

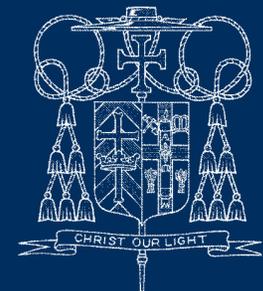
Come to the Light

VISION, PRIORITIES & GOALS FOR THE DIOCESE OF HELENA

YEARS 2007-2012

The Most Reverend George Leo Thomas

BISHOP OF HELENA



Mission Statement

We the people of the Diocese of Helena,
living at once in the Tradition of Roman Catholicism
- ever ancient, ever new -
and the unique heritage of Montana,
recognize that we are one in faith, spirit and purpose
though diverse in our roots, gifts, energies and treasures.

We remember our heritage,
born from the Native Peoples
who were the first among us to hear the Word of God.
We look for direction, support and leadership from our Bishop
in union with the Pope and all the Bishops of our Church.

We are a community...

CALLED

through the action of the Holy Spirit in the plan of God, our loving Father,
to embrace the ministry of Jesus through Baptism
in the Church - one, holy, catholic and apostolic,

NOURISHED

at the Table of Word and Eucharist,
the living and lasting center around which
the entire community of the Church gathers,

SENT

to proclaim the Good News to all who hunger,
to celebrate the life of the Church through the sacraments, and
to exercise the ministry of charity and justice.

We...

REJOICE

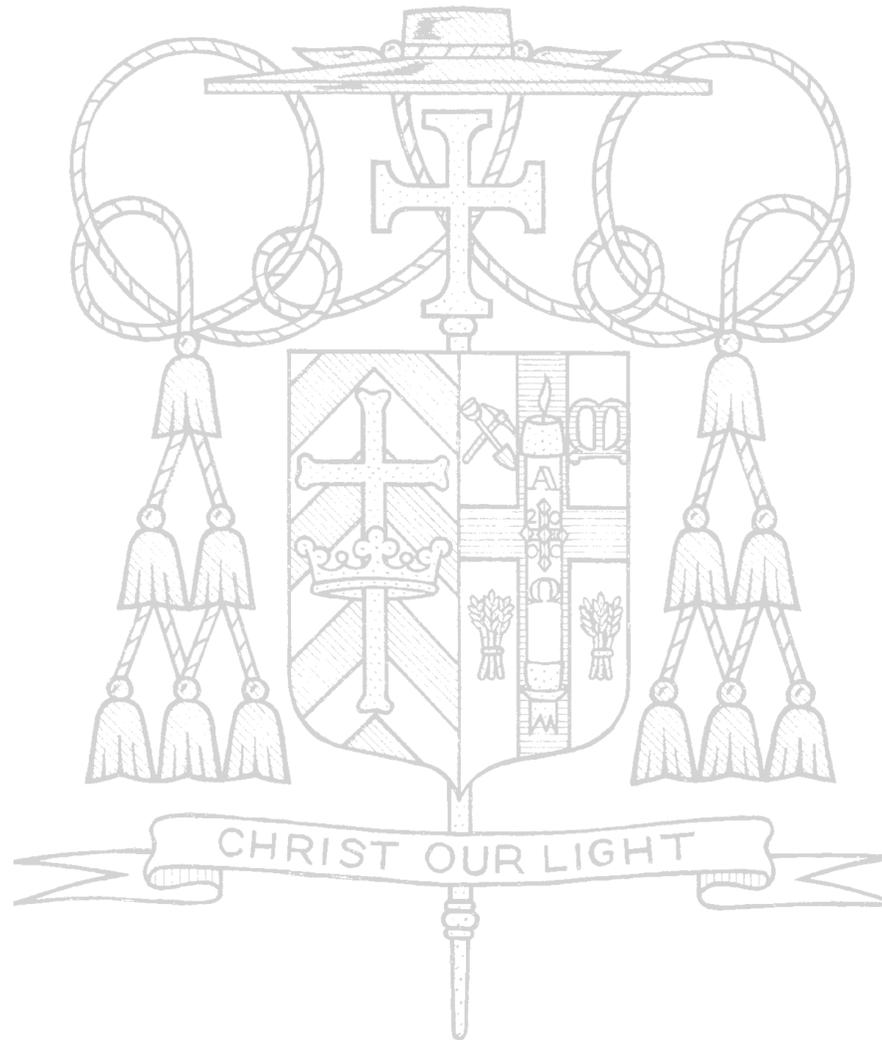
that we are invited to participate fully in the life of the Church,
responding with a burning desire to invite others to encounter the One
whom we have encountered,

