



# Fulfilling the Vision

## Diocesan Consultation on Renewing Parishes

JANUARY 22, 2017

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

### THIRD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

- **Is 8:23-9:3**

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing.*

- **Psalm 27**

*The Lord is my light and my salvation.*

- **1 Cor 1:10-13, 17**

*I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.*

- **Mt 4: 12-23**

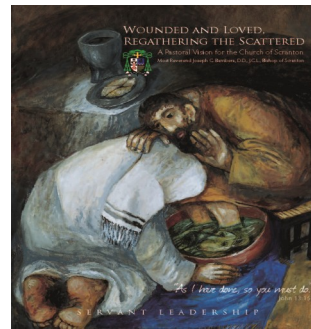
*Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing the people.*

## Giving Life to Parish Pastoral Plans

As the Diocese arrives at this juncture of five years into living the message of *Wounded and Loved: Regathering the Scattered*, it becomes evident that the time is here to once again look ahead – engaging in further consultation and dialogue by which we identify and commit to several key priorities, drawn from the existing pastoral vision for thriving parishes, in order to give even greater life to the pastoral plans being articulated and to infuse parish project teams with the resources and expertise needed to pursue your goals in creative ways well adapted to the changing times.

With this in mind, a review of the vision and goal statements contained in all of the parish pastoral plans currently on file with the Office for Parish Life led to the development of a set of “trending headlines” – themes around which a consensus is forming in parishes regarding the areas of parish life for which you have the energy and determination to make innovative strides. These trends were the basis of a one day Diocesan Consultation on Renewing Parishes held this past November. For this day, Bishop Bambera interacted with a representative group of clergy, religious and lay

leaders who could speak to both the driving forces in society today which are impacting the church, and to the hopes and desires of our Catholic community for growing the parishes of 2020 which you hope to become.



*The future of the Diocese lies in the renewal of parish life, and our hope lies in the generous servant leadership of priests, religious and laity who, wounded but loved, freely give themselves to Christ's good news mission of gathering those scattered from the love of God and the Church.*

Bishop Bambera's letter of invitation for the November Consultation expressed its purpose in this way: “While continuing the visioning efforts already underway in individual parishes, and maintaining a focus on the particular pastoral leadership approach needed when a change of Pastor is imminent, it is apparent to me that there are additional questions to ponder in the process of renewing our parishes. For us to continue to grow in vibrancy, we must empower

our parish communities even more broadly and begin – proactively – to consider new ways of doing so, ways that engage all generations of the faithful.”

“Mindful of the approaching 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for the Church of Scranton, which we will celebrate in 2018,” says Bishop Bambera, “this is a logical time in our history to assess where we are going. It will be much better for us to reach that milestone from a position of strength and vitality.” To this end, the Diocesan Consultation on Renewing Parishes is now being extended to all of the parishes for your active participation. The questions with which Bishop Bambera would like to challenge every parish are shown on reverse side.

All Pastors will receive detailed information about a workshops and resources provided precisely to assist you with implementing the goals you identify. “Parishes motivated in this way to achieve a specific new project,” proposes Bishop Bambera, “will begin to not only recognize their particular strengths but also what they can contribute to partnerships with other parishes, to leadership support within their own parish, and to parish sustainability into the future.”

## Priorities for Action Identified in Parish Plans

Parishes plan to **awaken the Baptismal call to holiness and giftedness**, fostering a **stewardship spirituality** where people's time, talent and treasure are cultivated as a response of gratitude and a fulfillment of this vocation. This involves inviting, expanding and developing a caring community of disciples – of all ages and walks of life – who share gifts and resources freely in order to make the parish a central hub for families and for the civic community in which it is rooted.

Parishes plan to **actively seek out and invite everyone to accept the good news and to belong** to our community by involving the whole community in extending a **spirit of welcome**; by strengthening relationships with people in all life circumstances; by learning about evangelization and 21<sup>st</sup> Century approaches; and by initiating deliberate evangelization activities.

Parishes plan to **invest in dynamic experiences of prayer and worship** in order to support individuals and the whole parish in a deepening spiritual life which will provide a connecting bridge between worship and everyday life.

Parishes plan to **provide life-long religious formation** for individuals and families, in ways that integrate faith and life; address all life stages and circumstances; and stem from well-formed and supported catechetical ministers.

Parishes plan to **expand into a social ministry reflective of the whole of Catholic Social Teaching**, integrating charitable outreach to meet real needs of parishioners and the neighborhoods we serve; advocacy and action on behalf of justice; and peacemaking at local, national and global levels.

Parishes plan to **incorporate use of modern communication media and strategies** in order to listen effectively to the real hungers and quests of our times; to meet, connect with and engage people where they are and reach those on the periphery of society; and to share our good news story, inviting parishioners and seekers to understand who we are, where we are going and what we have to offer.

Parishes plan to evaluate and implement **best practices in regard to all aspects of parish administration and operations** -- fiscal management, facilities maintenance and utilization, personnel practice, allocation of time – all in the service of and as the means for the mission.



*We, the Catholic community of the Diocese of Scranton, are called through Baptism to imitate the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. In union with our Holy father, the Pope, we proclaim the Gospel faithfully, celebrate the sacraments joyfully, and boldly promote life, justice and peace in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania.*

### Questions for Reflection and Dialogue on Renewing Parishes

- How would you describe what you can see as the best possible life for your parish by 2020?
- Specify how this parish of the future acts – what is it doing? What does ministry and faith formation look like?
- Identify strategies for how the Diocese of Scranton (at both the Diocesan and parish levels) can move even more creatively and effectively toward this future.
- When you tell the story of your parish for the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, what will be the new chapter you will add for 2016-2020?
- Which specific action for renewing and growing your parish will you commit to in 2017 in order to have the most positive impact? (For most parishes this will be selected from the goals you have already identified – for parishes not yet engaged in planning, assistance is readily available through the Office for Parish Life).
- How will you plan to achieve this one new project and to show it to other parishes in the Diocese so that we can all continue to learn from and teach each other?
- What are the best ways for the Diocese to support and resource your efforts?