser eficaz, establecer prioridades y dar enfoque, sin negar o ignorar nada importante es esencial. Segundo, como cualquier otro grupo no todos pueden tener su modo, algun grado de compromiso es requerido de parte de todos.

Al lado del puro desacuerdo con el marco, el obstaculo mayor para su exito es cuando lo ignoramos. En otras palabras, las oficinas diocesanas, las parroquias y pastores podrian simplemente seguir en sus negocios como si nada hubiera pasado. Para el marco diocesano trabajar toda la diócesis esta consiente de el y concientemente toma decisiones con el marco en mente.

Eso envuelve hacernos algunas preguntas significantes acerca de el uso de esos recursos: como nosotros usamos nuestro tiempo, talento y tesoros? Tambien significa tomar un vistazo a los varios programas corrientemente en lugar, algunos de los cuales han estado en operacion por anos, con poco cambio. Quizas lo mas importante son las preguntas que la gente se hace a si mismos, sus vidas espirituales y apostolicas.

Quizas la dimencion mas radical de el “Marco de Accion Pastoral” es su alcance diocesano. Las personas tienden a pensar y actuar parroquiarmente la mayoría del tiempo: parroquia, escuela, universidad, ministerio especial, etc. Eso se entiende perfectamente, ya que trabajar en una escala pequena es natural. El marco de ninguna manera niega el valor de esa escala de operacion. La pregunta es: Podriamos nosotros actuar parroquiarmente pero pensar mundialmente? Si nuestros pequenos esfuerzos locales son combinados en un esfuerzo comun, el potencial de eficacia aumenta.

Yo estoy muy agradecido a el Comité de Planificacion Pastoral de el Consejo Pastoral Diocesano que ha proveido el liderazgo a este proyecto. Por supuesto esto es solo el principio. Muchas mas personas necesitaran estar envueltas en participar para dar contenido a el “ Marco de Accion Pastoral” y muchas mas para la implementacion en los proximos anos. Despues lo evaluaremos y actualizaremos.

Una ultima palabra. Asi como Jesus es el verdadero pastor de el rebaño, asi el Espiritu Santo es el verdadero comandante de nuestras tropas. Con honor y humildad yo comparto el trabajo con ellos, como el obispo diocesano. El exito de nuestro plan pastoral y accion no depende de mi. Oracion, discernimiento y coraje para actuar son necesarios de todos nosotros. Es la mision de Cristo y de el Espiritu Santo que estemos listos para avanzar.

Obispo R. Daniel Conlon,
la Diócesis
de Joliet

“Oracion, discernimiento y coraje para actuar son necesarios de todos nosotros. Es la mision de Cristo y de el Espiritu Santo que estemos listos para avanzar.”



1 The 36th annual Wedding Anniversary Mass for married couples was held at the Cathedral of St. Raymond in September. Around 250 couples – all of whom were celebrating 25, 50 and more than 50 years of marriage – attended. The Mass was sponsored by the diocesan Office of Family Ministry. In the photo, the presider at the Mass, Bishop R. Daniel Conlon, stands with couples from Worldwide Marriage Encounter, who volunteered at the Mass.

2 Jorge Rivera, the diocesan director of the Office of Hispanic Ministry/Ethnic Ministry, receives the Saint John Paul II award from Cardinal Francis George, the archbishop of Chicago, during the Archdiocese of Chicago's 16th annual Noche de Gala award ceremony, held on Oct. 3, in Niles. Rivera used to work in the archdiocese, where he co-founded the National Network of Pastoral Juvenil Hispana - La Red and developed the Chicago Archdiocesan Network of Latino Young Adults - La Red. **PHOTO BY KAREN CALLAWAY/CATHOLIC NEW WORLD.**

3 A parishioner from St. John the Baptist Parish in Joliet prays in front of the traveling Virgin of San Juan de Los Lagos statue in September, which was when the parish hosted the statue for several days. The history of the statue begins in 1542 when a Spanish priest brought a statue of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception to a village that later became named San Juan de Los Lagos in Mexico. The daughter of one of the town's Indian peasants became ill, but later recovered after praying to the Virgin. The church that is now in the town of San Juan de Los Lagos is one of the most popular pilgrimage destinations in Mexico.

LOCAL NEWS



THINGS TO DO

Post-Abortion Retreat to be Held in Early November

The Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreats are for post-abortive men and women. The next retreat will be held Nov. 7-9. Contact Kay at **1.866.99.4-GIVE (4483)** for additional information. Strict confidentiality is always observed.

Tree of Light Infant Memorial Mass to be Held on Nov. 9

A Mass to remember babies who have been lost through miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death, other pregnancy losses or early childhood death will be held on Nov. 9 at 2 p.m., at the Blanchette Catholic Center in Crest Hill, presided

by Father James Lennon. At 2 p.m., a special tree blessing ceremony for family members to commemorate these babies will be held. Family members may wish to arrive at 1:30 p.m. to sign in and gather in the chapel. A reception will be served immediately afterwards. Call **815.838.5334** for more information or go to or www.dioceseofjoliet.org/familyministry (and then click on button 3) to register. Please call if unable to attend, but wish a baby to be remembered.

March for Life Registration Open Until Nov. 14

Bishop R. Daniel Conlon and Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Siegel will be leading a pilgrimage

to the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., from Jan. 19-23. The diocesan pilgrims will leave from the Blanchette Catholic Center in Crest Hill. Some highlights include Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, a youth rally and Mass, and more. The cost is \$340 for high school freshmen through college seniors, including all transportation, lodging and most meals. The cost for adults is \$435, double occupancy. All registration forms and a \$100 deposit are due Nov. 14. Register at www.dioceseofjoliet.org/life. Please contact the Respect Life Ministry Office at **815.221.6251** for more information. ■

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EDITOR’S NOTE

You probably have noticed that this month’s issue of the magazine is a little bit different than usual. That is because we wanted to focus on the diocesan “Framework for Pastoral Action,” which Catholics can view as a vision for building community and strengthening faith. In the pages that follow, you will read an excerpt from the framework and then be offered some commentaries regarding the three pillars of the framework. The hope is to give you a snapshot about some of the ways we, as a diocese, can go out and make disciples. ■

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The magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Joliet

November 2014
Volume 7: Issue 11

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Christ is our Hope (USPS 25288) is a membership publication of the Catholic Diocese of Joliet, 16555 Weber Road, Crest Hill, IL 60403. Published monthly. Gift subscription rates are \$15 per year. Individual issues are \$2.50. Send all subscription information and address changes to: *Christ is our Hope* magazine, 16555 Weber Road, Crest Hill, IL 60403; 815.221.6112 or email magazine@dioceseofjoliet.org. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Christ is our Hope* magazine, 16555 Weber Road, Crest Hill, IL 60403 ©*Christ is our Hope* magazine, Diocese of Joliet. ©FAITH Publishing Service. FAITH is a trademark of FAITH Publishing Service. No portion of *Christ is our Hope* magazine may be published, broadcast, rewritten or otherwise reproduced or distributed in whole or in part without prior written authority of the Diocese of Joliet and/or FAITH Publishing Service™. For reprint information or other questions regarding use copyright material, contact the *Christ is our Hope* magazine editorial offices at the Diocese of Joliet. Periodicals postage paid at Romeoville, IL and at additional mailing offices.

- To submit story ideas and news, send e-mails to magazine@dioceseofjoliet.org.
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STORY BY
 Tony Molinaro,
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 for Pastoral
 Action” Planning
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The “Framework for Pastoral Action” Focuses on **Discipleship, Evangelization** and **Charity**

One of the best ways to sum up the “Framework for Pastoral Action” is to quote Bishop R. Daniel Conlon, who said, “This [framework] is not focused on our financial or strategic needs. Instead, it looks at ways to build community and to strengthen faith. In fact, it delineates, as well as we can, how Christ and the Holy Spirit are fulfilling their mission through us here and now.”