BELIEVE

that we are called to transform our lives and the world around us,
bearing the Light of Christ into places of darkness,
extending a preferential option for the poor, and

COMMIT

ourselves to walk faithfully with the living Christ,
sharing from the abundance that we have received.



P. Sullivan
12-IV-04

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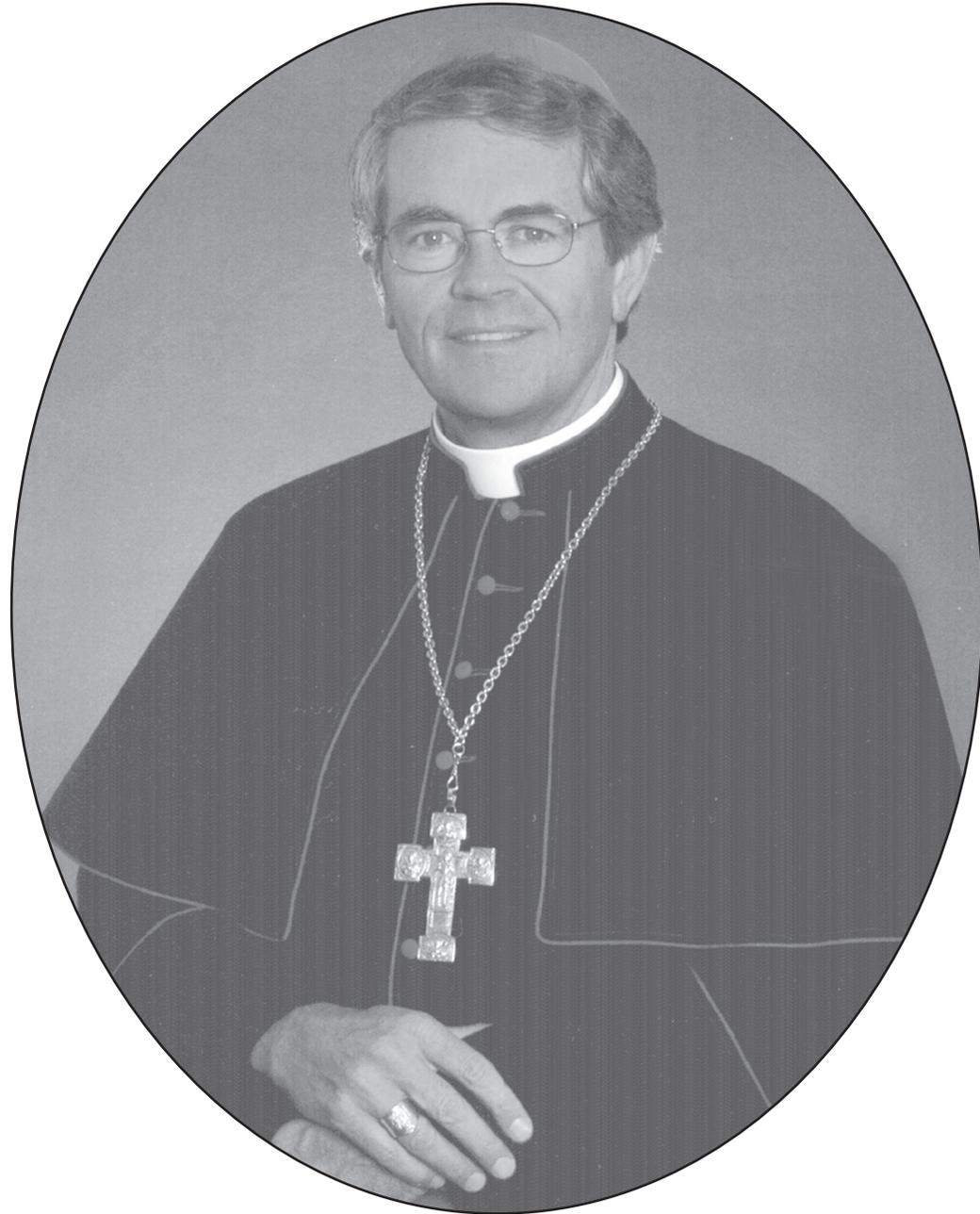
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*Most Reverend George Leo Thomas
Bishop of Helena*

