



You Will Be My Witnesses

Gathered and Sent From the Upper Room

Post-Synodal Pastoral Letter to the Faithful of the
Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

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INTRODUCTION

1. Gratitude for the blessings of our Archdiocese

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, it is with great gratitude to God, and to you, that I write this pastoral letter. The exhortation of our patron, St. Paul, to the early Christians in Thessalonica captures well what is in my heart: “We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father, knowing, brothers loved by God, how you were chosen” (1 Thes 1:2-4).¹ I feel blessed to shepherd an Archdiocese in which the work of the Holy Spirit is so evident. I think, for example, of our:

- strong, vibrant parishes with rich liturgical traditions, inspiring social outreach, and Eucharistic devotion;
- talented and devoted clergy;
- long history of generous and insightful lay involvement at every level of Archdiocesan life;
- two strong seminaries, including programs for ongoing clergy formation, deacons, and lay leaders;
- plentiful vocations to the various forms of consecrated life, the permanent diaconate, and the priesthood;
- network of excellent Catholic schools with growth at every level;
- transformational ministries and apostolates that have arisen here and continue to call our Archdiocese home; and
- abundant ministries that demonstrate our commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, the sanctity of life, and the dignity of the human person.

It is clear to me that we have rich soil into which the seeds of the Synod have been sown.

2. Gratitude for the Synod

I am also so grateful for how the Synod process itself has unfolded these past three years in ways that far exceeded my expectations. Undergirded with prayer and guided by the Holy Spirit, you, the faithful of this local church, have stepped forward to share your ideas and dreams for the future as well as your hurts and longings, past and present. A sign of hope for me was the dedicated work of the Synod Executive Committee, a group made up of women and men, laity and clergy, volunteers, Archdiocesan Catholic Center staff, and parish staff. Their work was evidence for me that the fruitful collaboration called for by Christ and his Church can be a reality; and that synodality can be an ordinary way of Church

life. All of this leaves me ever more confident that the Holy Spirit desires to bring about a great renewal in our local church.

SECTION I. WHERE WE HAVE BEEN IN THE SYNOD PROCESS

3. An experience of unprecedented difficulty meriting an apology

When I arrived seven and a half years ago as the temporary Apostolic Administrator, our local church was undergoing a tremendous trial, due principally to the scourge of clergy sexual abuse. I am grateful that we now find ourselves in a very different place, due to the dedication, sacrifices, courage, prayers, and collaboration of so many survivors of abuse and other members of the laity, clergy, and Archdiocesan staff. Yet I also realize that for some, despite the good work that has occurred, these days are still difficult due to the long-term effects of abuse.

For those experiencing the deep burdens of having been abused or of having a loved one suffer abuse, and for those scandalized as a result of the failure of the Archdiocese to protect the vulnerable, I am sorry for the actions and inactions that caused so much pain and ask for your forgiveness. I pledge that our efforts to protect the young and vulnerable and to support those who have been wounded will continue, even as we now expand our focus to include other aspects of renewal.

4. Why I called a Synod

When I was the Apostolic Administrator I had the sense that a Synod process, in addition to all the work being done to atone for the past and build safe environments for the future, could help a new archbishop, whoever that might be, to rebuild trust and clear a path for healing: an experience of overcoming evil with good (Rom 12:21). By the time I was appointed Archbishop and had come to know the dedication and talents of our priests, deacons, and consecrated women and men, and witnessed that we have such a well-educated and generous laity, ready to roll up their sleeves, I was even more confident that my hopes for a fruitful Synod could be fulfilled.

5. Principles that shaped the Synod process

It became clear with time that an effective Synod process would need to discern and establish clear pastoral priorities in a way that would both promote greater unity and lead us to a more vigorous proclamation of Jesus' Good News. Furthermore, it seemed that the Synod process would need to be grounded in parish life. For most Catholics, the parish is the primary encounter with the Church. If we are going to be healthy and credible as an Archdiocese, we need to have thriving parishes. These foundational understandings shaped the design of our Synod process.

6. Consultation grounded in prayer and listening

Our process was shaped by Pope Francis' hopes for a listening Church, one in which we listen to the Holy Spirit and to one another. The Holy Father has consistently taught that for such listening to be fruitful, it needs to be grounded in prayer. For the last three years, we have been praying for the success of our Synod, asking in particular that we might be able to hear the Holy Spirit as we carefully listened to each other. The efficacy of that prayer was powerfully experienced, as prayer and listening have been hallmarks of our Synod process.

Pope Francis asked all bishops to strive to listen for the heartbeat of the faithful as with a stethoscope so that we could both assess and understand the health of the Body of Christ as well as discern the desires of its heart. That is precisely what I was striving to do in this Synod process. It was always my intention to

follow the Spirit, wherever that might lead, without any pre-set agenda, to focus upon whatever themes would arise within my competency to address.

When I applied the proverbial stethoscope to what had been shared by the many thousands who attended the 2019-2020 Prayer and Listening Events, I discerned three Focus Areas:

- Forming parishes that are in the service of evangelization.
- Forming missionary disciples who know Jesus's love and respond to his call.
- Forming youth and young adults in and for a Church that is always young.

These three Focus Areas set the framework for the remaining rounds of consultation, including the Archdiocesan Synod Assembly, held over Pentecost weekend 2022.

7. The June 2022 Archdiocesan Synod Assembly exceeded my expectations

Whenever I recall the Synod Assembly, my heart fills with great joy and gratitude. It was an extraordinary event in which 464 voting members gathered to learn, discuss, pray, and vote on 40 Synod Propositions. I remain grateful for the generosity of Cretin-Derham Hall High School, Holy Spirit Parish, and the Cathedral of Saint Paul for the exceptional hospitality that they extended those three days. I am also grateful for the hundreds of volunteers who helped make it such a beautiful experience. Many participants commented that the Holy Spirit was clearly present in the three Masses that were celebrated, in the extraordinary prayer meeting at the Cathedral, and in the discussions among the Synod Members throughout the weekend as we grappled with the Synod Propositions that were under consideration. Those propositions had been carefully articulated to reflect the fruit of the three prior rounds of consultation.

The full text of the Synod Propositions and Synod Assembly voting results are included as an Appendix to this letter. I remain convinced that this voting gave voice to the Holy Spirit through the Synod Members and resulted in a great body of inspired feedback.

These past months, with the Blessed Virgin Mary as my guide, I have pondered this input and meditated upon it in my heart (Lk 2:19). Now it is time to join you in considering the key question: What then should we do?

SECTION II – WALKING TOGETHER (*SYNODOS*)

8. What then should we do? (Lk 3:10)

This question, asked so many years ago by the disciples of John the Baptist, finds an echo today in our own hearts. John had announced a new chapter of sacred history in which “all flesh will see the salvation of God” (Lk 3:6). In the face of so great a revelation his disciples could only ask, “What then should we do?” Having experienced the power and the promise of a historic Synod Assembly, we too find ourselves on the threshold of a new chapter in the sacred history of this Archdiocese, and we cannot help but ask, “What then should we do?” That is, in fact, the great question of this pastoral letter.

9. The harvest is abundant

Where do we begin in answering it? I propose that we begin by following Jesus. With religious imagination, let us walk with him from town to town in Galilee and witness him “teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom and curing every disease and illness” (Mt 9:35). Imagine his face revealing a heart that is moved with compassion at the distress of the people he

encounters, who are “like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:36). Nevertheless, as he gazes upon those vast crowds he is able to see with divine perception that “[t]he harvest is abundant” (Mt 9:37).

I have to say that this same perception came into focus within my own heart as I travelled from parish to parish for the many Prayer and Listening Events of 2019-2020 and the Parish Consultation of fall 2021. I too encountered people who seemed troubled and abandoned. I feel privileged to have heard their stories and even to have felt some of their pain. But I also felt the strength of their faith. Just as the hurting crowds would not have sought out Jesus without believing in his power to heal them, neither would the faithful of this Archdiocese have come out in such great number to these events without hope in the power of the Holy Spirit to renew their beloved Church. At the sight of those crowds, I too could perceive in faith, “The harvest is abundant.”

My dear sisters and brothers, as we begin the process of Synod implementation, I invite you to believe with me that these words of Jesus are as true for us today in the Archdiocese as they were for the people of Judea and Galilee 2,000 years ago!

10. The laborers are few

We must acknowledge, however, that we too lack one thing: “[T]he laborers are few” (Mt 9:37). Even as Jesus revealed the abundant harvest prepared by his Father, he was nevertheless confronted with his own human limitations before the crowds. His divine heart embraced each and all in that vast human throng, but his human nature limited him in space and time. As we contemplate in hope the abundant harvest before us as we embark upon our Synod implementation, we too come face to face with our limitations.

I suspect that no one feels those limitations more acutely than our parish priests. On the day of their ordination, they prayed to be shepherds after Jesus’ own heart and to embrace each and all in their parishes. As I go from parish to parish in our Archdiocese I see that their prayers were answered: I consistently encounter good shepherds, trying to lay down their lives for their sheep. Their mornings are often filled with prayer and the Sacraments, their afternoons with parish administration and staff meetings, and their evenings with gatherings at the church or visits to the homes of their faithful. Some will even be called in the nighttime to bring the mercy of Jesus to the sick and dying.

Yet with the Synod it seems that our priests are now being asked to do even more: to go out in search of those sheep that do not enter the sheep gate of the parish on Sundays. This is only an echo of what the fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught about priests: “They are to live as good shepherds that know their sheep, and they are to seek to lead those who are not of this sheepfold that they, too, may hear the voice of Christ, so that there might be one fold and one shepherd” (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 21). But with so many today who are like sheep without a shepherd, might not even our best priests feel overwhelmed? They rightly ask, “Do I have more to give?”

11. Ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest

It seems to me that Jesus would like to encourage his priest brothers with the same words with which he encouraged his disciples so many years ago: “[A]sk the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest” (Mt 9:38). Heeding that exhortation, we need to put our confidence in God who alone is the Lord of the harvest and who alone can assign the task. The gospels remind us that Jesus not only exhorted his disciples, he also gave them a living example: “In those days he departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named apostles” (Lk 6:12-13).

We can see that the Father answers the prayer of Jesus in a most merciful and marvelous way. In the call of the Twelve, God gives his Son companions to be “together on the journey” (*synodos* in Greek).

The wise plan of the “harvest master” now becomes clear: God allowed his Son to be in need of laborers so that that he might have “friends” (Jn 15:15) to journey with in the mission field, and so that those friends might have the dignity of being co-workers with him in the work of salvation.

12. Calling of the twelve to form a parish Synod Evangelization Team

At a gathering of our priests last June, Bishop Joseph Williams and I challenged them to join us in following Jesus up the mountain of prayer and asking the Lord of the harvest for co-workers in what would be our post-Synod mission fields. We know that priests are “not ordained by Christ to take upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the Church toward the world. On the contrary, they understand that it is their noble duty to shepherd the faithful and to recognize their ministries and charisms, so that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one mind” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 30).

To this end, each of our pastors, having descended the mountain of prayer, has been asked by me to choose “twelve” who could be co-workers with him in building a parish that is in the service of evangelization. These “apostles” – chosen for their capacity to draw others to Christ – will help each parish to be an icon of “[a] Church which goes forth.”² I pray that this choice of members to constitute the parish Synod Evangelization Team, made in consultation with their Parish Pastoral Council and parish staff, will lighten the burden of our pastors and let them more deeply experience the joy of missionary synodality.

While the vocabulary may seem somewhat new, “synodality” in its substance is not a new reality for our pastors. Many have already been “walking together” and experiencing fruitful collaboration with Parish Pastoral Councils and Parish Finance Councils. These structures, rooted in canon law, are concrete expressions of the synodal vision of the Second Vatican Council, which understood that the “journeying together” of clergy and laity would enrich the ministry of the Church. Some of us can remember when the financial responsibility of the parish fell almost solely on the shoulders of the parish priest. I would suspect that today’s pastors are relieved to know that they can count on the professional expertise of the laity to advise them in matters that pertain to the administration of the parish.

As we prepare to make our Synod dreams a reality, it seems to me that we must ask: if the talents and charisms of the laity are crucial in the financial administration of the parish, how much more critical must they be in accomplishing the task that is at the very heart of the Church’s mission — the proclamation of the Good News? Indeed, I am hopeful that the assembling of the “twelve” at each of our parishes will be the beginning of a kind of “Parish Evangelization Council” that supports missionary discipleship the way the Parish Finance Council supports stewardship of temporal goods. Much as the Finance Council helps the pastor keep finances on the front burner of parish administration, so too would an Evangelization Council consistently help pastors keep evangelization in the forefront of parish life. With this vision, our priests will experience synodality where it matters most: the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

I am confident that our pastors will experience as Jesus did the wise providence of the master of the harvest, who has given them not only co-workers but friends on the apostolic path. At the same time, these laborers – drawn mostly from the laity – will come to experience in a unique and concrete way the dignity of their own baptismal calling as set forth at the Second Vatican Council:

The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head; incorporated into Christ’s Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself. They are consecrated for the royal priesthood and the holy people (cf. 1 Pt 2:4-10) not only that they may offer spiritual sacrifices in everything they do but also that they may witness to Christ throughout the world (Decree on the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3).

13. From Synod to synodality

As our pastors call and form their Synod Evangelization Teams, the first movement of the Synod implementation now becomes clear: the movement from Synod to synodality. We are moving from the Synod as a first-in-our-lifetime canonical event to synodality as a way of being Church. While the Synod consultation has come to a close, synodality as a way of missionary life and activity is just beginning in this Archdiocese!

This movement is not, however, only for the parishes. I could not imagine asking pastors to choose the synodal path of evangelization if I were not willing to walk that “same path” myself. Indeed, I am committed to continuing the work of consultation with the Presbyteral Council, the College of Consultors, and the Lay Advisory Board, and I am in the process of choosing my own “twelve” – clergy, religious and laity – who will “walk with me” and advise me as we seek to implement the Synod.

14. Office of Synod Evangelization

I will be collaborating closely with the recently established Archdiocesan Office of Synod Evangelization, which has been primarily tasked with implementing the evangelistic priorities flowing from the Synod Assembly in June. The staff of this Office will take special care to “walk with” the parish Synod Evangelization Teams and their pastors. This “walking with” will include formation for missionary discipleship as well as listening to the Teams so that the creativity inspired at the parish level can be shared with all.

15. Vicars of Evangelization

In addition, I wish to “walk with” the pastors who will be guiding the Synod implementation in their parishes. Recognizing that it would not be possible to accompany each of them personally, I have appointed seven Vicars of Evangelization, each responsible for two of our geographical deaneries. These Vicars will encourage and visit the pastors and their Teams in my name and will then share with me their lived experience of implementing the Synod.

Distinguished by their proven charism of evangelization, the Vicars will follow in the footsteps of our patron, St. Paul, and his companion, St. Barnabas, who “strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith” (Acts 14:22). At the same time, the Vicars will be in a unique position to listen to the pastors and to communicate suggestions and experiences to me, so that I might be more aware of the pastors’ hopes and needs. The Vicars will also be particularly equipped to coordinate and align evangelization initiatives regionally. In this way, all parishes and their respective Teams will also be “walking together” in the building up of our local church.

16. From the *how* to the *what* of Synod implementation

The movement from Synod to synodality is, however, only a first step, speaking to us more about the “how” than the “what” of Synod implementation. While much of our time since the Assembly has been spent imagining “how” the whole local church might “walk together” in the implementation of our Synod Priorities, what remains is an articulation of the “what” of our Synod Priorities. Indeed, we might fairly say that the question posed by the disciples of John the Baptist still fundamentally remains for us to answer: “What then shall we do?”

To determine this “what,” I have been relying upon the excellent work of the Synod Members as they prayerfully voted on the Synod Propositions that had been formulated in light of the prior Synod consultations. I like to think of the results of their voting as the “data” of the Holy Spirit.

But with so much data, how can we begin to make sense of it all?

17. Finding clarity in the Upper Room

Several years ago, Monsignor Peter Vaghi, a lawyer and beloved pastor in the Archdiocese of Washington, wrote an engaging book entitled, *Meeting God in the Upper Room*. The “Upper Room” in the title refers to the site mentioned in the Gospels of Mark (Mk 14:15) and Luke (Lk 22:12) as the place of the Last Supper, and in the Acts of the Apostles as the site where the Risen Jesus appeared to the disciples and where the Holy Spirit fell upon them at Pentecost. Believed to have been located on a southwest hill of Jerusalem known as Mount Zion, just outside the Old City walls, the site is also often referred to as the “Cenacle.” Pilgrims to the Holy Land frequently visit this site.

Monsignor Vaghi insightfully calls the Upper Room “the most important room in all of Christendom” because of the significance of the actions that tradition tells us occurred there:

The events that took place in the Upper Room prior to and immediately after the crucifixion of Christ, and in the days following his Resurrection, can never be undone or forgotten. The fruits of Jesus’s life and ministry, as witnessed in the precious moments in the Upper Room documented in Scripture, continue in and through the Church.³

Monsignor Vaghi goes even further by saying the Upper Room gives us today an “icon of a fruitful Church.”⁴ This caught my attention since a fruitful local church was my very reason for calling this Synod. I am so grateful that Bishop Williams recommended a rereading of the book. I soon found myself wondering with him if the image of the Upper Room and the mysteries celebrated therein could give us a key to interpreting the Synod Assembly data. The longer I pondered the Synod data through the lens of the Upper Room, the more this seemed to be the case.

Three mysteries in particular – the washing of the feet, the breaking of the bread and the coming of the Holy Spirit – seemed to capture the hopes and dreams of our Synod Members and offer a key to understanding the Synod voting data, giving us a clear vision for implementing the Synod Priorities going forward. As Monsignor Vaghi so beautifully wrote, “In this humble space, the most important room in all of Christendom, where Jesus set a remarkable precedent of faith and service, we were given a new understanding of God’s love and the revolutionary power of the Holy Spirit was unleashed.”⁵

My dear brothers and sisters, let us then ascend to the Upper Room to learn how these lessons of faith, service, love and power will guide us in the fulfillment of our Synod dreams.

SECTION III – THE UPPER ROOM

A. The Mystery of the Washing of the Feet

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end....

[F]ully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around his waist....

So when he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you?... I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.... Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me” (Jn 13: 1,3-5,12,15, 20).

18. Jesus humbled himself through service and self-gift

From the earliest days of the Church, the washing of the feet has been seen by many as offering insight into the mystery of the Incarnation: the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus, lowering himself in humility and love to become one of us, throwing off the “garment” of the outward signs of his divinity. By Jesus’s taking on human flesh, the unseen God becomes visible to us in a way that we can understand.

At the Last Supper, on the brink of Jesus’s Passover offering of his very self, he rises from the table and lowers himself to wash the feet of his disciples. This reveals the mystery of the Incarnation in an especially poignant way: Jesus has descended – from heaven as well as from the table – to serve us. The gesture illustrates the insight of St. Paul, who noted that though Jesus was in the form of God, he “did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance, he humbled himself” (Phil 2:6-8).

Back in the Upper Room, our Lord’s humble act of menial service scandalized Peter, who at first responded, “You will never wash my feet” (Jn 13:8). Jesus’s humility expressed in service humbles those who do not think that they deserve it. None of us deserves the loving care God gives freely and daily, nor do we deserve the gift of God’s Incarnation. And yet Jesus sees something of great value in each one of us.