PILLARS OF PASTORAL ACTION

DISCIPLESHIP

Cultivate. Inspire. Embrace.

EVANGELIZATION

Seek. Welcome. Proclaim.

CHARITY

Care for. Advocate.

The “Framework for Pastoral Action” is a document that outlines the vision that has come about after listening to many people across the diocese. It is excerpted here as a way for people to get a greater understanding of the three pillars – discipleship, evangelization and charity – that make up the heart of the document. For those who want

to read the document in its entirety, please go to www.dioceseofjoliet.org/pastoralplan/.

DEFINING THE PILLARS

The overarching priorities of the “Framework for Pastoral Action” focus on discipleship, evangelization, and charity. We hear these words

nearly every day, but we may need a better understanding of what they mean and how important they are in our pastoral efforts.

Catholic discipleship means encountering Jesus Christ within and through the Church. We strive to learn more about Jesus, receiving Him fully in our lives and taking seriously our responsibility to

“The pastoral charge seems simple. Care for people in need. Embrace the lost and drifting. Encourage immigrant Catholics. Inspire young adults. Advocate for the voiceless. Cultivate lay discipleship. Proclaim the sacraments.

“What can you as a faithful Catholic do as a response to these entreaties? Just take a first step, whether it’s within your family, as an individual in your neighborhood, or as part of a ministry team in your parish. Take a first step and keep going.”

- The diocesan “Framework for Pastoral Action” Planning Committee

share His love with others. “To be true disciples of Christ,” says Pope Francis, “one must stay true to Jesus’ teachings, welcome His Light and profess our faith beyond our own individualism. Jesus speaks in the silence of the mystery of the Eucharist and reminds us each time that following Him means going out of ourselves and making our lives not something we ‘possess,’ but a gift to Him and to others. Our lives don’t belong to us.”

But at the same time, the pope adds “Our baptism makes us ‘missionary disciples’ within the communion of the Church. On the one hand, we never stop being disciples – learning, receiving. On the other hand, we are also called to the mission, to share what we have received, what we live, which is the experience of love, and of faith in the Trinity.”

As disciples, we embrace Christ’s love, and we form ourselves through piety and study, but our discipleship

also must point outward. As Pope Francis describes it, “If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life.”

As disciples, we not only must cultivate our own Catholic faith, we must also reach out to others, share our faith with them and encourage them.

Catholic evangelization can be described simply as “sharing our joy.” As Pope Francis explains, “... It would be wrong to see our evangelization efforts as a heroic individual undertaking, for it is first and foremost the Lord’s work. Jesus is the first and greatest evangelizer. 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.”

While we may feel unprepared and inadequate to be evangelizers, the pope observes, “All of us are called to mature in our work as evangelizers. We all want to have better training, a deepening love and a clearer witness to the Gospel. In this sense, we ought to let others be constantly evangelizing us. But this does not mean that we should postpone the evangelizing mission; rather, each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are.”

Most importantly, “instead of our efforts seeming to impose new obligations, we 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.’ ”

We invite; we welcome; we listen; we embrace, and as the pope explains, we must reach out. “We cannot passively and calmly wait in our church buildings; we need to move from a pastoral ministry to a decidedly missionary ministry.”

Catholic charity places our actions at God’s disposal and allows Him to multiply what is being given. Pope Francis recently said that he is “always struck by the disciples asking Jesus to send the crowd away to find their own food and lodging and Jesus telling him, ‘give them some food yourselves.’ In the face of the crowd’s needs, this is the disciples’ solution: Everyone takes care of himself; just dismiss the crowd. Many times we Christians have that same temptation; we don’t take on the needs of others, but dismiss them with a compassionate ‘May God help you’ or a not-so-compassionate ‘Good luck.’ ”

He goes on to explain, “What Jesus encouraged the disciples to do was an act of ‘solidarity,’ ” which is nothing other than “placing at God’s disposal what little we have, and our humble abilities, because only in sharing and in giving will our own lives be fruitful.”

The pope also observes, “My hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, and within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and there stands Jesus never tiring of saying to us: ‘Give them something to eat.’ ”

We must not dismiss our brothers and sisters with empty “compassion.” With our humble abilities, we are charged to care for them, to give them a voice, and to share Christ’s love with them.

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PASTORAL AREAS OF FOCUS

DISCIPLESHIP

- **Cultivate** a personal encounter with Jesus in order to joyfully **share** the Gospel as a knowledgeable and responsible disciple.
- **Inspire** young adults to **participate** as lay leaders in the mission of the Catholic Church.
- **Embrace** immigrant Catholics and **encourage** their development as leaders in the Church.

EVANGELIZATION

- **Seek, invite, and welcome** Catholics who have drifted away from the Church.
- **Emphasize** and outwardly **proclaim** the importance of the sacraments and all vocations.

CHARITY

- **Go** outside your church doors to **care** for people in need.
- **Advocate** for and with people in need as the Gospel instructs you to do.

OUR VISION

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. These *marks* of the Church describe not only the Catholic institution, but also the path that every member of the Church must follow.

We should personally strive to be one Church that unifies people of different backgrounds in one baptism. We should focus on living a holy life that strengthens us to accomplish Jesus' mission in the world. We define ourselves as catholic as our perspective must be universal and all-embracing. And our faith is apostolic which gives us the same mission as the apostles chosen by Jesus - to go forth and share the Good News with others. This inheritance of power and authority requires a genuine effort to understand what the Church teaches and why its tenets are essential.

For Catholic laity, this path has a simple, but challenging, goal: Bring Jesus Christ into the everyday world. This is our vocation and our calling.

At the moment of our baptism, when we are made "priest, prophet and king," we are commissioned to join in the missionary spirit and work of the Church. With an understanding of our faith and the Eucharist as our spiritual food, we are formed as disciples and sent out beyond our doors to carry on the mission of Jesus.

This is our pastoral vision. Nurture our own faith and our knowledge of the Truth. Reach outside our homes and our churches, bring the love of Jesus to others, and feed those who hunger for the Word of God.

Jesus told the Apostles, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). He was not only speaking to the Apostles. He is speaking to us today. As Catholics, we must stand up; we must act; we must go out and make disciples.

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32).

GO OUT AND MAKE DISCIPLES

Cultivate. Inspire. Embrace. Welcome. Proclaim. Care for. Advocate. These are steps that all Catholics must take in order to mature into a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

This plan is an invitation for not only for clergy, or parish staff, or ministry leader, but for every individual Catholic to carry on the mission of Jesus – in our parishes, our homes, our neighborhoods, in every aspect of our lives.

We all have a responsibility to welcome, to embrace and to care. We all must strive to inspire, to cultivate, and to proclaim. It is not just the deacon's job, or the teacher's responsibility, or someone else's mission. It is our individual mission as baptized and confirmed Catholics.

Doctor of the Church, St. Francis de Sales, understood well that all Catholics need to share their unique gifts and that every gift is important to the Body of Christ:

“When God the Creator made all things, He commanded the plants to bring forth fruit each according to its own kind; He has likewise commanded Christians, who are the living plants of His Church, to bring forth the fruits of devotion, each one in accord with his character, his station and his calling.

“I say that devotion must be practiced in different ways by the nobleman and by the working man, by the servant and by the prince, by the widow, by the unmarried girl and by the married woman. But even this distinction is not sufficient; for the practice of devotion must be adapted to the strength, to the occupation and to the duties of each one in particular” (“*The Introduction to the Devout Life*”).

The “Framework for Pastoral Action” echoes the challenge set down by St. Francis de Sales. We must “bring forth fruit each

according to our own kind ... and each according to our calling.”

In the Diocese of Joliet, there is much pastoral work to be accomplished by every Catholic. The “Framework for Pastoral Action,” along with constant guidance from the Holy Spirit, will help to focus and unite our efforts so that all the individual works will help make our pastoral vision come to life.

