



**ANNOUNCE
THE GOSPEL**
Equipping the Household of Faith



'Where we have been and WHERE WE ARE GOING'

A year ago, Bishop Boyea promulgated his pastoral letter, *Go and Announce the Gospel of the Lord*. In it, he addressed the decline in Mass attendance, and called us to respond with new fervor to the New Evangelization. Now, he has written a follow-up: *Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going*. *FAITH* asked Bishop Boyea to tell us more about his hopes for the Diocese of Lansing, and for the Household of Faith.

Your recent letter is titled *Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going*. Can you tell us where we have been and where we are going?

For the past year, we have been praying to the Holy Spirit, asking for guidance. My deep hope is that everyone has used this time to develop a deeper relationship with Jesus, and that we are now going to be very open and attentive to what the Spirit is telling us. I want to tell you that I don't know what that is – it may not be clear and it may not be right away. That is why we need to continue our prayerful listening – so that we can discern the direction God wants us to take.

Can you refresh our memories on the three sections of your pastoral letter?

First is the **Household of Faith** – our brothers and sisters who are active members of our parishes, whose faces we see at Mass on Sundays. We need

to build up our community of believers, and we need to equip others to deepen their own relationship with Christ so they can reach out to those who have left, and those who have never heard the Good News. As disciples, we must call others to Christ and welcome them.

The second part of the pastoral focuses on the **Lost Sheep** – those members of our family who have wandered from the faith. We must be witnesses for Christ to them – through our prayer, example and encouragement.

Then there is the **Court of the Gentiles**, those who have not heard the message of Jesus, or who do not believe. We must witness to them, and to all of our society. We are not to be separate from our culture; we are all called to conversion. And through our own conversion and deepening relationship with Christ, we help society to be its best.

You have outlined several actions that we should take as the Household of Faith – what is involved in each of them?

- **Equipping the saints** really means that we are continuing to help the family of faith to pray, because prayer is a doorway to a deeper relationship with Christ. We need to understand that we are members of a band of disciples; we are part of a community. Remember that Jesus never sent people out alone – they always had a companion on the missionary journey, and a community who were praying for them. This also means that we need to have the zeal of the Holy Spirit to go forth and be missionaries.
- **Pray.** We have just had a whole year of prayer! But that needs to be a cornerstone of our lives – it is through prayer that we come to a relationship with the One who made us, and who calls us to himself in love. Prayer opens us to be changed by God so that we abandon ourselves to his will and learn to seek the treasure of heaven. We need to continue our prayer, listening carefully to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- **Parish involvement** is critical because I believe wholeheartedly that the New Evangelization is the work of the laity. And our parish councils have a key role to play in this – they are our parishes' leaders. What greater role could they have than engaging with Christ and spreading the Gospel in a missionary way? Our parish councils should demonstrate what it means to be a band of disciples, and I hope they will see my pastoral letter as a guideline for their focus and purpose. All of our parish leaders, and really, all of us, are called to evangelize by virtue of our baptisms.
- **Study** is required for anything you want to know. In order to have a relationship with Christ and to love him, we must know him – we must know what he has done. To do that, we should study Scripture and the *Catechism*. We need to really know Christ and his Church.



“The diocesan assembly this fall is for the leadership groups of every parish, our Household of Faith ... **We want to train people to go from maintenance to missionaries!**”

- **Service and evangelization** are inherent in our Christian life. The easiest and best way for us to evangelize – to be missionaries – is to help somebody. It really is true that those who give of themselves gain themselves. It is the paradox of Christian love – to give up one's life to gain eternity.

Who are you hoping will attend the assembly for Church workers that is being held in the fall? What are you hoping will be the outcome?

The diocesan assembly this fall is for the leadership groups of every parish, our Household of Faith. That means priests, deacons, consecrated religious leaders, finance councils, parish councils, directors of religious education (DREs), pastoral work-

ers – everyone who is involved in parish leadership. These are the people who are on fire for the Church, and we want to help expand that. We want to train people to go from maintenance to missionaries!

In 2016, we'll reach out to those who are members of our faith communities who are no longer with us and invite them back to the celebration of the Mass and the sacraments that are the life of our Church. We are going to focus on how we are calling them back, and how we welcome them when they return.

Then, in 2018, we shall reach out to the Court of the Gentiles, those who have never heard the Gospel, or who are unbelievers.

Can you give us a look ahead to the other sections of the pastoral? What are the plans to address them?

Honestly, I am not sure where all this is going, but I do know that the Holy Spirit wants us to do what we are doing this day and tomorrow. We need to rely on him to guide us – our task is to be open to following where he leads. †



T. Gennara

The four aspects OF DISCIPLESHIP

A parishioner at St. Mary's in Westphalia, Craig Pohl serves as the director of New Evangelization for the Diocese of Lansing. Over the next few months, he is leading the charge to introduce four aspects of discipleship into Catholics' everyday lives to help them grow in holiness for the work of the New Evangelization.

What makes the four aspects of discipleship – prayer, study, community and service/evangelization – so critical to our role as Catholics? Beginning with prayer, every intentional disciple has a relationship with Christ, not just on Sundays but every day. Really effective evangelists and followers of Christ have a prayer life every day. They have a time they set aside for the Lord to just pour their hearts out to him. That's the first and most important component.

The research I've done shows that every organization in the Church that focuses on helping people grow in their walk with the Lord has a lifelong study of the faith as a central component. Disciples learn their faith constantly, through books, CDs, DVDs, movies, lectures.

There is an important connection between study and prayer – the more you get to

know your faith, the more you fall in love with it. The more you fall in love with it, the more you want to know about it.