19. Jesus heals us and purifies us

The washing of the feet signifies a deep healing. It is Jesus who washes us clean and makes us new. In taking on human flesh, Jesus took on our sinful, fallen-from-glory human nature in order to heal and purify us. As powerfully and succinctly stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “the Son of God became man so that we might become God.”⁶ Jesus descends so that we may be able to ascend, to be united with him.

20. The washing of the feet reveals that love must be expressed concretely

The washing of the feet also makes concrete the very love that motivated the Incarnation: Jesus the Master embraces the work of a slave in order to meet others’ spiritual and bodily needs here and now. He washes real feet of real people: feet hardened, worn, dirtied, and bruised. Jesus’s washing softens, renews, cleanses, and heals.

His attention to the most basic needs of the Apostles teaches us that the physical dimension matters to God, and so to us. As St. James exhorts: “If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,’ but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it?” (Jas 2:15-16).

21. The washing of the feet is hospitality that unites us with the other

In the Middle Eastern context, Jesus’s washing of the feet would have communicated a radical hospitality. The focus of the person washing feet has to be purely on the other. We can imitate Jesus

only by putting aside the “garments” of our position, our expertise, our self-focus, and even our pride. In attending to the need of the other, we open ourselves to the mystery of the other. In listening, we respectfully receive the other. Jesus teaches us that the simple gift of self opens us to the gift of the other. A communion, a unity, is then created between us through hospitality.

I was edified that the Synod Members appreciated the importance of hospitality. In fact, Synod Proposition 1 (Welcome and Hospitality) received the sixth highest vote total at the Synod Assembly.

22. The washing of the feet affirms the other

As noted above, Jesus’s humble washing of the feet does not depend on whether the other “deserves” this service: for Jesus even washed the feet of Judas. The washing of the feet says simply: “It is good that you are.” This is always the first movement of love.⁷ In putting aside our preferences and in attending to the person before us, we affirm that God has seen it good to love them into being, creating them in his very image and likeness. It is important that we always recognize the dignity of the other. This affirmation of the other is the first service we can offer.

23. As we give ourselves to others, we discover ourselves

As we open ourselves in service to the mystery of the other, we also begin to see our true selves more clearly. The Second Vatican Council taught that we begin to discover ourselves in the sincere gift of self (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* 24). We find ourselves refreshed when we are striving to bring refreshment to another. We find mutual refreshment in genuine encounter with one another. A communion, a unity, is created anew between us.

24. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do

Our credibility as witnesses to Jesus depends upon how we manifest our commitment to taking seriously the first of the charges that the Apostles received in the Upper Room on Holy Thursday:

“If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (Jn 13:14-15).

Throughout the Synod process, we heard the pain expressed by so many over family members and neighbors who no longer join us at Mass. How often we heard about youth and young adults who no longer believe what our Church believes or who have drifted away from the practice of the faith. I wonder if they may have been impacted by our too often tepid responses to the Lord’s command to wash one another’s feet, to follow his example.

While so much foot-washing is hidden, I feel particularly blessed as Archbishop to see so much evidence of self-emptying service in this Archdiocese. I think, for example, of:

- the heroic response of Catholic medical personnel who have served selflessly throughout the COVID crisis;
- the welcome offered by so many of our parishes to refugees and migrants, Catholic and non-Catholic alike;
- the Catholic community’s attentiveness to the needs of children and families desirous of Catholic education but lacking sufficient resources, especially in our St. Katharine Drexel Mission Schools;
- the outreach of laity and clergy to our brothers and sisters who are in prison, offering them hope and opportunities for prayer, formation, and conversation;

- the phenomenal response to the Neighbors in Need Fund set up by the Catholic Community Foundation and the exceptional generosity offered through our region's many pregnancy resource centers;
- the many who provide daily care for loved ones who are homebound or who regularly tend to their spiritual and sacramental needs;
- the unconditional love shown to the homeless and elderly by the many volunteers and staff at Catholic Charities, Sharing and Caring Hands, and our many Catholic residences for the elderly;
- the thousands of meals that were provided throughout the pandemic to families in need by parishes cooperating with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and by our many parish-supported food pantries; and
- the many parishes who support development projects in mission lands.

25. Small Groups as an opportunity for the washing of feet

Throughout our Synod process, I was delighted to witness a more subtle “washing of the feet” reflected in small group conversations that were respectful and affirming. While we did not always agree with one another, we did listen and strive to respect the dignity of the other. We received the other as other. Time and again I have heard the testimony of those who felt an exceptional unity in our Synod events: a unity born in prayer and in small groups that culminated in the beautiful liturgies of the Synod Assembly. It is my hope that this “washing of the feet” experience continues in our parishes.

St. Teresa of Calcutta worked among the poorest of the poor throughout the world, yet she would say that the greatest hunger of the human person was the “terrible hunger for love.”⁸ She even found that this hunger was often most pronounced in the wealthiest nations on earth. “Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat.”⁹ In her visits to the United States she had particular compassion on the many lonely hearts that she encountered here, noting that “[t]he hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.”¹⁰

In the Synod Small Groups last fall, there was a clear desire for connection: for experiencing the love of God directly and as expressed through other sisters and brothers in Christ. This desire was heard again at the Synod Assembly, as Proposition 19 (Small Groups) was one of the top five voted-upon propositions. I was not surprised: our parishes with strong small group ministry have consistently shown that small groups continue to be an excellent vehicle for the provision of Christ-centered care, with heart speaking to heart.

The first “foot-washing” action I will be asking our parishes to take, through the work of their Synod Evangelization Teams, will be to begin the process of creating or growing a small group ministry that fosters personal relationships, builds community, and provides formation to help parishioners grow as joyful missionary disciples of Christ. I saw this incarnated when I visited St. Pius X Parish in White Bear Lake this summer, where one of the Synod Small Groups formed in 2021 had decided to continue to meet. They named themselves “Agape,” with a commitment to serve – wash the feet – by taking new responsibility for hospitality and welcome within the parish.

26. The primary small group: The family

This radical love is not only needed in the parish church, but also in the domestic church: the family. After all, the primary small group is the family. No wonder then that Proposition 28 (Parents as Primary Educators: Form and inspire parents to understand and fulfill their responsibility as the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith) was the proposition receiving the highest number of votes.

We are becoming increasingly aware that parenting is an intense form of youth ministry: a mission of corporal and spiritual works of mercy directed toward one's own children. The family is the place where

each of us first encounters love, where the mother's smile first evangelizes the infant held close and affirms the child's goodness. The family is the primary place where foot-washing of the youth occurs: clothing the naked; feeding the hungry; giving drink to the thirsty; sheltering the homeless; visiting the sick; instructing the ignorant; counseling the doubtful; admonishing the sinner; bearing wrongs patiently; forgiving offenses; comforting the sorrowful; and praying for the living and the dead. What an expression of foot-washing we find in every Christian home!

A family that is rooted and united in Jesus and that has experienced his love so humbly expressed in the Upper Room, will be a shining example of evangelization and mission. Such a family will wash the feet not only of those in their household, but also of those in the household of the Church – a family of families.

27. Support for the family: Office of Youth and Young Adults

Notwithstanding their essential vocation as first teachers and primary youth ministers, parents themselves often ask for help, especially as their children reach middle school and high school. The next level of support often comes from our dedicated Catholic school teachers and faith formation catechists.

As you know, "Forming youth and young adults in and for a Church that is always young" was one of the three Focus Areas of our Synod. It is for this reason that I am happy to announce the creation of a new Office of Youth and Young Adults, which will be separate from the Office of Marriage, Family and Life. This was specifically requested at the Synod Assembly and is reflected in the voting: Proposition 33 (Vibrant Youth Ministry) and Proposition 39 (Regional/Deanery Cooperation in young adult ministry) were both in the top ten in the voting results.

It has become increasingly clear through the years that it is difficult, if not impossible, for each individual parish to have robust and sustainable ministries in these areas, which can create frustration at the parish level. My hope is that this Office will help the various youth and young adult ministry groups to "walk together" in the ways of evangelization and thereby create greater regional alignment and parish cooperation in these critical ministry areas. In this way, I hope the Archdiocese can help parents in their task of washing the feet of the young people God entrusted to them.

Our encounter with the loving service of Jesus in the foot-washing leads us to the next mystery of the Upper Room: the Holy Eucharist.

B. The Mystery of the Eucharist

28. This is my body given for you

What a precious gift we have received from Jesus in the washing of the feet: "a model to follow" (Jn 13:15). What would our lives be like if he had not given us this model? What would our marriages be like? What would our parishes be like? The whole of Christian life has been marked by Jesus's act of humble service.

And yet, are we not sometimes frustrated by Jesus's command? As we try to do for others what Jesus has done for us – washing the feet of our spouses, our children, our sisters and brothers in the parish, our co-workers and friends day in and day out – we encounter our limits and at times even lose our patience. Perhaps we even feel we cannot go on and want to cry out to the Lord with St. Augustine: "Give what you command."¹¹

And that – giving what he had commanded – is precisely what Jesus did in the Upper Room on the very evening of the Passover Feast when he said to his Apostles, "This is my body, which will be *given* for

you” (Lk 22:19)¹². Indeed, when Jesus took the bread, he poured all his divine love into it, saying, “This is my body”. When he took the chalice, he poured all his compassion for sinners into it, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you” (Lk 22:20).