The pastoral charge is simple and clear: care for people in need. Welcome the lost and drifting. Embrace immigrant Catholics. Inspire young adults. Advocate for the voiceless. Cultivate lay discipleship. Proclaim the sacraments.

What can you as a faithful Catholic do in a response to these entreaties? Just take a first step, whether it's within your family, helping a neighbor in need, or as part of a ministry team in your parish. Take a first step and keep going.

We know that the work will be challenging, but also rewarding. We must remember to take courage for we are not alone in our efforts. Jesus is with us every step of the way.

The “Framework for Pastoral Action” offers strategies, guidance, prayer reflection and suggested action steps. Pore over all of it. Pray about your role in it. Decide to act, even if it's just in a small way. Even small steps can reveal God's plan for us to fulfill our Catholic calling and make disciples for Christ.

Each of us has a mission in life. Jesus prays to His Father for His followers, saying: “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18).

.....
“We seldom realize fully that we are sent to fulfill God-given tasks. We act as if we have to choose how, where, and with whom to live. We act as if we were simply plopped down in creation and have to decide how to entertain ourselves until we die. But we were sent into the world by God, just as

DISCIPLESHIP

Cultivate lay discipleship. **Inspire** young adults. **Embrace** immigrant Catholics.

EVANGELIZATION

Welcome the lost and drifting. **Proclaim** the sacraments.

CHARITY

Care for people in need. **Advocate** for and with the voiceless.

Jesus was. Once we start living our lives with that conviction, we will soon know what we were sent to do.”

- Father Henri Nouwen

.....
“The way we came to know love was that He laid down His life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech, but in deed and truth.”

- 1 John 4:16-18

Focus Area for Discipleship

Cultivate a personal encounter with Jesus in order to joyfully share the Gospel as a knowledgeable and responsible disciple.

Guidance: Participating in the life of the Church means being actively involved in any number of aspects involving faith, community-building, or service. It includes an active prayer life and involvement in the Mass, in ministries, in social events, or in outreach to the community or to those in need on at least a semi-regular basis. We want to especially target Catholics who are seen at weekend Mass, but are not involved in the work of the Catholic community.

Reflection: “God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next ... I have a part in a great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons...”

- Cardinal John Henry Newman



AIM I: BUILD COMMUNITY

■ **Focus Area for Discipleship:** Inspire young adults to participate as lay leaders in the mission of the Catholic Church.

• **Guidance:** With visible actions by local Catholic leadership and changes in organizational structures within our churches, we need to build valuable roles for young adult and teen Catholics so that their input and leadership will grow. Young adults range in age from 18 to 39. Their single lifestyles and their married lifestyles and faith needs can be very different from older Catholic faithful. We need to identify and meet these needs.

• **Guidance:** Target actions toward at least three separate groups: college students, and single young adults and married young adults in the working world. Determine how to do a better job of inviting and reaching out so that these Catholics can fully participate in parish life. Resolve to do this more often. Invite

and reach out more frequently.

- **Reflection:** “Even though you are young, the time for action is now! It is time to let your light shine! Remember, Christ is calling you; the Church needs you; the pope believes in you, and he expects great things of you!”

- Saint John Paul II

- **Reflection:** “I hope there will be noise. ... I want you to make yourselves heard in your dioceses. I want the noise to go out. I want the Church to go out onto the streets. I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable, everything to do with clericalism, everything that might make us closed in on ourselves.”

- Pope Francis

AIM II: BUILD COMMUNITY

■ **Focus Area for Discipleship:** Embrace immigrant Catholics and encourage their development as leaders in the Church.

• **Guidance:** We should continue to encourage and celebrate the numerous cultural heritages that are part of our Roman Catholic Church in the United States while making sure that all cultures act in unison as part of the Body of Christ. A proactive attitude should be developed that focuses on communicating, listening, and engaging with Catholic immigrants living and worshiping within every parish. In the Diocese of Joliet, initial focus could be aimed at first- and second-generation Latino, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, and

Polish Catholics.

- **Reflection:** “The presence of brothers and sisters from different cultures should be celebrated as a gift to the Church.” - U.S. Catholic Bishops

- **Reflection:** “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. ... Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. ... But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.”

- 1 Corinthians 12

AIM III: EMBRACE AND SHARE THE WORD

■ **Focus Area for Evangelization:** Seek, invite and welcome Catholics who have drifted away from the Church.

• **Guidance:** Be more welcoming not only at Mass, but in all aspects of the Catholic faith and the parish community. Determine how all Catholic faithful can better intersect with people’s daily lives and make changes to accomplish this. Find ways for Catholics to move forward and actually meet people at where they are in their spiritual lives.

• **Guidance:** Evangelization can be carried out in many ways: Share your faith with others. Be an advocate for your Catholic faith. Encourage faith in others. Build relationships by being a sincere and attentive listener. We can also go beyond one-on-one evangelization by placing emphasis on using current media methods to evangelize from our local faith community.

- **Reflection:** “Let your door stand

“Look at actions that can spur spiritual growth in active Catholics and can encourage participation in uninvolved Catholics.”

open to receive Him, unlock your soul to Him, offer Him a welcome in your mind, and then you will see the riches of simplicity, the treasures of peace, the joy of grace. Throw wide the gate of your heart, stand before the sun of the everlasting light..." - St. Ambrose

- Reflection: "Let us not shrink from entering the public square to proclaim the person of Christ, to teach the values that flow from reason and faith, to uphold our right to go about our daily work in accord with our teachings and values."

- Archbishop William E. Lori

AIM IV: CELEBRATE OUR UNITY THROUGH THE SACRAMENTS

■ **Focus Area for Evangelization:** Emphasize and outwardly proclaim the importance of the sacraments and all vocations.

• **Guidance:** Focus on why the sacraments (baptism, Eucharist, reconciliation, confirmation, matrimony, holy orders, anointing of the sick) are important to our faith and to the Catholic Church. Look at actions that can spur spiritual growth in active Catholics and can encourage participation in uninvolved Catholics.

• **Guidance:** Marriage and family are foundational institutions for our Catholic beliefs. They provide the means by which our faith is nourished and they are a conduit that helps us pass on our faith to future generations. We want to highlight the importance of married life to all Catholic faithful.

- Reflection: "The sacraments infuse holiness into the terrain of man's humanity: they penetrate the soul and body, the femininity and masculinity of the personal subject, with the power of holiness." - St. Pope John Paul II

- Reflection: "It takes three to make love, not two: you, your spouse, and God. Without God people only succeed in bringing out the worst in one another. Lovers who have nothing else to do but love each other soon find there is nothing else. Without a central loyalty, life is unfinished." - Bishop Fulton J. Sheen

- Reflection: "The world looks to the priest, because it looks to Jesus! No one can see Christ; but everyone sees the priest, and through him they wish to catch a glimpse of the Lord! Immense is the grandeur of the Lord! Immense is the grandeur and dignity of the priest!" - St. Pope John Paul II

AIM V: SERVE OTHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN NEED

■ **Focus Area for Charity:**

Go outside your church doors to care for people in need.

• **Guidance:** To all Catholics, act in order to give a voice to the voiceless. Get out from inside the church walls in order to do this. Take heed of recent comments by Pope Francis: "It's key that we Catholics, both clergy and laity, go out to meet the people. This is not only because our mission is to announce the Gospel, but because failing to do so harms us. ... A Church that limits herself to administering parish work, that lives enclosed within a community, experiences what someone in prison does: physical and mental atrophy." A Church that merely protects its small flock, that gives all or most of its attention to its faithful clientele, he believes, "is a Church that is sick."

"We cannot fall into that trap ... becoming too self-referential rather than missionary. It afflicts lay people worse, when they begin to believe that the fundamental service God is asking of them is to become greeters, lectors or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Church rather than to live and spread the faith in their families, in workplaces, in schools, in neighborhoods and beyond."