Letter of Promulgation

FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

My Dear People of God,

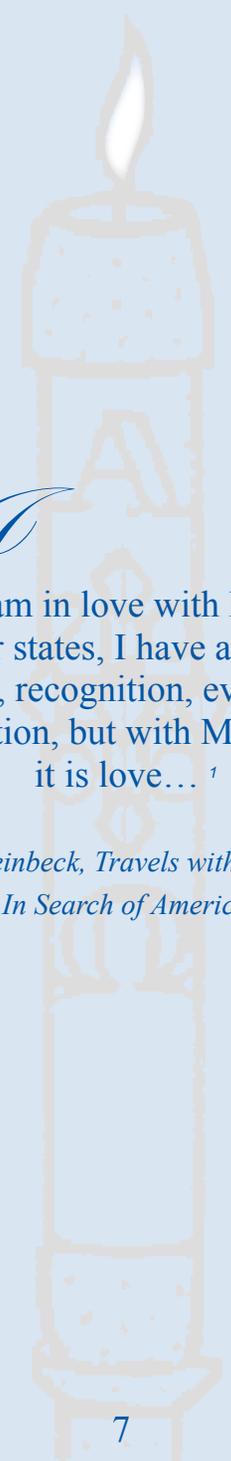
The Diocese of Helena is graced with land that encompasses part of the upper Great Plains, Rocky Mountain ranges and broad fertile valleys; a land uplifted and folded by forces deep within the earth, sculpted by glaciers, carved by wind and water. It is a land of great diversity and challenge. Our Diocesan Church embraces people who match her terrain, people who live in this sparsely settled state under such vast expanses that it is called “Big Sky.” This land has drawn and formed a people who are adaptable, independent, plain-spoken and direct; great-hearted people who gather as Church in magnificent variety from city parishes to small rural outposts. The Diocese of Helena is blessed with people who have a deep commitment to their faith, who face challenges with courage and inventiveness, and who are optimistic about the future. Montana is called the “Treasure State,” and, truly, its people are its treasure.

“It is up to the bishop, with the help of the priests, deacons, religious and lay people, to implement a coordinated pastoral plan, which is systematic and participatory, involving all the members of the Church and awakening in them a missionary con-

sciousness.”³ *Ecclesia in America (The Church in America)* – Pope John Paul II – 1999

Commissioning energies not unlike the forces that continue to uplift, shape and form our landscape, as the Bishop of Helena, I invited the people of the Diocese of Helena to begin a process of planning which would provide a vision to shape and form the priorities of the Diocese for the next five years. Guided by reliance on the Holy Spirit and trusting the goodness and wisdom of our people, the process moved forward.

On September 23, 2005, responding in the spirit of collaboration and communion that was reflected in the documents of Vatican II and referenced in the 1999 Post-Synodal document, *The Church in America*, I appointed a Diocesan Pastoral Council with the mandate to set a course that would lead to a Pastoral Plan for the Diocese. This Council was the instrument that would provide a “systematic and participatory process” involving the whole Diocese. They were charged to listen to the People of God of the Diocese of Helena at this time in its history, to be attentive to the signs of these times, and from that listening and attentiveness, to recommend directions and priorities to guide the Diocese into the



I am in love with Montana.
For other states, I have admiration,
respect, recognition, even some
affection, but with Montana
it is love...¹

*John Steinbeck, Travels with Charley:
In Search of America*

future. The year that followed was truly “a year of favor from the Lord” as spoken of in Isaiah (61:2) as a time of celebration, of pause, of a kind of holy restlessness.