29. The love is in the food

There is a saying in many cultures that “the love is in the food.” This was never so true as for the bread that was broken in the Upper Room. For the bread is Jesus. As Pope Benedict XVI noted, “When Jesus speaks of his body, he is obviously not referring to the body as opposed to the soul or the spirit, but to the whole, flesh-and-blood person.”¹³ The Pope Emeritus then cited with approval the German theologian, Rudolph Pesch: “The disciples could understand that he was saying: this is I myself, the Messiah.”¹⁴

What the Apostles rightly understood became part of the Church’s deposit of faith, which has been celebrated through the ages and which we still proclaim today:

In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.*”¹⁵

Mysterium fidei! Mystery of faith! When we “take and eat” in the Holy Mass, the love of God – substantially present in Christ – passes in mystery into us. In the Eucharist, Jesus has given what he commanded. Now, what he has done for us, we can do for others because it will be his love in us. “We love because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). St. Teresa of Calcutta understood well that our “terrible hunger for love”¹⁶ could never be fully satisfied by another human being but only in the love divine, all loves excelling of the Holy Eucharist: “Nowhere on earth are we more welcomed or loved than by Jesus in the Eucharist.”¹⁷

30. From foot-washing to the breaking of the bread: From Incarnation to Paschal Mystery

When Jesus laid aside his outer garment to wash his disciples’ feet, it signified how Jesus emptied himself by “coming in human likeness” (Phil 2:7). Yet only the breaking of the bread can bring us “to the end” of Jesus’s love (Jn 13:1) in the mystery that is called Paschal. The plunging into the passion, death and Resurrection is anticipated in scripture with the very words of the “Institution Narrative”:

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:26-28).

The “broken” body and the “shed” blood reveal to the disciples in the Upper Room that Jesus will be “obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). At the Last Supper, the Apostles were transported sacramentally to the altar of the cross, that is, to Good Friday. Such a profound mystery might lead us to ask:

But how can this be? Jesus, after all, is standing there in the midst of his disciples – what is he doing? He is bringing to fulfillment what he had said in the Good Shepherd discourse: “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (Jn 10:18). His life will be taken from him on the Cross, but here he is already laying it down. He transforms his violent death into a free act of self-giving for others and to others.¹⁸

31. Do this in memory of me: The institution of the Holy Eucharist

“Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19). With these simple words, what occurred one Thursday evening 2,000 years ago was destined to become a perpetual institution. Indeed, the word “memory,” as Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa reminds us, is what “connects the Eucharist to the Jewish Passover which, as we know, was also a ‘memorial.’”¹⁹ It is of such critical importance that St. Paul twice repeats this command of Jesus in his account of the institution of the Eucharist. He also specifies the content of this remembrance of Jesus: ‘For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord’ (1 Cor 11:26). The content is Christ’s death.”²⁰

The great troubadour of the Body and Blood of Christ, St. Thomas Aquinas, showed his awareness of the content of Eucharistic remembrance in his great hymn “Adoro Te Devote”:

O thou our reminder of Christ crucified,
Living Bread, the life of us for whom he died,
Lend this life to me then: feed and feast my mind,
There be thou the sweetness man was meant to find.²¹

As we can see in these moving words, St. Thomas understood the paradox that the bread reminding us of Christ’s death is nevertheless a “*Living Bread*.” He recognized that Jesus’s act of giving his life in the Upper Room already encompassed the Resurrection.

As Pope Benedict XVI explains:

In his certainty that his prayer would be heard, the Lord gave his body and blood to the disciples during the Last Supper in anticipation of the Resurrection: both Cross and Resurrection are intrinsic to the Eucharist – without them there would be no Eucharist. Yet because Jesus’ gift is essentially rooted in the Resurrection, the celebration of the sacrament had necessarily to be connected with the memorial of the Resurrection. The first encounter with the risen Lord took place on the morning of the first day of the week – the third day after Jesus’ death – that is to say, Sunday morning. The morning of the first day thus naturally became the time for Christian worship – Sunday became the “Lord’s Day.”²²

32. The Sunday Eucharist in our parishes

Now we can see how “Do this in memory of me” brings us from the Last Supper to the Sunday morning Eucharist and, thus, from the Upper Room of Jerusalem to the Upper Room of every Catholic parish, including the 185 parishes of this local church. One of my great joys as your shepherd is traveling to the four corners of the Archdiocese Sunday after Sunday to see the many and varied ways those 185 communities, reflecting the vibrant multicultural character of our region, are fulfilling the Lord’s command, “Do this in memory of me.”

As I do so, I cannot forget how these very words implicate me as Archbishop, since they were first directed to the Apostles, of whom I am a successor. The Apostles became “stewards of the mysteries” (1 Cor 4:1) at the Last Supper. This privilege – and great responsibility – was entrusted to the bishops through apostolic succession: “For the Diocesan Bishop, the prime steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to his care, is the moderator, promoter, and guardian of the whole of liturgical life.”²³

“Prime steward of the mysteries of God” – I count this among my most sacred episcopal titles not only because it touches the “source and summit”²⁴ of all Christian mysteries, the Eucharist, but also because this is who you – the faithful of the Archdiocese – have asked me to be. In fact, Synod Proposition 9 (Education for the Mass: Educate God’s people on the beauty, form and meaning of the Mass, with special emphasis on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist) received the third highest number of

votes in the Synod Assembly, and I have committed to make this our Synod Priority for Year 2 (July 2024 – June 2025).

And how could I commit to anything less, given the launch of the National Eucharistic Revival this past June on the Feast of Corpus Christi? Many of you know that the Revival will take place from 2022 to 2025, thus coinciding with the first two years of our Synod implementation. Why a Eucharistic Revival now? The bishops themselves, under the leadership of our former Auxiliary Bishop, Andrew Cozzens, explain:

Scandal, division, disease, doubt. The Church has withstood each of these throughout our very human history. But today we confront all of them, all at once. Our response in this moment is pivotal.

In the midst of these roaring waves, Jesus is present, reminding us that he is more powerful than the storm. He desires to heal, renew, and unify the Church and the world. How will he do it? By uniting us once again around the source and summit of our faith—the Holy Eucharist.

The National Eucharistic Revival is the joyful, expectant, grassroots response of the entire Catholic Church in the U.S. to this divine invitation.²⁵

Promoting healing and unity in the local church was one of my principal motivations in calling for a Synod, so I count the concurrence with the National Eucharistic Revival as nothing less than a gift of divine providence to aid us in those hopes.

33. Do this in memory of me: the institution of Holy Orders

Dear brothers and sisters, we cannot meditate on the mystery of the Holy Eucharist without meditating on another great mystery: the holy priesthood. The truth is that the simple words – “Do this in memory of me” – had the power to institute not just one Sacrament but two! As Monsignor Vaghi reminds us, the Sacrament of Holy Orders was also born in the Upper Room:

There is an inseparable link between the Eucharist and Holy Orders – these two wonderful gifts of the Lord Jesus from the Upper Room. At the altar, the priest reminds us daily of Christ’s ultimate act of love for us on the cross... There could be no greater gift from our Lord Jesus than the privilege and vocation of the priesthood – this service for his holy people.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the priest prays the words of consecration at every Mass – in the person of Christ – “Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As such, without the priest, there can be no Eucharist – this bread of life and cup of eternal salvation. It is at once the priest’s most unique privilege and obligation – the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of our lives as Catholic Christians. The priesthood and the Eucharist are thus truly lasting legacies of the Upper Room.²⁶

It is for this reason that I call on all priests to help me respond to the appeal of the Synod Members to promote the “beauty, form and meaning” of the Mass among all God’s holy people. As you know, this also goes to the heart of your priestly vocation: “Let priests take care so to foster a knowledge of and facility in the liturgy, that by their own liturgical ministry Christian communities entrusted to their care may ever more perfectly give praise to God, the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit” (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 5).

Perhaps, therefore, it would be good to meditate together briefly on the aforementioned dimensions of the celebration of the Eucharist according to the mind of the Church and especially as expressed by Pope Francis.

34. The beauty of the Mass

How wonderful that the faithful are asking for beautiful liturgies. St. Teresa of Calcutta reminded us that there is a “terrible hunger for love” in the modern world.²⁷ We might also say that there is a terrible hunger for beauty. If for many decades and centuries truth was listed first among our “transcendental” desires, we may say that in our time beauty has come to the fore. Now, more than ever, it behooves us to “begin with the beautiful.”²⁸

It is no wonder, therefore, that the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* exhorts the bishop to be “vigilant that the dignity of [the Eucharistic] celebrations be enhanced. In promoting this dignity, the beauty of the sacred place, of music, and of art should contribute as greatly as possible.”²⁹ I urge my brother priests, in collaboration with your deacons and parishioners, to make your liturgies dignified and beautiful. And as we do so, let us remember a secret ingredient of beautiful liturgies given by Pope Francis – joyful evangelization:

Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.³⁰

I always feel particularly privileged during the Easter Season to see firsthand in our parishes how joyful evangelization has become beauty in the Liturgy, as the faces of the newly baptized and confirmed adorn the Sunday assembly like new and precious “living stones” (I Pt 2:5).

35. The form of the Mass

One of the earliest revelations of the form of the Mass is given to us by the evangelist Luke in his account of the appearance of the risen Jesus to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). Many theologians, including Pope Benedict XVI, believe that Luke is offering a liturgical catechesis, the goal of which is to help the Christian community understand that the risen Christ is encountered ever anew in the Eucharistic worship.

The evangelist highlights *two* pillars of Christian worship: the interpretation of the scriptures (v. 27) and the breaking of the bread (v. 35). These correspond, then as now, to the two pillars of Catholic liturgy: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We have already said much – and will say more – about the Liturgy of the Eucharist. I would like to draw our priests’ attention to the Liturgy of the Word, because one of the goals of Second Vatican Council was to restore its proper dignity in the Mass, where the Council spoke of two tables: the “table of the Lord’s body” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 48) and the “table of God’s word” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 51).

Regarding the latter, the Council says, “The treasures of the bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s word” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 51).