- Reflection: "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better

than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." - *Philippians 2:1-11 RSV*

AIM V: SERVE OTHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN NEED

■ **Focus Area for Charity:**

Advocate for and with people in need as the Gospel instructs you to do.

• **Guidance:** Catholic social teaching in the Diocese of Joliet encompasses abundant areas for service: social justice, peace advocacy, restorative justice, anti-poverty, hunger relief, respect for life, fair income advocacy, disaster recovery, faithful citizenship, environmental stewardship. Work on these issues from the parish community to the wider community, at the local, national or international levels. We must get out to the wider community, says Pope Francis: "You can't speak of poverty without having experience with the poor. You can't speak of poverty in the abstract. That doesn't exist."

- Reflection: "We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty." - *Blessed Mother Teresa*

- Reflection: "If you judge people, you have no time to love them."

- *Blessed Mother Teresa* ■

A Church that merely protects its small flock, that gives all or most of its attention to its faithful clientele, he believes, "is a Church that is sick."

The Many-Splendored Mystery of Discipleship

STORY BY
Sister Judith
Davies, OSF,
the diocesan
chancellor

Love is a *Many-Splendored Thing* caught the attention of those who heard the song for the first time. What was there about love that it could be described as *many*? Those who heard the song knew ... as well as those who experienced love in their lives. Saying that *discipleship* is a *many-splendored thing* probably causes you to wonder how and why discipleship might be described that way.

One way of thinking about discipleship is that it is a multi-faceted mystery. How it occurs and why it happens is not by chance. It is not a matter of mixing up ingredients and *voila!* Discipleship! Instead, there are a few components that go into following the Lord as a disciple, including the mystery of grace. Prior to a person setting out on the way, there has to be an awareness of a call. The ears of one's heart have to be opened to listening even though the call may be extremely faint and most difficult to hear. How simple if the phone would ring or a knock was heard at the door announcing a call to discipleship! Persons would know immediately that the Lord was calling them to do thus or so in life. But it is not that easy, is it? Sometimes the Lord speaks through a neighbor, through a friend or even through the person who irritates us to no end. Sometimes, hard as it may seem, we may hear the Lord through the raucous noise of the teenager ahead at the next traffic light! Sometimes it is only in silence that we can hear best.

Although we may think we are hearing the Lord, it is important that we discern just how, when, where, and to whom the Lord wants us to exercise discipleship. Speaking with wise persons who may or may not be those of immediate choice may serve as the "hearing aids" as we discern our call to minister as disciples.

Through discernment, our eyes become open to see the people whom we are being called to serve. Although we admire the work done by Blessed Mother Teresa's community, or the efforts of missionaries in Bolivia or Brazil, or perhaps those ministering to the poor in Appalachia, is that our particular call to discipleship? Instead, could the Lord be calling us to see the cranky next-door neighbor or an irascible co-worker with new eyes?



Might our area of discipleship be confined to family members or to parish events or to assisting an elderly neighbor?

Our hands have to be open to give of ourselves perhaps even more than we have anticipated. We may be asked to give more time than planned or give when we are bone-tired or step-in when there is no one else available. We have to be willing to receive whatever response others choose to give. Some may decide to envelop us in gratitude; others may shroud us in cynicism and lack of appreciation.

It is in discipleship that we may be called to walk in ways that we would not have selected or ever even imagined. Sometimes after we have told the Lord of our love, and that we are willing to follow after him, we may feel that we are taken where we would have rather not chosen to go on our own (cf. John 21:18). That too is discipleship.

We believe that listening, seeing, giving, receiving and walking are ordinary parts of daily life. It is with the Lord that those ordinary things become extraordinary as we remain open to the many-splendored mystery of discipleship. ■



THE JOYS OF SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

As a member of our Presbyteral Council, I was appointed, about a year ago, to be a liaison from the council to the diocesan Pastoral Planning Committee (PPC). This means that I am one of several priests who report back to Bishop R. Daniel Conlon on the progress of the diocesan "Framework for Pastoral Action." Our diocese has another council, called the Diocesan Pastoral Council, that represents the diocese itself and meets regularly with Bishop Conlon. The PPC is made up mostly of these members.

We have been meeting regularly for almost three years now, working on the "Framework for Pastoral Action," to stimulate ideas, growth and action in three main areas of spiritual and parish life: discipleship, evangelization and charity. As a former assistant to the representative for charismatics in our diocese, I find evangelization particularly interesting and exciting. To evangelize – or "to proclaim the Good News" – is not something that we Catholics necessarily see as one of our imperatives as disciples of Jesus Christ, and yet they are actually the final words of our Lord to His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

We do this by making Christ known to others, by sharing the "Good News" of the Gospel. Over the years I have found it most rewarding to "evangelize" my fellow Catholics who may not have explored their faith as deeply as they could have. Perhaps they did not attend a Catholic school, or a religious education program, when they were younger. But because they are already baptized as Catholics, I almost always find that they have an interest and a thirst for more knowledge. I also nearly always find that, even though they are baptized as Catholics, they have a great many misconceptions

and false understandings about the Catholic religion. Sadly, some of these very misconceptions can make them reluctant to explore the depth and the riches of our Catholic faith.

One common misconception is that Catholics are discouraged from reading the Bible. Nothing could be further from the truth. I often tell the people of my parish to make God happy by wearing out their Bibles. I tell them to read their Bibles, and if they find anything that confuses them, to give me a call so we can talk about it, either over the phone or in person. I have had many such conversations in my 29 years as a priest, and I honestly find them very enjoyable.

I do find it somewhat more challenging to evangelize non-Catholics, but, with those who were open to hearing what I have to say, I have had many spirit-filled conversations, and we have found that we have much common ground. The great requirement and challenge of evangelization for me personally is that I must first believe and "feel" that it is Good News. Everyone likes to share Good News with others. I enjoy sharing with anyone who is even a little open to hearing it.

Before I became a priest, I had a license to sell real estate and

"When we evangelize others, we not only make disciples, but we also find that we have made friends, brother and sisters by sharing the Good News."

insurance. I passed both exams the first try, which I was told was unusual. But in spite of that, I am not a salesman. I was not inspired to sell real estate or insurance, and that is what I would have needed to be in order to be successful as a sales person. Over the years, however, people have told me that I am very good at "selling" the Gospel. If this is true, and I hope that it is, then it is because I believe in them, am inspired by them, and see great value in sharing them with others. Not too long ago, I had a conversation on the phone with a person about faith and spirituality, and after a while, we checked the time and found that we had been talking for three hours. We both were surprised because the time flew by so quickly that it did not seem nearly that long. When I find myself talking about the Good News with someone who is also excited by it, I recall the Scripture passage from the road to Emmaus; "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

When we evangelize others, we not only make disciples, but we also find that we have made friends, brother and sisters by sharing the Good News. ■

STORY BY
Father Steven Bondi, the pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Wilmington.

PHOTO BY
jamesclk@freeimages.com



THE HEART OF DISCIPLESHIP: *Cultivating a Personal Encounter with Jesus*

Let's face it, we're all in the same boat. Moreover, as G.K. Chesterton noted, "Not only are we all in the same boat, but we are all sea sick"!

STORY BY
David D. Spesia,
the diocesan
director of the
Newman Institute
and secretary of
Evangelization
and Catechesis.

PHOTO BY
Henri-Pierre
Picou, *The
Miraculous
Draught*, 1850s.

Our personal sea sicknesses may differ. They might be self-inflicted, or the result of decisions by people we love; they might involve illnesses, troubled relationships, problems at work or school. Regardless, the remedy for every type of sea sickness remains the same: Discipleship rooted in a personal encounter with Jesus.