Every disciple is then called to a community, to build relationships with fellow believers and to support one another in the ways of holiness and the mission of Christ.

Christ says loving our neighbor is one of the two greatest commandments, but, practically speaking, we need one another. We need to support each other and really grow together.

And finally, with service and evangelization, one of the ideas that has really been proven throughout history is that when we put ourselves out there to serve others, God supplies the grace we may not have had before to meet the need in the moment.

It's through service and evangelization that many people experience the most growth in their spiritual lives; it is growth we simply cannot experience in any other way. God has given each of us our own "mission field," and each day we can choose to respond to his promptings, while being confident that he will supply us with all we need in the moment.

► **DIRECTOR OF NEW EVANGELIZATION:**
Craig Pohl

What is the goal of bringing these four aspects of discipleship into our Catholic communities? As the director of New Evangelization for the diocese, I am acutely aware of the fact that true and lasting evangelization only can be done effectively through committed disciples. The Holy Spirit is the primary agent of evangelization. Therefore, the more open our lives are to the work of the Holy Spirit, the more fruitful our evangelization will be. True evangelization depends on intentional disciples.

How will you implement this discipleship across the diocese? There are many steps, but right now we're creating a little booklet, called the Lifetime Discipleship Plan. It has recommendations for people on how they might plot a course for their spiritual lives. As we know, having a plan is important whenever we try to get from one point to the next. Although many of us don't actually take the time to sit down and map our spiritual course, we do this type of planning with almost everything else in our lives. It's vital to the success of our evangelization efforts that each of us first maps a plan for growing in holiness. †

DISCIPLESHIP BOOKLET

► **This fall, in an effort to foster each individual's growth in the four aspects of discipleship,** local parishes will make available journals with daily reminders, tips and the space to log entries. Like the daily Advent and Lenten books, the journals will help Catholics in our diocese navigate their efforts toward enhancing prayer life, study, community involvement and evangelization.

There will be challenges along the way as we continue to grow closer to Christ, and the Lifetime Discipleship Plan aims to keep us on task, providing the tools necessary to become the very best of who we are in fulfilling God's intentions in our life.



Bishop Boyea calls for A RESPONSE TO DECLINES IN PARISHES

The Diocese of Lansing is not alone in facing declines in Mass attendance and the reception of sacraments. More than numbers on a chart, these statistics represent people who are no longer active in the life of the Church.

In 2003, more than 90,000 people attended Mass in the parishes in the 10-county Diocese of Lansing. In 2013, fewer than 70,000 attended Mass, a decline of more than 20,000 over the past decade. Over this period, only three of the diocese's 81 parishes had an increase in Mass attendance – an increase of only 119 individuals. The rest of the diocese's 78 parishes reported a combined total of 21,374 fewer people attending Mass. Additionally since 2003, parishes in the diocese

conducted 36 percent fewer weddings, received 55 percent fewer people into the Church through RCIA, and baptized 39 percent fewer infants.



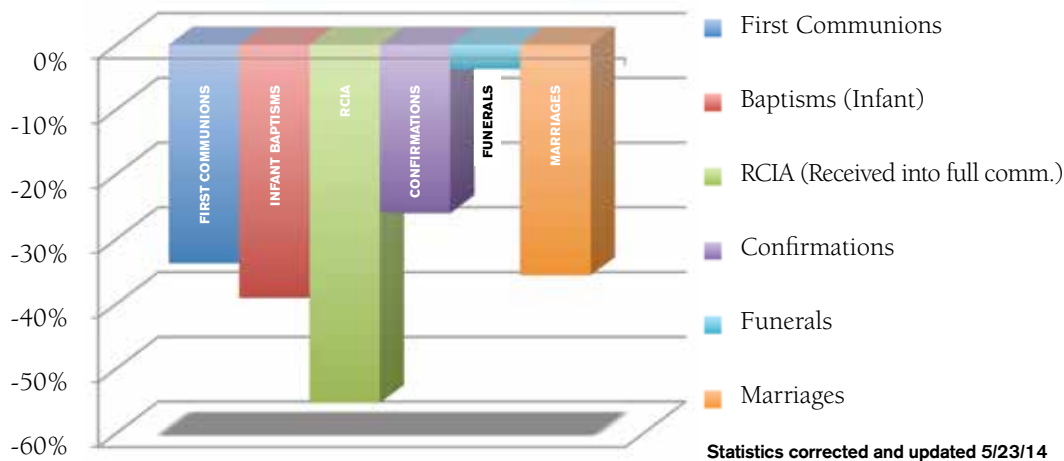
In response, Bishop Boyea wrote a pastoral letter, calling us to a Year of Prayer, and is gathering Church leaders for a conference in November titled Announce the Gospel. The goal of the conference is for

parish leaders to be renewed so they can better help parishioners become disciples, who then evangelize. †

**IN THE PAST DECADE:
only 3 parishes grew
out of 81**

Diocese of Lansing 2003 to 2013

- First communions**
Decreased by **34%**
- Infant Baptisms**
Decreased by **39%**
- RCIA**
Decreased by **55%**
- Confirmations**
Decreased by **26%**
- Funerals**
Decreased by **4%**
- Marriages**
Decreased by **36%**



Statistics for the Diocese of Lansing from 2003-2013

	Population change %	Mass Attendance change %
Shiawassee	-5%	-32%
Clinton	14%	-21%
Ingham	0%	-27%
Eaton	2%	-10%
Washtenaw	5%	-20%
Livingston	7%	-19%
Hillsdale	-2%	-5%
Lenawee	-2%	-35%
Jackson	-1%	-29%
Genesee	-6%	-26%
Total Diocese of Lansing	0%	-23%

MASS ATTENDANCE from 2003 to 2013