Our year of favor was one of preparation, listening, waiting, praying, and planning. This Sabbath time was a time of hope as so many came to the table in parishes and regions to open their hearts, sharing their wisdom and hopes for the future. Eight Regional Listening Sessions followed a Parish Preparation Process where delegates to the Regional sessions were chosen and entrusted with the hopes of each parish, mission and faith community in the region. I was heartened to see over 1,400 people of every age, from communities large and small throughout the Diocese, participate in the process. Members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council were involved listeners as the regions gathered to voice the concerns and to hear the ideas representing each parish in the Diocese. These ideas and hopes were the good harvest of the regional gatherings which provided nourishment for this document and began to illuminate the path to our future.

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes, declares:

The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.⁴

This Vatican II document calls the Church to welcome no less than the “joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of this age.”⁴ Reading the signs of these times and discerning among all the paths that lead to the future has been the effort of many voices. Through the months of listening and deliberating, we have prayed:

Send us forth to love and serve that all may be lifted up by the hope of a world made new . . .⁵

Prayer for the Diocesan Planning Process

As I promulgate this pastoral plan and complete the circle of conversation with all who were first part of this process, gathered in faith communities and regions to share their “joys and hopes, griefs

and anxieties,” the work is just beginning. It is my profound hope that the processes and dialogue that this document represents will be a source of hope and encouragement for our whole Diocesan Church and that it might effectively direct the focus of these next five years. We are entrusted with this moment in our history and it will require the best from us to do what must be done for the sake of God’s whole community.

This document is entitled *Come to the Light*. The Scriptures offer rich images of light, from the city of light set on a mountain top to the light not hidden under a bushel barrel to the very words of Jesus proclaiming that “I am the Light of the world.” Even my Episcopal motto, “Christ Our Light” and the unwavering flame of the Easter candle, leading our way, point us to Christ, the Light of the World.

With all this in mind, I hereby promulgate *Come to the Light* to guide and direct our diocesan Church for the next five years. We have already begun the process of bringing this good work to fulfillment, a process that will continue with the assistance of the Presbyteral Council, the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Diocesan staff, our many consultative groups

and all those in the Diocese of Helena who see by the Light, Jesus Christ.

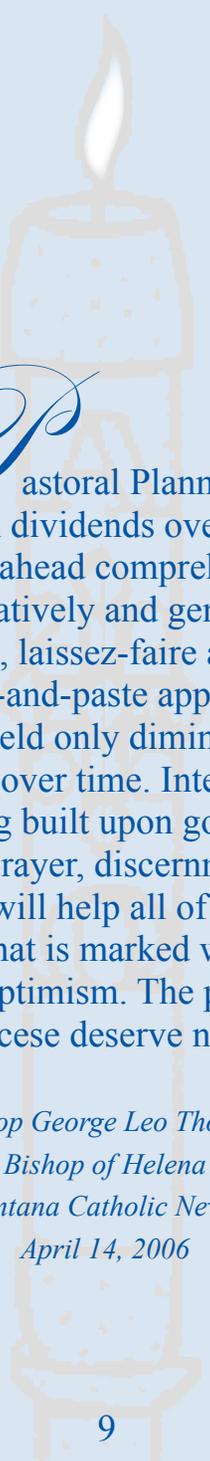
Given at Helena, Montana, on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord, the second day of February, in the Year of Our Lord two thousand seven.

+ *George L. Thomas*

*Most Reverend George Leo Thomas
Bishop of Helena*

John W. Robertson

*Reverend John W. Robertson
Chancellor*



*P*astoral Planning will pay high dividends over time if we move ahead comprehensively, collaboratively and generously. Inaction, laissez-faire attitudes and cut-and-paste approaches will yield only diminishing returns over time. Intentional planning built upon good processes, prayer, discernment and sacrifice will help all of us secure a future that is marked with vitality and optimism. The people of the Diocese deserve no less. ²

*Bishop George Leo Thomas
Bishop of Helena
The Montana Catholic Newspaper
April 14, 2006*

Introduction

MAJOR THEMES OF THE DOCUMENT THE DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

Each Ordinary will make sure to promote among priests and lay faithful the sense that the Diocese is the visible expression of the Church's communion, which is formed at the table of the Word and of the Eucharist, around the bishop in union with the college of bishops and under its head, the Roman Pontiff. As a particular Church, the Diocese is charged with initiating and deepening the encounter of all the members of God's People with Jesus Christ...⁶

The Church in America
Pope John Paul II
1999

1 We, the members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, after listening, considering, praying, and gathering the data into a larger picture of the needs and hopes of the Diocese, identify the following as areas where the faithful, gathered with their pastors, have indicated directional priorities. While we heard and discussed many wonderful ideas, we remembered the admonition of our Bishop that “We cannot do every good thing,” and believe that the focus provided by this document provides fertile soil for the energies of the Diocese in these next five years.