In other words, once we recognize that we are all "in the same boat," the question becomes whether we will allow Jesus into our boat. Luke's Gospel recounts a scene which needs to be replayed in each of our lives: With the crowd pressing in to hear the word of God, Jesus climbs into Simon's boat (Luke 5:1-11). Already tired from a full day of fishing, Simon was washing his nets. He was finished.

Yet perhaps Simon knew, deep down, just what kind of boat he was in. Clearly his heart was open just enough to be touched by Jesus' next request, "Put out into deep water

and lower your nets for a catch." Thus the next question for us becomes: Will we dare to face the deep waters? Will we trust Jesus enough to lower our nets again – perhaps in a place where we've never fished before?

Simon's boat is transformed by the presence of Jesus. The miraculous, overflowing – dare we say, Eucharistic – gratuitousness of the catch compels Simon to confess his own sea sickness. His "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" is not the end of the story, however, but an essential turning point. Without denying his malady, Jesus reassures Simon of the ever-greater grace which awaits: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

The ultimate question regarding our invitation to the lifelong adventure of discipleship is whether we will leave everything – including our fears, our boats and our nets – in order to follow Jesus. Without a

personal encounter with Jesus, we are destined to cling to our familiar ways. This is why Pope Francis begins "The Joy of the Gospel" with a provocative proposal: "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." Don't you love the invitation's gentleness ("at least an openness"), as well as its persistence ("unfailingly each day")?!

Just when we might be tempted to respond like Simon ("I am not worthy!"), the Holy Father adds, "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.' The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step toward Jesus, we come to realize that He is already there, waiting for us with open arms." ("Joy of the Gospel," n. 3)

So how will you encounter Jesus today? Maybe it will come through a silent prayer from the heart. Perhaps it will be a matter of listening to the living Word of God as if for the first time, or seeing our Lord's face in someone who is in need. It could be a moment with the profound presence of Christ in the Eucharist, or a kind word spoken through a friend.

Raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, no longer bound by space and time, our Lord is able to be with us in a multitude of ways. He speaks to each of us personally, in the depths of our hearts, just as He spoke audibly to Simon. He stands ready to jump into our boat and to greet us with open arms, whenever we allow Him.

Our diocesan pastoral plan is an opportunity to "put out into the deep," to cultivate a personal encounter with Jesus, and to reap the fruits of evangelization and charity which will undoubtedly follow. ■

Answering Jesus' Call to Help Those in Need

As the executive director of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet, I am grateful to Bishop R. Daniel Conlon and to the creators of the “Framework for Pastoral Action” for having included the pillar of charity in its structure. “Go outside your church doors to care for people in need. Advocate for them and with them as Christ instructs you to do,” dictates the “Framework for Pastoral Action.”

As Catholics we are called to embrace each other with our whole hearts and souls; we are called to offer assistance to our neighbors through our thoughts and deeds. Christian charity means giving with your heart, as well as your hand, and doing so without boasting or expecting anything in return. Charity is not just about giving to the poor; it is also about truly loving your neighbor.

The importance of charity standing as a pillar in the “Framework for Pastoral Action” cannot be understated. Pope Francis reminds us, “These days there is a lot of poverty in the world, and that’s a scandal when we have so many riches and resources to give to everyone. We all have to think about how we can become a little poorer.”

As the “Framework for Pastoral Action” continues to define itself, I challenge everyone to consider how we can best follow the charitable example of Jesus Christ.

Jesus could have been arrogant or prideful, for He was all-powerful. Instead, He found reason to be charitable. Jesus taught us to love all people, even those who are difficult to love. True charity is to love unconditionally.

Christ was committed to uplifting others, even those who had been forgotten, abandoned, or marginalized. Jesus befriended the outcast, dined with sinners, and devoted His time to the poor. Christ left us a charitable road map to follow for His life was the ultimate example of charity. Christ shows us that, if we put others first, we can find true joy. In truth, the definition of charity is the pure love of Christ. Charity is actually one of the spiritual gifts, and, as such, can be acquired as a gift from Christ.

Life is fragile. Catholic Charities knows this firsthand. The people who seek our help often don’t know how they will make it through until tomorrow. We feel heavy-hearted knowing that some families living within our own communities do not know where their next meal is coming from; how they will pay

their rent and utilities; how they will acquire school supplies and clothes for their children; or how their aging parents will afford their monthly prescriptions. Addiction and mental illness envelop many we serve. Day after day, Catholic Charities compassionately cares for the fragile and vulnerable in hopes that each and every client under our watch and care reaches self-sufficiency. Yet we do not go it alone.

Hundreds of families within the diocese have heard the call of the Lord and have answered His call selflessly. I have watched my neighbors volunteering in our shelters, serving at our soup kitchen, offering companionship to our seniors, distributing food at our mobile food pantries, packing Easter baskets for our Head Start Families, praying for those seeking our counseling services, and donating resources that make the entire agency work for the good of our neighbors who are struggling.

We want to make sure that we remain the beacon of light and hope to those most vulnerable. Your generosity presented in prayer, deed, gift, and love helps provide that hope. With the help from the wonderful people within our diocese, Catholic Charities will continue to serve those who are currently in need, and many of you that may one day need our help.

When feeling overwhelmed by the amount of poverty and people in need, Mother Teresa once commented, “We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.” Historically, Catholics nationwide have been proud of the assistance, the compassion, and the generosity the Church shows to the disadvantaged. It is our responsibility and duty to continue that tradition of Catholic humanity and benevolence.

I invite the entire diocese to join with Catholic Charities in support of the “Framework for Pastoral Action.” As our Catholic Charities’ mission tells us: “We are a faith-based organization providing service to people in need and calling others of good will to do the same.” I pray that the pillar of charity found in the “Framework for Pastoral Action” will call you to service as well. ■



STORY BY
Glenn Van Cura,
the executive
director of
Catholic Charities
in the Diocese
of Joliet.

Examining the Three Pillars of the “Framework for Pastoral Action”

The Framework for Pastoral Action is a template, a roadmap that we can refer to as a diocesan Church and draw upon in our collective work of becoming ever more fully the Body of Christ, a sacramental sign of God’s love for the world.

The pillars of the framework are discipleship, evangelization, and charity, which succinctly and accurately articulate the essence of the Christian mission that the Catholic Church serves. And while there is a certain sequential flow among these pillars, I want to also point out that they are in dynamic relationship to one another. As a result, the framework should not be read in a linear manner, as with a cookbook recipe or a math equation. With that said, let’s look at each pillar.

Discipleship: A perfect place to start considering the identity and function of the Church is with the person of Jesus. Who is He and what is He calling us to? Jesus, of course, is the Word-made-Flesh, Son who is co-equal to the Father. Jesus is the Messiah, our Savior, the great Sacrament from whom all grace flows into the world.

Jesus wants a relationship with us. In fact, all three persons of the Trinity want a relationship with each of us. We’re talking personal relationship, not private. (There is a big difference between the two.)

Jesus invites each of us to spend time with Him, come to know Him (His love, His truth, His mercy and power) and be transformed in the experience of being in relationship to Him. Then we are called to follow Him, to commit ourselves to Jesus and His vision for building a world where grace and love win out over sin and hatred, a world the Scriptures call the Kingdom of God.

Those of us who intentionally live as followers of Jesus are disciples. This is not just a matter of being baptized or believing in our hearts or even attending Mass each Sunday. This is about living our lives in a generous, courageous and joyful manner that reflects Gospel values and is grounded in relationship to God. Let us open ourselves to grace. Let us deepen our relationship to Jesus and orient our lives in one decidedly distinctive direction: To be His disciples!

Evangelization: Pope Paul VI defined the mission of the Church with wonderful clarity when he asserted in 1975 that “the Church exists to evangelize.” We,

the presumably evangelized, who are disciples of Jesus Christ, are entrusted to carry on His ministry of proclaiming the Gospel in all times and places. Bringing Good News is what Jesus calls us to do as the Church, through our lives and in our words.