The recent publication of the synthesis of the consultation for the upcoming Global Synod on Synodality at the Vatican has revealed that the people of God across continents and cultures are hungering for “deeper homilies, centered on the Gospel” and relevant to daily life.³¹ We who are privileged to preach need to ask ourselves, “Do I preach like Jesus?” That is to say, when I have explained all that is in the law, the prophets and the Gospels, do my people ask themselves, “Were not our hearts burning [within

us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us” (Lk 24:32)? This is an increasingly important question for all bishops, priests and deacons, and I urge all of us to invest more time into our homily preparation so that a hungry people may have “richer fare” and burning hearts. Rereading chapter three of Pope Francis’ *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Proclamation of the Gospel”) would go a long way in this regard. I invite you to make this a source of meditation during these years of Eucharistic Revival.

36. The meaning of the Mass

Saints and scholars throughout the millennia have already labored to mine the depths of meaning contained in the Mass. I would simply like to draw your attention to a singular power of the Holy Eucharist as I have experienced it in my own life: the power to “give” ourselves to others in spite of our own suffering. We should not be surprised by such a grace in the Eucharist, for this very power is found in Jesus himself. In fact, it is most clearly revealed in his own celebration of that First Eucharist in the Upper Room. Notwithstanding the intrigue, betrayal and abandonment of his impending passion, Jesus was still “giving” of himself: “This is my body, which will be given for you” (Lk 22:19).

This strength is also given to us as we participate in the Holy Eucharist. I can continue to give myself up for others – sometimes in spite of terribly difficult situations – by the power of the one whose body has been “given up” for me. In this way, *I become Eucharist for others*. And I would dare say that the more frequently we participate in the Mass, the more powerfully we will see this Eucharistic life emerge.

Bishop Williams has shared with me a story about one of the faithful in our Archdiocese which witnesses to this power profoundly. Despite this woman’s desire to be a devoted Catholic wife and mother, she had experienced the bitter disappointment of abandonment in her marriage. One day she gave this sorrow to Jesus in tears, who invited her to walk with him in friendship. And walk with him, she did. Every day she went to meet her divine friend in the Holy Mass. It was the blessed bread that filled the hole in her heart. Even more, it was that blessed bread that made her own hurting heart a font of consolation for other hurting hearts. People around her marveled as one person in need after another called upon her for wisdom, strength and hope. Where did she get all of this – she who herself was brokenhearted? Bread! Not ordinary bread, of course, but the bread that is Jesus.

This woman, who never doubted Jesus’ presence in the Blessed Sacrament, nevertheless had her Eucharistic faith confirmed in a marvelous way one morning on the Feast of St. John Bosco. During daily Mass at one of our local parishes, as she approached for Holy Communion, the priest raised the host saying, “The Body of Christ.” In that very moment she saw the face of Jesus in the elevated host. Overwhelmed, she hurried to the sacristy following Mass to share with the priest what she had seen and how his hands had held the face of Christ. The priest instructed her to write down what she had experienced. She went directly home and wrote the following poem in honor of the priesthood and the daily miracle of the Eucharist:

You held the face of Christ today
A gift I will never forget
To be so touched in this special way
An awesome and humbling effect

Rejoice, he shows you once again
God is love in bread forever.
The Mass of Sacrifice shall always remain
My most precious daily endeavor.

The face I saw this morning
On the Host so pure and white

Impressed on my mind as a warning
Never to leave his sight

Praise the sight beheld today
Praised be Jesus Christ
Praise your hands blessed to pray
Praised be Jesus Christ.

My sisters and brothers, this is what we celebrate in the Holy Mass: “God is love in bread forever”! I invite more of our faithful to make the Holy Eucharist your “most precious daily endeavor,” as it was for the author of the above poem. I invite our priests, for their part, to make the Holy Eucharist generously available, knowing that “the Eucharistic Action, over which the priest presides, is the very heart of the congregation,” and that in so doing, he has the privilege of enabling the people “to offer to God the Father the Divine Victim in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and to join to it the offering of their own lives” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 5).

C. The Mystery of Pentecost

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.” (Acts 2:1-11)

37. Waiting for the promise

My dear sisters and brothers, we cannot descend from the Upper Room just yet. There is another mystery awaiting us – or rather, as Jesus said, a mystery we must await: “[W]ait for ‘the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the holy Spirit’” (Acts 1:4-5).

Pentecost! According to a very ancient tradition, the Spirit-baptism of the Church on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover, occurred in the same room where Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and broke the bread. Let us then dwell a while longer in this holiest of holy places to see what lessons the Holy Spirit can teach us about our Synod hopes.

38. The Synod and the mystery of Pentecost

You may recall that key Synod events happened on Pentecost. The 2019 Pentecost Vigil Mass and prayer service was the first public event of the Synod process, and the 2021 Pentecost Vigil Mass and prayer service included the promulgation of the Synod decree. The Synod process culminated with the Synod Assembly held over the 2022 Pentecost weekend. My dear friends, this was no coincidence. I was entrusting the entire Synod process to the fire of the Holy Spirit. Why? I have long felt that there is something too often missing today in our beloved Church. That something – if I had to find a single word – is *witness*.

In the Prayer and Listening Events, many of you also lamented the decline of the Church and your own inability to be effective witnesses to Jesus Christ today. If you were one of those people, you should know that you are in good company. In 2017, Pope Francis preached a homily expressing this same lament and asking some very poignant questions:

There are many Christians who profess that Jesus is God; there are many priests who profess that Jesus is God, many bishops.... But does everyone bear witness to Jesus? Or is being Christian... like being the fan of a team?... Or having a philosophy... Being Christian, first of all, is bearing witness to Jesus..... This is what the Apostles did: the Apostles bore witness to Jesus, and because of this, Christianity spread throughout the world.³²

Indeed, if the early Church was a growing Church, it was because it was also a witnessing Church. Conversely, if the Church today is in decline, it is largely because it lacks witnesses. In her groundbreaking *Forming Intentional Disciples*, Catholic author Sherry Weddell cited a jarring statistic from a sweeping 2005 study on religious practice in the United States entitled, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners*.³³ Weddell explains that when asked whether spreading the faith was a high priority, 75 percent of conservative Protestant congregations and 57 percent of African American congregations responded yes, whereas only six percent of Catholic parishes did so. When asked whether they sponsored evangelization activities in their parishes, that number fell to three percent.³⁴

39. The Upper Room: What God has joined, we have divided

The Church exists to evangelize, and only 3 percent of Catholic parishes are intentional about doing so! This sad statistic forces us to ask, “How did we get to this point?” Once again looking through the lens of the Upper Room, may I suggest an answer? *What God has joined, we have divided*. God joined the mysteries of the Holy Eucharist and Pentecost in the Upper Room, but parishes have often separated these mysteries in practice. Many Catholics today are accustomed to ascending to the Upper Room of the parish for the reception of the Sunday Eucharist but very few ascend to that same Upper Room for the reception of the Holy Spirit.

Should we be surprised, then, that we all too often experience a holy but non-witnessing Church? The Eucharist is the sacrament of charity, but it is not the sacrament of witness. Confirmation is the principal sacrament of witness because it “perpetuates the grace of Pentecost.”³⁵ And as Jesus reveals about Pentecost: “...you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Indeed, the power to witness to the risen life of Jesus is the true power of the Church. It is, as Pope Francis reminds us,³⁶ how Christianity spread throughout the world – how a small band of fishermen and humble women and men converted one of the greatest empires in history without raising the sword. That is true power.

Have we lost this power today? If so, it may be because we have first lost the fire. Jesus clearly tells us that we will receive power to witness to him “when the holy Spirit comes upon you” and that Spirit came in “tongues as of *fire*” (Acts 2:3). Indeed, it is the fire of the Spirit that has the potential to become a

blaze, according to Jesus's own words: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!" (Lk 12:49).

40. The Acts of the Apostles: A Church on fire

What does it look like to have the earth set on fire? Luke the Evangelist tries to paint a picture of this for us in the Acts of the Apostles. The transformative power of the fire of the Holy Spirit is seen, first of all, in St. Peter and in his preaching on the day of Pentecost:

"You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it." (Acts 2:22-24).

Peter, who had timidly denied Christ and then locked himself in the Upper Room out of fear, is now – after receiving the fire of the Holy Spirit – proclaiming Jesus without regard for the consequences, including imprisonment (cf. Acts 4 and 5). Peter understands precisely what has become of him in the Spirit: "God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses." (Acts 2:32). The fire of the Spirit has transformed Peter into a **witness**. "With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all" (Acts 4:33).

41. The Acts of the Apostles: A growing Church

And what is the result of his witness? The fire of faith spreads: "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day" (Acts 2:41). This becomes a theme for Luke as he writes the first history of the Church:

"And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

"Yet more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them" (Acts 5:14).

See the contrast between the Church of the Acts of the Apostles and the Church of today, where the number of adults who are leaving the Church in the United States is more than six times greater than the number of those entering.³⁷ Only a culture of witness can turn the tide of decline that we are seeing in many areas of the Church today. But this bold *witness* is not a power that we can give ourselves. It can only be received when the Holy Spirit comes to us.

