

New evangelization initiative to be launched in the Diocese of Madison

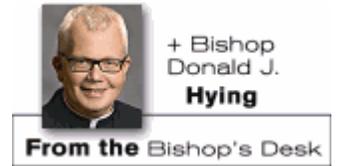


Bishop Hying's Column

Written by Bishop Donald J. Hying

Thursday, May. 21, 2020 -- 12:00 AM

One of the Missal prayers in the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary expresses a beautiful aspiration: "In our mortal flesh may we show forth the life of Jesus." This simple hope expresses succinctly the nature and purpose of evangelization.



Through the urgency of the Great Commission and the power of Baptism, each Christian is sent forth to proclaim the saving Gospel of Christ, so that every person, created by God, comes to salvation by knowing, loving, and serving Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Three circles of influence

The task of evangelizing has three concentric circles of influence: Catholics already engaged in the life and mission of the Church, Catholics who are not, and the wider community.

We ourselves must allow the Lord to stir the Holy Spirit into flame within us and to deepen our sacrificial love, so that we can help lead and equip our people to reach the disengaged, the lost, and the seeking. We cannot give what we do not possess ourselves.

Witness of a holy life

The witness of a holy life totally consecrated to Christ is the primary evangelizing tool. The building blocks of sanctity include regular and fervent participation in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, Scripture study, daily prayer, joyful asceticism, and generous loving service of our neighbor.

As we more profoundly discover the depths of God's loving mercy, the truth of the Gospel and the urgency of the evangelizing task, we are compelled to share with everyone the fullness of life in Christ which we have come to know as the true meaning and purpose of our existence.

Launching evangelization initiative in our diocese

In conjunction with the 75th anniversary of our diocese next year, we are launching an evangelizing initiative to deepen and animate our commitment to proclaim the refreshing and saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone.

This plan has four essential phases, all of which have a starting point but no actual end point which speaks to the ongoing nature of evangelization as the mission of the Church.

First Phase

The First Phase, beginning this June, is the spiritual formation of our diocesan and parish leadership. Each pastor is forming a leadership team in his parish, and through an ongoing process of prayer, study, and conversation, these core groups will continue to grow in faith, knowledge, and zeal on their path of discipleship.

Second Phase

The Second Phase, which begins this Advent, is essentially the same process, but widened to include all active parishioners. This ongoing formation will focus on keeping Sundays holy with weekly celebration of the Eucharist as central, monthly sacramental Confession, daily prayer, and some form of ascetical action. These specific goals concretize our efforts in spiritual practices which will form our people in their discipleship and the mission of evangelizing others.

Third Phase

The Third Phase, beginning on Pentecost next year, will ask each pastor and parish team to formulate an evangelization plan for their community, focusing on enhancing parochial strengths, bolstering current evangelizing and catechizing efforts, and adding practices that will help this missionary effort.

Fourth Phase

The Fourth Phase, beginning in Advent of 2021, will be the implementation of the plans throughout the diocese. As parts of the plans are completed, other activities and projects can be added to create an ongoing momentum of sharing the Good News and fulfilling the Great Commission.

Sharing Christ with everyone

Our evangelizing initiative is not another program or a three-year cycle of activity or just another thing to do. God is inviting us in this moment, rich in opportunity and challenge, to focus our energies, talents, and resources on the mission of the Church with renewed vigor.

To proclaim the Gospel to every creature, to show forth the life of Jesus in our mortal flesh, to manifest the Catholic Faith as intelligible, credible, liberating, and saving.

Having received this new and glorious life in the risen Christ, we just have to share Him with everybody! I invite you to pray for the spiritual fruitfulness of this effort, especially as we give thanks to God and our forebears for the rich patrimony of Church life we enjoy here in the Diocese of Madison.

Pastoral Letter

To launch this effort, I am offering a relatively brief Pastoral Letter as an inaugural reflection on the gift and responsibility of the evangelizing mission we have collectively and individually received directly from Jesus Christ Himself.

Beginning with next week's edition of the *Catholic Herald*, we will serialize the letter in place of my column. I encourage you to read, pray over, and reflect upon it, as a preparatory way to open our minds and hearts to the transforming fire of the Holy Spirit, whose Divine Power birthed the Church and sent the Apostles on their bold evangelical path of proclaiming Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, as the Savior of the world and the meaning of human history and destiny.

Many, many thanks and prayers to our priests, deacons, Religious, lay leaders, and faithful who already heroically live out the radical call of Christ; what we seek to do here is to simply deepen and widen the fruitful efforts of so many which have already brought us so spiritually far.