Evangelization is essentially the initial movement of encounter and falling in love with God in Jesus. This experience changes everything, and life takes on a new and richer meaning. All of life – the good, bad and ordinary – is experienced and understood in the context of grace. We call this conversion. A result of conversion is having the desire to share the Good News that we know in the core of our being: We have a God who saves in Jesus Christ! Humbly and lovingly (conscious of our own need for ongoing conversion), we share this joy with the unbaptized and the merely culturally-Christian, alike.

Charity: Jesus tells His disciples “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me’ ” (Matthew 25:40). He then proceeds to give several examples of how caring for the vulnerable, the lost, and the marginal fulfills the will of God. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is clearly the friend and advocate of the least in society. He calls us to be the same.

The three great theological virtues are faith, hope and love. Charity is often substituted for love, and understandably so. Charity, which means far more than simply giving money to a charitable association, is love-in-action for those in need, whether the need is temporal or spiritual. Charity flows from a generous and joyful spirit that knows the love of God deeply and desires to be a conduit of that love for others.

Charity is a mandate, not an option. Pope Francis continually reminds us to put those most burdened first. Charity is a sign of God’s love that makes our identity to the world as Christ’s Body credible and, hopefully, compelling.

As you consider the three pillars, I’m sure you can see how they relate to one another, intimately and dynamically. For example, Christian acts of charity can help to evangelize. Or, in our efforts to evangelize, we ourselves can experience a deeper sense of discipleship.

May the Holy Spirit bless you and our diocese as we move forward in a concerted way, with this framework as our guide, in building the Kingdom of God that Jesus so desired for the world. ■

STORY BY
Tom Quinlan, the diocesan director of the Religious Education Office and co-chair of the evangelization committee for the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership.

“This is not just a matter of being baptized or believing in our hearts or even attending Mass each Sunday. This is about living our lives in a generous, courageous and joyful manner that reflects Gospel values and is grounded in relationship to God.”

The Spiritual Path of the Family

STORY BY

James Healy, the diocesan director of the Office of Family Ministry

For many of us, family life is the beginning of evangelization, the beginning of discipleship, and the beginning of charity.

■ **Charity:** We start by clothing the naked in our own family, feeding them, comforting them, and if we “time out” our children in the corner, we can even be said to be “visiting the imprisoned!”

■ **Evangelization:** The lessons we learn when we don’t even know we are learning them are often the deepest and most lasting. The Bible stories we tell our children, the way we pray in their presence, and the spirit with which we serve others can set the foundation for a lifetime of faith.

■ **Discipleship:** In the medieval world, marriage was sometimes called the “school for perfection.” The family way is a spiritual path. Done prayerfully and in a focused way, family life is all the ascetic life most of us will ever need.

That’s the spirituality of the “domestic church,” the household of faith. Priests receive the sacrament of Holy Orders, but, as pastors of the domestic church, parents are called to bring a “holy order” to family life. However, as the “Framework for Pastoral

Action” says, *that is not enough*. We also need to be part of the parish church, and the Universal Church, and we are called to charity, evangelization, and discipleship in those spheres also.

Families need opportunities, as families, to serve in charitable ways. Our parish has an annual service day, where families can work together helping others in the community, and those days have been memorable experiences for our family. Other parishes sponsor service trips or times when families can help at a homeless shelter or a soup kitchen together. And let’s not leave out families witnessing for pro-life issues, for greater attention to the needs of the poor, or for a compassionate response to immigrants.

As for evangelization, people may tell us about trouble in their marriage or with one of their kids, or challenges dealing with the aging and death of their parents. If we listen carefully and prayerfully, we earn the right to ask, “Where is God in all this for you?” We can only ask them that question, though, if we have asked it of ourselves. So evangelization starts by asking ourselves, “In terms of my family life, where has God spoken most powerfully? When was it toughest for me to forgive? When was it toughest to offer a second chance, or to ask for a second chance? How did God help us, and how did the Church help us?” Owning the answers to these questions for ourselves gives us something important to share with people and provides real motivation to invite them into deeper participation in the mystery of Jesus and His Church.

In terms of discipleship, can we bond with other families, starting with those we most trust, so that

we can grow together in the Lord? Can families support other families? Can we come together in prayer, in service, in mutual support, so as to broaden and enrich our households of faith?

In terms of reaching the groups prioritized in the “Framework for Pastoral Action,” some of the “low hanging fruit” can be found in our marriage preparation and baptism preparation programs. There we find couples and parents, ranging from the fervently Catholic to the barely present. Getting married or having a child are seasons of transfiguration, when the joy of being in love or the joy of becoming a father or mother explodes into our lives. Dorothy Day, now a candidate for sainthood who once was an atheist, was so overwhelmed with joy upon bearing a child that she had to find Somebody to thank. We need to take advantage of these opportunities to name and celebrate the Source of their joy. That way, they may stick around for the hard times, when we can name and help them find the Source of their comfort. Often, the Church does this work indirectly. By enriching the faith lives of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other elders, we can make it more likely that young people will be touched at the right moment by the words and love of people they trust.

The vocation crisis is not just limited to priesthood and the religious life. All types of commitment, including marriage and parenthood, are finding fewer adherents. Our call as a Church is to joyfully live out all of these expressions, whether celibate or married, in such a way that both we and the people we reach out to are swept up in the mystery of God’s love. ■

“Can families support other families? Can we come together in prayer, in service, in mutual support, so as to broaden and enrich our households of faith?”



ENGAGING THE WORLD

with the Power of the Gospel

The “Framework for Pastoral Action” challenges us to fully embrace the Gospel, as a diocese, as parish communities, as families, and as individuals. It calls us to reflect upon what that embrace might look like in this time and in this place.

What then is this Gospel we are called to embrace? The Gospel, or the Good News, is so magnificent that it can be and has been articulated in many ways. It brings with it many beautiful outcomes. But fundamentally, and at its core, the Good News is that “Jesus Christ is Lord!”

The word “gospel” itself harkens back to the prophet Isaiah (chapters 40 and 52) where the people of Israel were promised, in the midst of their suffering, that a new day was coming wherein God would make everything right. God would reign supreme, justice would prevail across the land, and the People of God would be cared for and renewed by the Spirit of God. This message was meant to be the comfort of Israel and the hope of the entire world.

Adding to our understanding of the word gospel is the idea that it was also used in Roman society. It was a term the Roman emperor used when speaking of the occasion of his own enthronement. By using this term, the Christians were announcing “Jesus Christ is Lord! Caesar isn’t.” The Gospel, then, is a declaration of a new power, of a new reality. Jesus has been enthroned, and everything in the heavens and upon the earth must come into alignment with that reality. The Gospel is a challenge to become obedient to this kind of faith. It is a call to believe, not merely in some intellectual fashion, though it is rationale, or even as a private spiritual experience, though it is an intensely personal one, but it is to believe in such a way that we are pledging our allegiance to this new Lord, an allegiance which demands we orient our lives, not to the voices and values of this world, but to the precepts of the new Kingdom that is emerging in our midst. Indeed, there is something very subversive about this Gospel. It seeks to overthrow all ideas, values and powers that do not conform to the way of the new King.

So Jesus Christ is Lord. What makes this good news? Well, it’s not too hard to see how the values of this fallen world have led to such darkness and death evident through abortion, war, genocide, to such inequity and poverty, to oppression, racial divide, and discrimination, even to the very degradation of creation. And so if you are living on the receiving end of the outcomes of

the false values of this world and its powers, be they political, economic, or cultural, the idea that there is now someone new in charge, someone whose will and ways promise to undo all the damage, someone who pledges to “come to the aid of the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, bring recovery of sight for the blind, and to set the oppressed free,” as Luke would describe it, it becomes very good news indeed.

And while this Gospel is subversive in nature, turning upside-down the lives of any who would embrace it and seeking to overthrow the values and powers of this age, ours is not a mission of condemnation of the world or fearful isolation from it. Rather – as the three foci of the “Framework for Pastoral Action” outline for us – it is one of full engagement and sacrificial, suffering service to the world.