42. St. John XXIII and the new Pentecost

Perhaps nobody understood this better than St. John XXIII. He saw the mystery of Pentecost as holding the key to the renewal of the Church in the modern world, as is revealed in the well-known prayer with which he convoked the Second Vatican Council:

Renew your wonders in our time, as though in a new Pentecost, and grant that Holy Church, united in unanimous and intense prayer around Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and guided by Peter, may spread the Kingdom of the divine Savior, a Kingdom of truth, of justice, of love, and of peace. Amen.³⁸

As people of faith, we believe that with our prayers what goes up must come down, and history has shown that the saintly pontiff's prayer for a new Pentecost has indeed come down! We cannot help but think, first, of a wondrous event that occurred in my hometown seven years after this prayer went up. What has come to be known simply as "The Duquesne Weekend" was a retreat for Duquesne University students that took place in February 1967 at The Ark and The Dove Retreat Center. Having heard of an interdenominational prayer group that had received the gift of tongues, the organizers decided to center the retreat on the Holy Spirit. They began praying the Pentecost sequence, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. One of the retreatants, Patti Gallagher Mansfield, described the Saturday night of the retreat as follows:

Saturday night a birthday party was planned for a few of our members, but there was a listlessness in the group. I wandered into the upstairs chapel... not to pray but to tell any students there to come down to the party. Yet, when I entered and knelt in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I literally trembled with a sense of awe before His majesty. I knew in an overwhelming way that He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords.... Within the next hour God sovereignly drew many of the students into the chapel. Some were laughing, others crying. Some prayed in tongues, others (like me) felt a burning sensation coursing through their hands. One of the professors walked in and exclaimed, "What is the Bishop going to say when he hears that all these kids have been baptized in the Holy Spirit!" Yes, there was a birthday party that night, God had planned it in the Upper Room Chapel.³⁹

Many of the students reported speaking in tongues that night in the chapel. One of them recalls that a professor from Duquesne who had been present at the retreat would later witness to his friends at Notre Dame and Michigan State with these compelling words, "I no longer have to believe in Pentecost; I have seen it!"⁴⁰

This story hits close to home, given that the Church in Pittsburgh, including my home parish, was very much impacted by that weekend at The Ark and The Dove Retreat Center, a place where I often went to pray as a young priest.

My recalling of this event here, however, is not mere nostalgia. The Duquesne Weekend marked the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which is estimated to have touched hundreds of millions of Catholics worldwide. For our Synod, I engaged our members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal at each Pentecost Mass during the three-year process, to help our Archdiocese experience, in our own way, that same fire of the Holy Spirit.

43. The Second Vatican Council: A Council to proclaim the Good News in the modern world

Even before the Duquesne Weekend, however, the prayer of St. John XXIII had already been answered in another marvelous event with worldwide consequences: the Second Vatican Council. Again and again, Pope Francis has urged us not to forget that the Second Vatican Council was itself a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Recently, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Council's beginning, our Holy Father exhorted all of us to "rediscover the Council's passion and renew our own passion for the Council!"⁴¹ I echo those sentiments: let us "renew our passion for the Council!"

How does the Council relate to our Synod? As the Holy Father explained, "The Council helps us imitate God's approach, which the prophet Ezekiel has described to us today: 'Seek the lost sheep and lead back to the fold the stray, bind up the injured and strengthen the weak'" (cf. Ezek 34:16).⁴²

Pope Francis is not the first pontiff to recognize that renewing our passion for the Council is nothing less than renewing our passion for evangelization. It was St. Paul VI, while commemorating the 10th anniversary of the closing of the Council, who reminded the whole Church that "the objectives of [the Council] are definitively summed up in this single one: to make the Church of the twentieth century ever

better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people of the twentieth century.”⁴³ While countless debates about the Council have occurred in the last 60 years – and continue to occur today – let us never lose hold of this basic conviction.

St. Paul VI himself courageously put his own conviction into practice by convoking a Synod in 1974 to address the question of evangelization in the modern world (III Ordinary General Assembly), which gave rise to the landmark Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, in which he clearly places evangelization at the heart of the Church:

Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. *She exists to evangelize*, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection.⁴⁴

The pontiff would go on to clarify that this work of evangelization depends upon the Holy Spirit:

Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit.... In fact, it is only after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost that the apostles depart to all the ends of the earth in order to begin the great work of the Church’s evangelization. Peter explains this event as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel: “I will pour out my spirit.”⁴⁵

What is St. Paul VI saying? There would never have been a first evangelization without a first Pentecost; neither can there be a new evangelization without a new Pentecost. Only the fire of the Spirit can overcome our fears and weaknesses. We saw this most clearly with Peter and the Apostles.

44. St. John Paul II: “Be not afraid!”

We’ve spent much of this letter reflecting on the need for evangelization. Yet the very word “evangelization” frightens many. We have to admit today that often we resemble more the pre-Pentecost community of believers, huddled behind closed doors, than Peter and the Apostles afire with the Holy Spirit.

But a great voice reaches us today through those closed doors, saying, “Be not afraid!” It is the voice of St. John Paul II, and it carries a prophetic word: “I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and to the mission *ad gentes* (to the nations).”⁴⁶ St. John Paul II foresaw a “new evangelization” in formerly Christian regions of the world that would need to be “new in its ardor, methods and expressions.”⁴⁷ But there is a key aspect of the “newness” of the new evangelization that is often overlooked: its protagonists.

45. The New Evangelization is for all Christians

St. John Paul II is clear that the “Be not afraid!” of the new evangelization is for *all* the baptized: “The commitment of the laity to the work of evangelization is changing ecclesial life... Above all, there is a new awareness that *missionary activity is a matter for all Christians*, for all dioceses and parishes, Church institutions and associations.”⁴⁸ The Holy Father was drawing on the teaching firmly established at the Second Vatican Council in the Decree on the Laity⁴⁹ and by his predecessor, St. Paul VI.⁵⁰

46. Pope Francis and the “all” of missionary discipleship

Perhaps nowhere does the “all” of missionary commitment ring out more clearly than in the writings of Pope Francis:

In virtue of their baptism, *all* the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). *All* the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of *each* of the baptized. *Every* Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, *anyone* who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. *Every* Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples."⁵¹

You may recall that this key phrase, "missionary disciple," figured prominently in one of the Focus Areas of our Synod. How good to know that being a missionary disciple is simpler than we think! This is the consoling message of our Holy Father. We need only to have experienced God's saving love and then begin sharing that love with others according to our talents and spiritual gifts. Can you imagine if every woman, man, young adult and youth accepted these words and embraced this simple calling?

47. Going beyond fear and misconceptions

This *universal call of witness* might arouse fear in our hearts until we recall that the will of God will never lead us where the grace of God cannot keep us. If it is indeed possible to not be afraid in the face of the Church's call to mission, it is only because the "all" of the Church's call is met by the "all" of God's grace: "To *each* individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit" (1 Cor 12:7). What made Vatican II so potent in its ability to prepare us to evangelize the modern world is that it put these words of our patron, St. Paul, at the forefront of the Church's consciousness through teachings like the one below from *Lumen Gentium*:

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, "allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills" (1 Cor 12:11). He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit" (1 Cor 12:7) (*Lumen Gentium* 12).

If there is fear of the word "evangelization" in many parts of the world today – and maybe even in our own hearts – it may be because we have a very narrow image of evangelization. Perhaps we have the misconception that the *universal call of witness* requires us all to knock on doors and preach on street corners. Some of us may be called and gifted to do this, but not all. St. Paul explains, "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone" (1 Cor 12:4-6).

How good to know that we do not each need to have all the gifts. How good to know that we belong to a body with many members, who can supply in works of evangelization what we are lacking. Moreover, how encouraging it is that our unique giftedness has been foreseen by God for a time such as this (Est 4:14) and is "perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church" (*Lumen Gentium* 12)!

48. Recognizing our gifts: Vicar for Charisms

Given the importance of both recognizing the gifts that each of us has received and acknowledging that they come from the Holy Spirit, the "principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission,"⁵² I have appointed one of our priests to serve as my Vicar for Charisms. I am entrusting him with the task of keeping the fire of Pentecost at the heart of all our prayer, planning, and projects to implement the Synod

evangelization in this local church. My hope is that many Synod Evangelization Team members, priests, deacons, consecrated women and men, and laity from throughout the Archdiocese will join him in this effort.

The Vicar for Charisms will be available to all those who feel a deeper call to life in the Spirit. The School of the Holy Spirit will give those who participate the confidence to pray and exercise charisms. This confidence is sorely needed in our local church. There is a powerful witness when a Catholic can lead extemporaneous prayer with someone in need, perhaps even offering prophetic words to console and guide that person on his or her way to the house of the Father.

Some of you who were present for the Pentecost Vigil Mass in the Cathedral this past June have told me that they felt like we were in the Upper Room – a glorious Eucharistic celebration, followed by a time of joyful praise with the exercise of charisms. What if such an experience were not simply a once-a-year celebration on the Solemnity of Pentecost, but rather a regular expression of the Church's life? Thus would the Upper Room of the past be brought into the present of our Archdiocese, according to the words of St. John Paul II: "Spiritually the event of *Pentecost* does not belong only to the past: the Church is always in the Upper Room that she bears in her heart. The Church perseveres in prayer, like the Apostles together with Mary, the Mother of Christ, and with those who in Jerusalem were the first seed of the Christian community and who awaited in prayer the coming of the Holy Spirit."⁵³

Indeed, by centering our Synod in the mystery of Pentecost, I have sought to lead this local church spiritually into the Upper Room. However, as you may recall from the Synod Focus Areas, the hope of the Synod is not only making missionary disciples but also making missionary parishes. In fact, these two hopes go hand-in-hand. To this end I encourage our pastors and their lay leaders to ask themselves this question: Is our parish like the Upper Room? Or have we divided what God has joined? That is, are our people ascending to the Upper Room of the parish each week only for the breaking of the bread and not for the outpouring of the Spirit? At stake is whether or not the fire of Pentecost will empower us to "go forth" from the Upper Room of our parishes.⁵⁴

I have experienced that many of our bilingual parishes are shining examples of communities that "go forth," often on behalf of our immigrant sisters and brothers from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America who too often find themselves on the peripheries of society. Should we be surprised, for example, to find that the fire of Pentecost is burning brightly in many of our Latino communities? Indeed, many Spanish speaking Catholics report having a profound faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ I believe that this is one of the main reasons for the tremendous potential for missionary discipleship that I have witnessed among them. May they inspire us all to "go forth" in the months and years ahead!