2 What we heard and discussed around our tables involved two movements of the heart. First, a deep desire for encountering Christ in the Church, within our faith communities, families, those who are marginalized and within the lives of individuals (known in the Church as Encuentro theology). The second was a need for union or communion among ourselves gathered around the Table of Word and Eucharist, with the Diocese and Universal Church, among the Catholic faithful and also found in a deep yearning for union with our God (known in the Church as Communion theology). These movements are reflected in various ways in the nine challenges that underpin all that follows.

3 We have indicated here, first in broad strokes, the deep streams that we believe move beneath more specific recommendations so that as more strategic planning and operational initiatives become part of this process, the most innovative and effective approaches to the challenges may be pursued.

4 Listed below are the main streams of thought and challenge that we heard expressed again and again in the regions of the Diocese and around our meeting table:

*You are the light of the world.
A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

Matthew 5: 14

5 We heard great energy around Catholic faith formation for children, young adults, adults and most especially for our youth. There is a desire for opportunities for our young people to encounter Christ, to become disciples, to embrace and proclaim the faith the Church professes, deepening their faith and commitment.

6 We heard a profound longing that we live our faith so expansively that our parishes become beacons of invitation so that others will join us and those who have fallen away from the practice of their faith will return. There is a deep understanding that to accept the mission of Jesus is to spread the “Good News” far and wide, embracing “The New Evangelization” called for by Pope John Paul II.

7 Moving in and through each of these areas we heard a need to utilize the most effective means of communication among and between us and outward to the larger reality of our communities and our world, heeding the mandate of Jesus to preach the Gospel “even to the ends of the earth.”

*T*he light shines on in darkness, a darkness that did not overcome it.

John 1: 5

8 We heard a pressing need to initiate a process to look at the equitable distribution of priest personnel in our parishes in the next years and to form realistic strategies by collaborating with parishes and regions to plan in light of the numbers of ordained

priests who will be available to serve. Believing that strong, vibrant parishes make a strong, vibrant Diocese, we know that new parish configurations and initiatives will need to emerge so that the Church can provide quality pastoral care to our people gathered in faith around the Eucharistic Table.

9 We heard concern for promotion of vocations to the priesthood, religious life, permanent diaconate and formation of lay ministers within our parishes so that the leadership in our parishes may be vibrant and vital. There was strong support for reinstating a training program for the permanent diaconate.

*T*his, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless, clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn...

Isaiah 58:6-8



PASTORAL COUNCIL

The Most Reverend George Leo Thomas
Bishop of Helena

Stephen Barry
Mary Jean Brophy
Sylvia Bryce
Vincent Chris Burgmeier
Laurie Croghan
Daniel Doyle
Rev. Jeff Fleming
Virginia Hanson
Ron Johnson
Vondene Kopetski
Rev. Mr. Tom McCarthy
James McDevitt
Sister Mary Jo McDonald, SCL
James McNeely
Timothy Norbeck
Rev. Msgr. Kevin O'Neill, *Vicar General*
Seaneen Prendergast
Rev. John Robertson, *Chancellor, Judicial Vicar*
Donald Shaughnessy
Chuck Tellier
Doug Tooke
Margaret Walsh
Lawrence White, Jr.
Beverly York
Sue Zezeus

STAFF

Sister Rita McGinnis, SCL
Glenda Seipp

10 We heard an awareness of the need to listen to the voices that are not always around our tables with an exploration of expanding Catholic Social Services, and through support of the legislative and educational efforts of the Montana Catholic Conference.

11 We heard enthusiasm for a greater connection throughout the Diocese to our Guatemalan mission, through education, increased awareness, resources, and support, and through pursuing opportunities for service there.