- **EVANGELIZATION:** *We are told to go into all the world announcing Jesus Christ is Lord and that a new kingdom is being established.* (MARK 16:15)
- **DISCIPLESHIP:** *We are called to bring people into obedience to this new kingdom, teaching them the ways of the new King and helping them to live like him.* (MATTHEW 28:19)
- **CHARITY:** *And, we are commanded to help them recover from the effects of this fallen, false values’ world through acts of caring love and justice.* (MATTHEW 25:31-46)

The Kingdom of God will, of course, not be fully realized until Jesus returns in glory. However, we do live in the age of the Lord’s Prayer – “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” The original language here brings a sense of immediacy and urgency: “be done on earth, right now.” This is the prayer we pray as Christians. This, too, is our prayerful labor.

Within our particular focus areas of Choosing Life, Struggling for Justice, and Seeking Christ in the face of the Poor, the Office for Human Dignity, through its ministries of Respect Life, Justice and Peace, and Missions, stands ready to assist parishes and individuals as they reflect upon the “Framework for Pastoral Action” to help as they discern how to live the Gospel more fully in this time and place and to support them in actions which will lead to a fuller manifestation of the Kingdom of God in our midst. ■

STORY BY
Thomas L. Garlitz,
the diocesan
director of the
Office for
Human Dignity.

Catholic Schools Act as Beacons of Discipleship, Evangelization and Charity

Commenting on the New Evangelization, Pope Francis has encouraged the church to “a shared commitment to a pastoral plan which brings us back to the essential and which is solidly focused on the essential; that is, on Jesus Christ.” The three pillars of the diocese’s “Framework for Pastoral Action” – discipleship, evangelization, and charity – are a fitting expression of the focus “on the essential” encouraged by the Holy Father.

Our Catholic schools are a particularly good example of how we as a diocese do indeed focus on the essential, on the person of Jesus Christ. Each of the three pillars of the framework captures well what happens every day in every Catholic school in the diocese. In our schools, we form disciples, we evangelize and we exercise charity in countless ways. Where else in the diocese can a young person foster, on a daily basis, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, in an unapologetically Catholic environment led by pastors, principals and teachers who themselves bear witness to the Gospel?

During the more than 400,000 hours of religious instruction we offer each year, we teach children to pray and to know their faith. During the 65,000 hours of community service offered each year, we teach children to love their neighbor and serve the poor. As we have doubled the numbers of Latino students in our Catholic schools over the past three years, we embrace immigrant Catholics as an integral part of our community. As we have increased the numbers of Catholic school families who attend Sunday Masses at their parishes, we re-evangelize those who have drifted away from the Church.

At a time when many people

have drifted away from the faith and or embraced a secular indifference to the faith, it is important to appreciate how our Catholic schools truly are centers for the New Evangelization. Our Catholic schools have heard the Holy Father’s call to redouble our efforts for the New Evangelization. So we join the rest of the diocese in the implementation of the “Framework for Pastoral Action.”

We commit to acquire more knowledge and skills for the New Evangelization, collaborate with parish staffs and councils, seek to maintain equitable relationships with other parishes and schools, respect and embrace other cultures, and set priorities according to a missionary discipleship that receives the faith as well as shares it with others. In the context of parish life, our schools will continue to present the teachings of the Church, incorporate children into the Body of Christ through the sacraments, support the family, promote vocations, and defend religious liberty in order to make God’s mercy visible to a world much in need of God’s mercy.

As one privileged form of the evangelizing mission of the Church, our schools integrate our faith within the education of the whole person. Centered on the

Eucharist and immersed in saving grace, the hearts of our students grow and mature in the Catholic faith. Vibrant Catholic school culture provides stability, fosters certainty and creates meaning for young people and their families. For the Catholic school that means more than schedules and calendars, curriculum and instruction. It means that we provide an environment where “the way we do things” immerses our children in saving grace through prayer, the sacraments, curriculum and anything else that leads them to an encounter with Christ and His Church.

If Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta is right, and “joy is a net of love in which you can catch souls,” visit one of our Catholic schools and get caught in the net! We form disciples. We evangelize. We exercise charity. As we like to say: We Teach More. ■

STORY BY
Father John Belmonte, S.J.,
the diocesan
superintendent of
Catholic Schools.

PHOTO BY
Bruce Burns
Photography



THE LANDSCAPE OF Young Adult and Youth Ministry

Paul Mach and Kevin A. O'Donnell work in the diocesan Office of Young Adult and Youth Ministry. They were recently interviewed by Carlos Briceño about the "Framework for Pastoral Action."

■ What is a common misconception about youth ministry?

Paul: People might think youth ministry only works with teens. It works with parents too because they are the primary teachers of the faith. Kids most often mirror their parents' faith. So, it's important that moms and dads are active and engaged. Youth ministers can provide resources for parents to help them grow in their faith lives. We want parents to understand that a youth minister is also there to help them with issues their kids may be having. We want to help moms and dads to evangelize their kids and help them to grow as disciples.

Kevin: Family does have an influence on a lot of young adults as well, but, when they don't participate in the life of the Church, it might be due to the fact that they don't have the discipleship piece – a relationship with Jesus. They may have been through a Catholic school or religious education program and know plenty about what the Church teaches, but they don't have the relationship with Jesus.

A lot of people understand that it's important to be nice and do good deeds. It just can't stay at that level, though. We must reach into the spiritual realm and try to understand what it means to be called to be *holy* people.

■ Paul, you mentioned the goals of "Renewing the Vision," a document published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1997. It

offers a blueprint for ministry involving young people, and you said it mirrors the three pillars from the "Framework for Pastoral Action." Can you say more about that?

Paul: The first goal is to make disciples, which is also the first pillar. The second one is to get them involved with the parish community – evangelization [the second pillar]. Our third goal is to focus on the whole person (physically, spiritually, mentally). With charity we're looking at the needs of people. "If kids don't know you care, they won't care about what you know." So you can tell them all about Jesus, but if they don't feel you care about them they won't likely hear what you have to say. "Hey, I care about what is happening in your life" builds a relationship which is discipleship and leads to a relationship with Jesus. In the Gospels, Jesus went out of His way to build relationships; it was one of the ways He made disciples and evangelized.

■ How difficult is it to keep that going in your ministries and what are some of the obstacles to getting youth and young adults to deepen their faith lives as they grow older?

Kevin: Across the country, there are a number of college campus ministries that are excellent examples of providing great points of connection with students. They know what students are going through, how to interact with them, and they have resources, especially staff. It's an enviable situation to be able to focus on such

a particular population, and when the resources are there, even better. It's understandable that at a parish there are so many populations and needs that it can be difficult to focus on anything too particularly, but that's one of the things that affects the difficulty – commitment of resources.

Take a look at the large non-denominational or Protestant churches, the ones that may have several paid youth pastors on staff. Then compare them to many Catholic ministries that might have one part-time person or less. You can see what's working. There are vehicles for building relationships.

Paul: Temptations and challenges to core beliefs are significant, and when peers are falling into those traps, it complicates things even more. Unfortunately, the facts speak for themselves: those leaving the church mostly do so between the ages of 16 and 23. We need to take this into account.

Kevin: I like that the "Framework for Pastoral Action" is concerned about young people and even mentions inviting young people into leadership positions. Young people do want to be involved. I think that an additional obstacle to getting people involved is when we in the Church hold on to doing things the way we've always done them. We have to be mindful of not being too limiting in the invitation, though, and saying, "Here's how we do things, and here's where you can fit in." I'm not talking about changing doctrinal and theological elements; just that we need to realize that inviting people in means making space for changes. ■

"We must reach into the spiritual realm and try to understand what it means to be called to be holy people."

