



This weekend we take up our collection for the Co-op Mission Appeal for the Comboni Missionaries. Please be generous in your response to his message.

You will not doubt have heard discussion about a change in our Mass time. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find priests to cover a Mass every week. I have asked the Pastoral Council to consider this matter and see if we can come up with a solution. I will be speaking with the Sacred Heart Pastoral Council as well. The Pastoral Council met this week and we could not come to any real consensus on a path forward. We will continue to think and consider our options. So, at this time we will continue with the present schedule.

Here is the next section of Bishop Harrington's Pastoral Letter, *Proclaim, Jesus!*

### **PREACH THE GOSPEL – IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON**

Evangelization -- spreading the Gospel -- the teachings of Jesus, is the essential mission of the church; it must be present in all of our parishes. "Alive in the Spirit" included an evangelization initiative and benchmarks focused on welcoming others, forming small faith groups and sharing the gift of the church's social mission.

We spread the Gospel in many ways. As we live the Gospel, we demonstrate to others our faith in Jesus and in His teaching. As church communities, we form and organize people to bring the Gospel to neighbors who have never heard it or who need our help to live it. Jesus did exactly that when He sent His disciples, the people who believed in Him, into towns and villages to tell even more people about Him. (Luke 12: 1-6)

Since the publication of "Alive in the Spirit," the Lord has made us aware of two pressing opportunities to evangelize. In "Proclaim Jesus!" I suggest a new evangelization initiative and two sets of benchmarks focused on two special groups of people, our teens and our Hispanic brothers and sisters. I believe that our diocesan church and every parish are called to be more effective in bringing the good news to our neighbors who have been baptized and who share our faith.

#### ***Training our children in the faith***

I draw my inspiration here from the parable of the sower and the seed. (Matthew 13: 1-9; 18-22) The seed that fell on good ground yielded great results. The plants were tended carefully and that investment paid great benefits. Some seed, however, fell among the thorns. It sprouted and grew, but the thorns choked it, and the plants died. These thorny areas describe the environment where many of our teenagers have been planted. Like you and me, they received the Spirit in the waters of Baptism and in Confirmation but the ways of the world grew strong and choked off their life in the Spirit. Like plants that seek the sun, they continue to search for Jesus but the negative

ways of the world often keep them from understanding the great love that Jesus has for them. They struggle to focus their energies on the faith into which they were baptized. They need the help of disciples, believers in Jesus, to clear away the thorns and allow the light of Jesus to shine more intensely into their lives. Only then they can grow strong in their faith and bear fruit thirty, sixty and a hundred fold.

I hear so many people tell me, "Bishop, I am worried about our children and grandchildren; they don't practice the faith like the people of my generation. Can't we reach out and evangelize our own?" I tell them that I am worried, too, but I have hope. First, I believe that our young people today have just as much faith in God as we did when we were their age. But, because society has surrounded their lives with so many thorn bushes, many are not engaged disciples who are active in their church. We don't always see their faith, but I know it is there -- I experience it when I administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. Every year, I have numerous opportunities to be with young people in settings where they give witness to their faith and demonstrate their capacity for leadership in the church. I meet them on Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) weekends. I listen to them tell me about their mission trips. At the National Catholic Youth Conference, I was overwhelmed at the faith of our teens and moved by their leadership. I know that, across our diocese, our teens are sharing in the mission of the church in so many ways that they are difficult to count. Second, I know that if we reach out to inactive teens, they will respond in their own way and become disciples in their own right. Discipleship is the purpose of our youth ministry programs.

The bishops of the United States wrote an excellent letter in 1997 about ministry to young people, "Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry." From that letter, I draw these benchmarks that I commend to the parishes of the diocese. The secret to re-kindling the Spirit is engagement. People of all ages are most receptive to the call of Jesus when they are involved regularly with the church. When they see and experience disciples who are concerned about them, and who want to help them grow in the faith, they will respond. It is no secret among parents and grandparents that we cannot force our young people to accept their gift of faith. Rather, we must invite them, engage them and lead them to consider the great love that God has for them. If they are invited, engaged and led, they will respond.

- Parishes will develop youth ministry programs built on the eight components described in "Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry."
- Parishes will engage teens in the process of developing ministry programs enabling them to exercise their gifts of leadership.
- Parishes will enable youth to take their place in the community of believers serving and leading in all parish ministries, including liturgy, social justice, stewardship, faith formation and pastoral care.

*Father John Sauer*