49. The Renewal in the Spirit and the Catholic parish

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Pope Francis addressed the members of the Renewal:

Fifty years of Catholic Charismatic Renewal: a current of grace of the Spirit! And why a current of grace? Because it has neither a founder, nor statutes, nor organs of governance. Clearly in this current multiple expressions have been born that are certainly human works inspired by the Spirit, with various charisms, and all in the service of the Church. But this current cannot be dammed, nor can the Holy Spirit be enclosed in a cage!... This current of grace is for all the Church, not just for some, and no one among us is the "master" and all the others servants. No. We are all servants of this current of grace.⁵⁶

Can we dream of sharing the outpouring of the Spirit with "everyone in the Church" if the outpouring of the Spirit is not an ordinary part of *parish* life? If the current of grace is for the whole Church, then it

needs to be an ordinary part of *parish* life since the parish is the ordinary experience of Church for the vast majority of Catholics.⁵⁷

I would like to share a few words of encouragement in particular to our pastors and to their collaborators on parish staffs: let the fire of the Spirit transform the ordinary pastoral work of your parishes! You do not have to do this alone. Your parish Synod Evangelization Team will certainly be with you. Moreover, through the Office of Synod Evangelization and its valued partners (e.g., the Archbishop Flynn Catechetical Institute), you will have opportunities for Schools of Discipleship, of Charisms and of Evangelization. These resources will help your ordinary pastoral ministry to be more animated by the fire of the Spirit.

50. Holy Spirit you are welcome here

In addition, we are blessed with the resources of the many local organizations and movements who in this Archdiocese carry the fire of the Spirit at the heart of their apostolates. I think, for example, of:

- the Archdiocesan Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office and the many affiliated prayer groups, especially prominent in bilingual parishes;
- NET Ministries and its international outreach to high school students;
- St. Paul's Outreach and its national apostolate to university students and young adults;
- the Totus Tuus summer program for youth;
- the Center for Evangelization and Discipleship (CEND) for young adults;
- Extreme Faith Camp and Damascus summer camp experiences;
- the many programs for discipleship and evangelization (e.g., the Catechetical Institute's School of Discipleship and its School of the Holy Spirit);
- the annual Twin Cities Steubenville Conferences sponsored by Partnership for Youth;
- the Called and Gifted™ workshops sponsored locally by the Catherine of Siena Institute;
- the many parishes who have introduced Alpha or the Parish System of Evangelization Cells (SCPE), or partnered with Evangelical Catholic or Amazing Parish;
- the *Cor Jesu* first Friday gatherings sponsored by the Saint Paul Seminary and our Vocations Office; and
- the many new movements and communities that have their origins in the renewal in the Spirit.

I know that many parishes are already collaborating with these groups. I would encourage all parishes to make friends with these friends of the Holy Spirit! If the fire of the Spirit were to become an ordinary part of the life of each parish, what would be the effect? I think Pope Francis paints a vivid picture for us:

The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”.... In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach.⁵⁸

“A center of constant missionary outreach” ... what an inspiring and ambitious vision for our Catholic parishes! Would we be lamenting the decline of our beloved Church if every Catholic parish in this Archdiocese adopted this vision? Some would say this is too bold; I would say this is precisely what our Synod has been all about!

SECTION IV. GOING FORTH

51. SYNOD PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS (JULY 2023 – JUNE 2026)

After reflection, prayer and discernment considering the Synod Assembly voting results, I am hereby establishing one Synod Priority⁵⁹ at the parish level each year. The Synod Priorities by year are:

- Year 1 (July 2023 – June 2024): Small Groups (Adopting Proposition 19)
- Year 2 (July 2024 – June 2025): The Mass (Adopting Propositions 9 and 10)
- Year 3 (July 2025 – June 2026): Parents as Primary Educators (Adopting Proposition 28)

Each Synod Priority will be advanced through three goals corresponding to the mysteries of Foot-washing, Eucharist, and Pentecost, so that our parishes become true icons of the Upper Room and share in its fruitfulness.

A. YEAR 1: SMALL GROUPS (JULY 2023 – JUNE 2024)

Proposition 19

Create or grow a small group ministry at every parish that fosters personal relationships, builds community and provides formation to help parishioners grow as joyful missionary disciples of Christ.

Goals corresponding to the Upper Room Mysteries:

- Foot-washing: establish one or more small groups that reach the marginalized and the poor
- Eucharist: use newly formed small groups in spring 2024 as a vehicle for teaching about the “beauty, form and meaning of the Mass” (Proposition 9)
- Pentecost:
 - Praying in the Spirit – create small groups that can offer a prayer ministry for those in need
 - ‘Going forth’ in the Spirit – create small groups that are in the service of evangelization (see Proposition 15)

B. YEAR 2: THE MASS (JULY 2024 – JUNE 2025)

Proposition 9 Education for the Mass:

Educate God’s people on the beauty, form and meaning of the Mass, with special emphasis on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Proposition 10 Reverent Liturgies with Active Participation:

Celebrate prayerful liturgies that inspire the faithful to offer their very selves in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass.

Goals corresponding to the Upper Room Mysteries:

- Foot-washing: work to show radical hospitality before and after the Sunday Mass especially to the newcomer, the disconnected and the stranger
- Eucharist: formulate a plan for educating about the Mass and for celebrating beautiful liturgies with active participation

- Pentecost: help the faithful to live Sunday not only as the day of the Eucharist but also as the day of fire⁶⁰
- Praying in the Spirit – introduce some expression of Pentecost on Sunday (e.g., small group prayer ministry before or after Mass, praise and worship)
- ‘Going forth’ in the Spirit – plan an “easy entry” event, perhaps even off church property, with the hope of building a bridge to the Sacraments for those presently outside of parish life (see Proposition 3).

C. YEAR 3: PARENTS AS PRIMARY EDUCATORS (JULY 2025 – JUNE 2026)

Proposition 28

Form and inspire parents to understand and fulfill their responsibility as the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith.

Goals corresponding to the Upper Room Mysteries:

- Foot-washing: equip parents with the resources to teach the faith in the home
- Eucharist: help families to prepare together for the Sunday Eucharist and to reclaim Sunday as a day of worship, fruitful leisure, and solidarity with others (see Proposition 23)
- Pentecost:
 - Praying in the Spirit – teach parents how to make their home a “school of prayer,” with special attention to the gifts of the Holy Spirit in each child (see Proposition 31)
 - ‘Going forth’ in the Spirit – encourage and assist parents to find ways of going forth to share the faith that involve their children

52. ARCHDIOCESAN ACTIONS TO SUPPORT SYNOD IMPLEMENTATION

In order to bring to life this bold vision, the Archdiocese has already undertaken or will undertake the following actions to support parishes in their implementation of the above Synod Priorities:

- Direct Pastors to appoint a parish Synod Evangelization Team (see n.12).
- Establish an Office of Synod Evangelization (see n.14).
- Appoint Vicars of Evangelization (see n.15).
- Establish an Office for Youth and Young Adults (see n.27), including a new partnership with NET Ministries for monthly large-scale youth events.
- Appoint a Vicar for Charisms (see n.48).
- Provide resources to parishes to help them launch or enhance their small group ministries, including a Small Group Leader Formation series.
- Create programs and resources under the auspices of the Vicar for Charisms to support parish prayer ministries.
- Reconstitute the Archdiocesan Worship Commission.
- Establish a Blue Ribbon Commission to present recommendations on the formation of parents as primary educators.
- Provide regular training on consultation at the parish level for effective functioning of parish pastoral and finance councils and engagement with parish trustees.
- Establish an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council to facilitate ongoing synodality.

53. ANNUAL SYNOD IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

I will annually publish a Synod Implementation Plan to guide the implementation of the Synod Priority established for each year. The publication schedule is as follows:

- Year 1 (July 2023 – June 2024): Published concurrently with this Pastoral Letter
- Year 2 (July 2024 – June 2025): To be published January 2024
- Year 3 (July 2025 – June 2026): To be published January 2025

Each Implementation Plan will include directives to the Archdiocesan Catholic Center (ACC) staff, parishes, pastors, and others as appropriate. In addition, there will be specific invitations to various groups in the Body of Christ concerning how each can uniquely contribute to the success of the Synod Priorities.

54. SYNOD PRIORITIES BEYOND THE FIRST THREE YEARS

Rooted in prayer, our synodal journey has allowed for the Holy Spirit to guide each step of a process that continues to unfold. With that confidence, and considering the need to remain attuned to what may be the evolving needs of our local church, I intend to call for a one-day synodal gathering on Saturday, June 7, 2025, the Vigil of Pentecost, to address the question of priorities for years 4 and 5. It would be my hope that the gathering will be an opportunity to prayerfully consider and discuss the other important Synod Propositions presented at the 2022 Synod Assembly that were not chosen as priorities for years 1 through 3.

The specific topics to be considered at the 2025 gathering will be chosen from among the Propositions that had received the highest number of votes at the 2022 Synod Assembly.⁶¹ Additional Propositions could be put forward for consideration after consultation with the Presbyteral Council and Archdiocesan Pastoral Council. Invited participants will include the Synod Assembly 2022 delegates, with substitutes drawn from among the various parish Synod Evangelization Teams.