The Gift of Christmas: Bringing Hope to Those in Need

The “Framework for Pastoral Action” offers a vision for the diocese, and one of the pillars of this vision is charity. The holidays often offer many opportunities for people to be generous and charitable, and, with that in mind, Catholic Charities is again offering its Gift of Christmas campaign. To help others in need this Christmas season, read the following stories, choose a family to support and make a donation to Catholic Charities. Give others the gift of hope this holiday season!



- After escaping from an abusive marriage, Kim and her 17-year-old son were homeless for over two years. Recently, the pair entered Catholic Charities’ Transitional Housing Program, and they are thriving. Kim is enrolled in school and working toward a degree while her son is studying hard to maintain his 5.0 GPA. Your gift of \$200 would help provide this small family with a bright Christmas, including a much-desired Christmas tree.

- Jorge was the family breadwinner until earlier this year when he fell down a flight of stairs and suffered a traumatic head injury. Just before the accident, Jorge and his wife discovered that they were expecting their third child. He is unable to work while he recovers, and his wife must care for him full time. Your gift of \$250 will provide basic needs, such as clothes for this family.

- Stacy and her husband have four young children, three of whom are students in Catholic Charities’ Head Start program. This family puts a huge value on education and has great attendance and participation at school, despite facing many personal challenges (including job loss and instability in housing). A gift of \$300 would provide winter clothing for this family, which is something they desperately need.

- Patrice is a single mother with three children and a very strong faith in God. This family has lived in Catholic Charities’ transitional housing in Kankakee since becoming homeless. Patrice is very motivated and

works two jobs to provide for her family, but still struggles to make ends meet. Your gift of \$250 would help Patrice afford winter clothing for her children and shoes for school.

- Mary, 70, is the guardian of her two adult grandchildren, both of whom have severe disabilities and are unable to work or care for themselves. After roaches were found in the clothing and wheelchair of the grandson, Catholic Charities’ Adult Protective Services stepped in to help this family. Mary has a positive and loving attitude toward her grandchildren and is very grateful for the help she is receiving. A gift of \$200 would allow Mary to treat her grandchildren to new clothing (especially a Chicago Bears’ sweatshirt), bed sheets, and towels for Christmas.

- Scott is a single dad to his four-year-old daughter, Zoe. This close-knit pair reside in Catholic Charities’ permanent supportive housing after being homeless. The family has no income because Scott is disabled and unable to work. Zoe is thriving in pre-school and looking forward to starting kindergarten next year. Your \$200 donation would help Scott purchase winter clothes, including a warm coat, for Zoe.

- Last year, five-year-old Alex witnessed an incident of domestic violence during which his father severely injured his mother. While his father is incarcerated, Alex attends school, and his mother works three jobs. This brave little boy is also seeing a Catholic Charities’ counselor at school. A donation of \$200 will provide books and educational games for Alex this Christmas

and a gas card for his mother.

- Marcus is a first grader who lives with his great grandparents who are extremely loving and supportive but struggle financially. Marcus is a sweet child who loves to help others and to feel loved. He sees a Catholic Charities' counselor at his elementary school. A gift of \$200 would provide Marcus with clothing, shoes, and toys for Christmas.

- Tasha and her two young children live in public housing. Her three-year-old son is a student in Catholic Charities' Head Start program, while Tasha commutes a long distance to work each day. Despite financial, physical, and health challenges, Tasha never complains and always has a smile on her face. A gift of \$200 would provide the children with gifts to open on Christmas morning, including art supplies for the kids who love to paint and draw.

- Although Ed, 72, has difficulty walking and other disabilities, he strives for as much independence as possible. He was recently moved out of poor living conditions and is receiving case management services from Catholic Charities. Ed lives on a very low income, and a gift of \$150 would afford him food, cleaning items, and bedding.

- After Caden's parents got divorced, this kindergartener and his mother became homeless and lived in their car. Things are improving for this small family; they now have an apartment, and Caden's mom recently found a job and is also attending college. A donation of \$200 would put presents under the Christmas tree for Caden, who has requested board games and toys.

- Crystal and her four young daughters became homeless earlier this year and are staying at Catholic Charities' Daybreak Center. The children have witnessed violence in their family and on the streets, which has left them anxious, depressed, and withdrawn. Crystal is working hard to save money and hopes to be self-sufficient again soon. A gift of \$300 would provide blankets and dolls for these children, who currently have no toys of their own.

- Kenneth is a single dad to four children. He often works 12-hour days to provide for his family, but still struggles financially. Your gift of \$300 would provide a warm holiday meal and winter clothes for this loving family.

- Jacob and Mason are three-year-old twins who were born prematurely and are developmentally delayed. The boys are the youngest of five children who live with their parents in a two-bedroom apartment. Their mom works two jobs, and their dad works part time and also attends school. Despite their struggles, this family is upbeat and always smiling. Your gift of \$300 will provide a warm holiday meal and winter clothes for this family.

- When Rosemary, 61, was diagnosed with breast cancer a few months ago, she was devastated. Once she began chemotherapy, she was too tired to continue working and resigned from her job. Unfortunately, this single woman is now living without an income. She has a strong faith and believes that everything is in God's hands. A gift of \$150 will provide Rosemary with basic needs, such as toilet paper,

soap, shampoo, and cleaning products.

- Ashley and her five young children are staying in Catholic Charities' Daybreak Center homeless shelter after being evicted from the hotel they were staying in. This single mom devotes all of her energy to finding a job and caring for her young family. A \$300 donation would replace some of the much-loved items that Ashley's children lost when they were evicted, including dolls, building blocks, puzzles, and clothing.

- Samantha is a 21-year-old single mom with a three-year-old son, who is a student in Catholic Charities' Head Start program. Samantha works part time and is often stressed about her finances. Her son has developmental delays that have seriously affected his ability to speak. A gift of \$150 will provide food, warm clothes, and bedding for Samantha and her son. ■

STORY BY
Maggie Snow and
photography by
Carlos Briceño

➤ To read about many more families in need and how you can help, visit Catholic Charities' website at www.catholiccharitiesjoliet.org and visit the Gift of Christmas page. Monetary gifts can be made in several ways:

- Call **815.724.1140**.
- Make your gift online using your credit card at: www.catholiccharitiesjoliet.org.
- Or, send a check payable to Catholic Charities. Mail it to: Catholic Charities, Gift of Christmas, 203 N. Ottawa Street, Joliet, IL 60432.

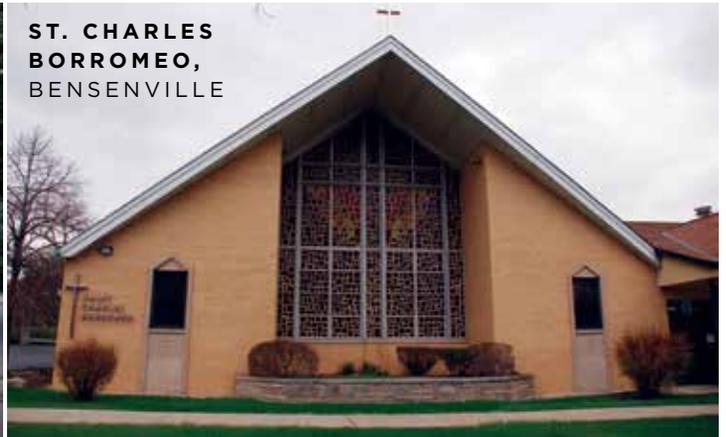
For more information, call Claudia Browne at **815.724.1140** or send her an email at cbrowne@cc-doj.org.

Please note there are many more client stories posted at www.catholiccharitiesjoliet.org. We are grateful for all who contribute. Once every client in our Gift of Christmas program has been adopted, any remaining donations will move to the Catholic Charities' Annual Christmas Appeal so that Catholic Charities has the ability to take care of our client's year-round.

**HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY, NAPERVILLE**



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