55. OTHER ONGOING ARCHDIOCESAN PRIORITIES

You may recall, moreover, that there were a few critical Archdiocesan priorities that had already been announced prior to the Synod deliberations and that required special attention outside of the Synod process. While embracing our new Synod Priorities, the Archdiocese will also continue to allocate time, energy, and resources to the following:

1. The work of the Office of Ministerial Standards and Safe Environment. The Archdiocese acknowledges a continuing need to maintain the highest of standards as we work for the protection of children entrusted to our care and remains committed to engaging in outreach, especially through restorative justice efforts, to those who have in any way been harmed by the Church.
2. The work of the Office for the Mission of Catholic Education in its implementation of the 2019 Roadmap for Excellence in Catholic Education. Given the effectiveness of the measures already undertaken by the Office in the areas of Catholic identity, talent recruitment and management, and attention to the families served by the St. Katherine Drexel schools, the Archdiocese remains committed to the faithful implementation of the *Roadmap*.

3. The work of the Office of the Chief Operating Officer to improve Archdiocesan Catholic Center effectiveness. The Archdiocese remains committed to the initiatives that are being undertaken to better support parishes and schools.
4. Inauguration of the Office for the Renewal of Structures. I renew my 2020 pledge to our priests to examine after the Synod how we might better align our limited resources (material, financial, human and property) to serve the faithful through viable and vibrant parishes. As a first step in that process, the Archdiocese has budgeted for this Office which will be charged with both supporting individual parishes in the near-term and laying the groundwork for a comprehensive examination of our needs in the future.

56. PLANS FOR A FUTURE OF HOPE

The experience of being your shepherd these past years has deepened my confidence that Christ Our King has wonderful plans in mind for us in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, plans to give us “a future of hope” (Jer 29:11).

I trust that the Holy Spirit has spoken through you, the faithful of this local church, throughout the Synod process, and that the vision outlined in this pastoral letter is an important first piece of the Spirit’s plan for us at this juncture in our history to fulfill the Great Commission that is emblazoned on the front of our Cathedral: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). I am excited to imagine the abundant fruitfulness that will result when our parishes intentionally integrate all three mysteries of the Upper Room.

For those of you who had been hoping that other priorities would have been discerned and chosen for these first three years, please be assured of a special remembrance in my prayers. I will be asking the Master of the Harvest to bless you with both patience and perseverance rather than discouragement and desolation. As reflected at the Synod Assembly, the needs of our Church are vast. This pastoral letter calls us to take a few important first steps together toward addressing some of those needs. My hope is that our efforts together in the Upper Room will in time give us the common experience and tools that will be necessary for addressing the remaining needs, while remaining docile to the Holy Spirit.

Sisters and brothers, the health of this local church depends upon your willingness to share in humility the gifts with which you have been so richly blessed. Please join me in asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to each one of us how we are uniquely equipped to serve the renewal of our Archdiocese in a time such as this. If you are being asked to embrace new ministries or new challenges, do not be afraid. The Lord is never outdone in generosity.

Only God knows the great surprises he has in store for us as we continue to walk together, pray together, listen together, discern together, and now respond together to the commission that Jesus first gave to his Apostles: “You will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8)! Through the intercession of Our Lady of the Cenacle, and full of the hope that resides in her Immaculate Heart, let us call upon the Holy Spirit to lead us forth:

Archdiocesan Evangelization Prayer

Holy Spirit,

renew your wonders in our time, as though in a new Pentecost,

and grant that this Archdiocese,

united in prayer around Mary, the Mother of Jesus,
and guided by St. Peter,
may spread the Kingdom of the divine Savior,
a Kingdom of truth, of justice, of love, and of peace.⁶²

Amen.

Saint Paul, our great missionary patron, pray for us!

From the Cathedral of Saint Paul on the Solemnity of Christ the King, 20 November 2022

The Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda

Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

Endnotes

¹ Biblical quotes taken from the *New American Bible*; <https://www.usccb.org>.

² Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium*. 2013, 20.

³ Vaghi, Monsignor Peter J. *Meeting God in the Upper Room: Three Moments to Change Your Life*. Servant, 2017; xix

⁴ *Idem*, 107.

⁵ *Idem*, xix.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [hereinafter cited as "CCC"] 460

⁷ Cf. Pieper, Josef. *Faith, Hope, Love*. Ignatius, 1997; 187-206.

⁸ St. Teresa of Calcutta. Class Day Address to the Harvard University Class of 1982. Reprinted in *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*. Zondervan, 2007; 316.

⁹ Catholic Online. <https://www.catholic.org/clife/teresa/quotes.php>; accessed November 1, 2022.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ St. Augustine, *Confessions* X, 29.

¹² All emphasis appearing in Biblical text within this document, has been added.

¹³ Benedict XVI. *Jesus of Nazareth II*. Doubleday, 2007; 130.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

- ¹⁵ CCC 1374, quoting the Council of Trent: DS 1651.
- ¹⁶ St. Teresa of Calcutta. Class Day Address to the Harvard University Class of 1982. Reprinted in *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*. Zondervan, 2007; 316.
- ¹⁷ Knights of the Holy Eucharist. <https://www.knightsoftheholyeucharist.com/adoration-prayer-download/>; accessed November 1, 2022.
- ¹⁸ Benedict XVI. *Jesus of Nazareth II*. Doubleday, 2007; 130.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Exod 12:14.
- ²⁰ Cantalamessa, Cardinal Raniero. *The Eucharist Our Sanctification*. Liturgical Press, 1993; 55.
- ²¹ St. Thomas Aquinas. "Adoro Te Devote." Tr. Gerard Manley Hopkins.
- ²² Benedict XVI. *Jesus of Nazareth II*. Doubleday, 2007; 142.
- ²³ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [hereinafter cited as "GIRM"] 22.
- ²⁴ CCC 1324.
- ²⁵ National Eucharistic Revival. <https://www.eucharisticrevival.org>; accessed November 1, 2022.
- ²⁶ Vaghi, Monsignor Peter J. *Meeting God in the Upper Room: Three Moments to Change Your Life*. Servant, 2017; 14.
- ²⁷ St. Teresa of Calcutta. Class Day Address to the Harvard University Class of 1982. Reprinted in *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*. Zondervan, 2007; 316.
- ²⁸ Barron, Bishop Robert. "Pope Francis and the New Evangelization." May 8, 2014.
- ²⁹ GIRM 22.
- ³⁰ Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium*. 2013, 24.
- ³¹ General Secretariat of the Synod. *Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) of the 2021-2024 Synod: For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*. 2022; 93.
- ³² Francis. "Homily at Santa Maria a Setteville." January 15, 2017.
- ³³ Nancy Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners*. University of California Press, 2005.
- ³⁴ Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2012.
- ³⁵ CCC 1288.
- ³⁶ Francis. "Homily at Santa Maria a Setteville." January 15, 2017
- ³⁷ Pew Research Center. "America's Changing Religious Landscape." May 12, 2015.

³⁸ John XXIII. Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis*. December 25, 1961. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 54. January 31, 1962; 5–13, at 13.

³⁹ Gallagher Mansfield, Patti. *How the Charismatic Renewal began to Grow Rapidly in the Catholic Church: The Duquesne Weekend*. Reprinted with permission at <http://www.arlingtonrenewal.org/duquesne-weekend.html>; accessed November 2, 2022.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ Francis. “Homily on the 60th Anniversary of the Beginning of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.” October 11, 2022.

⁴² *Ibid*.

⁴³ St. Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. 1975, 2.

⁴⁴ *Idem*, 14; emphasis added.

⁴⁵ *Idem*, 75.

⁴⁶ John Paul II. *Redemptoris Missio*. 1990, 3; translation added.

⁴⁷ John Paul II. “The Task of the Latin American Bishop,” *Origins* 12 (March 24, 1983): 659-62.

⁴⁸ John Paul II. *Redemptoris Missio*. 1990, 2.

⁴⁹ Cf. Decree on the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3 (“On *all* Christians therefore is laid the preeminent responsibility of working to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted by all men throughout the world.”); emphasis added.

⁵⁰ Cf. St. Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. 1975, 13 (“The command to the Twelve to go out and proclaim the Good News is also valid for *all* Christians, though in a different way.... Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it.”) and 21 (“*All* Christians are called to this witness, and in this way they can be real evangelizers. We are thinking especially of the responsibility incumbent on immigrants in the country that receives them.”; emphasis added).

⁵¹ Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium*. 2013; 120; emphasis added.

⁵² John Paul II. *Redemptoris Missio*. 1990, 21.

⁵³ John Paul II. *Dominum et Vivificantem*. 1996, 66; emphasis added.

⁵⁴ As Pope Francis explains, our “going forth” as a Church today connects us to the “Go, therefore” of the Great Commission (Mt 28:19) and thus to our fundamental vocation as a Church: “In our day Jesus’ command to ‘go and make disciples’ echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth.’ Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel.” *Evangelii Gaudium*. 2013, 20.

⁵⁵ Pew Research Center. “Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion.” April 25, 2007.

⁵⁶ Francis. “Homily on the Vigil of Pentecost to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.” June 3, 2017.

⁵⁷ Pope Benedict XVI spoke about the importance of calling upon the Holy Spirit in “ordinary pastoral life,” including the everyday ministry of the parish: “[W]e must ask the Holy Spirit to arouse in the Church a new missionary dynamism, whose protagonists are, in particular, pastoral workers and the lay faithful. The new evangelization applies to the whole of the Church’s life. It applies, in the first instance, to the ordinary pastoral ministry that must be more animated by the fire of the Spirit, so as to inflame the hearts of the faithful who regularly take part in community worship and gather on the Lord’s day to be nourished by his word and by the bread of eternal life.” “Homily at Holy Mass for the Closing of the Synod of Bishops.” October 28, 2012.

⁵⁸ Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium*. 2013, 28.

⁵⁹ The three Synod Priorities were chosen to represent one priority from each of the three Focus Areas.

⁶⁰ John Paul II. *Dies Domini*. 1998, 28.

⁶¹ See the Appendix for the [Synod Assembly Propositions](#) and [voting results](#).

⁶² Adapted from the Prayer of St. John XXIII at the calling of the Second Vatican Council.