One who lights a lamp does not put it in the cellar or under a bushel basket, but rather on a lampstand so that they who come in may see the light.

Luke 12:33

12 We heard the need to strengthen our fiscal infrastructure, with transparency and accessibility in reporting, appropriate accounting procedures, updated technology in the Diocese and our parishes. There is an urgency to pursue a capital campaign to provide a new revenue stream for the

realization of this pastoral plan and to promote an attitude of stewardship throughout the Diocese. There is also recognition that, in order to support charitable giving, it is important to be structured so that the Diocese can comply with the intention of our donors for the use of their gifts.


A lamp to my feet is your word, a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

13 We heard concern that we address the unique pastoral needs of our people, finding more effective ways of inclusion so that the voices and needs of our rural parishes and Native American parishes may be more clearly heard. Recognition and support of other cultures that also enrich our parishes should be effectively addressed.

14 These are the deep currents of thought that ran through many of our listening sessions and within our own deliberations. The next sections look more closely at the concerns, needs and longings and begin to shape directions that will carry forward the initiatives that surfaced.

PART I

Formation, Outreach and The New Evangelization

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”

Matthew 5:14

P. Sullivan
12-IV-04

Catholic Faith Formation

The images of salt, light and leaven taken from the Gospel, although indiscriminately applicable to all Jesus' disciples, are specifically applied to the lay faithful. They are particularly meaningful images because they speak not only of the deep involvement and the full participation of the lay faithful in the affairs of the earth, the world and the human community, but also and above all, they tell of the radical newness and unique character of an involvement and participation which has as its purpose the spreading of the Gospel that brings salvation. ⁷

*The Lay Members of Christ's
Faithful People
Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation
Pope John Paul II
1988*

We heard great energy around Catholic faith formation for children, young adults, adults and most especially for our youth. There is a desire for opportunities for our young people to encounter Christ, to become disciples, to embrace and proclaim the faith the Church professes, deepening their faith and commitment.

(Introduction)

15 In the words of Stephen Covey, "We begin with the end in mind;" faithful discipleship is the goal of faith formation for all ages. There is great interest and energy around Catholic faith formation that is appropriate for all age groups. Catholic Formation Services has effectively provided programs, resources and direction for a variety of initiatives that have enhanced parish and Diocesan formation efforts from children, through adult opportunities. The Diocesan Pastoral Council recognizes the deep need for continued support for these initiatives as well as new support for initiatives that will enhance the faith lives of, especially, the youth of this Diocese.

16 A key resource for parish and Diocesan formation programs is the NDC (National Directory for Catechesis) - a normative source document for all catechesis - which should provide direction and a foundation for all programs.

ADULT CATECHESIS

17 The Diocesan Pastoral Council recognizes the hunger for faith formation for adults. The Council recommends the implementation of creative models of adult formation in our parishes and the Diocese and the continuation of successful structures. Programs should reflect the guidance of *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, a Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*, 1999, from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. (USCCB).

PFLM (PROGRAM OF FORMATION FOR LAY MINISTERS)

18 This program is an effective formation tool and through the years has provided a deeper awareness of the treasures of our faith to women and men throughout our Diocese. There is a need to increase support for and awareness of PFLM in all parishes. Pastor endorsement is a key to the success of this formation opportunity.

ADULT FORMATION

19 The facilitation of other creative adult formation opportunities, exploration of alternate delivery systems, and exploration of small Christian Communities in parishes should be encouraged, resourced and supported by the Diocese.

YOUTH MINISTRY

20 In the past Catholic Formation Services included a position dedicated to Youth Ministry. In recent years because of budgetary constrictions, that position was eliminated. Many of the activities that were covered by the Youth Minister in the past were reallocated to others within that division, increasingly stretching the resources of the current staff. More recently some of the functions of that position have had to be re-evaluated and are no longer available because of staff limitations.

21 The Diocesan Pastoral Council recommends that the position of Youth Minister be re-visioned and re-established as soon as fiscally possible. This position should incorporate, in some form, the three traditional functions of the office: Catholic Youth Coalition Convention, Youth Leadership Camp and Youth Leadership Team in addition

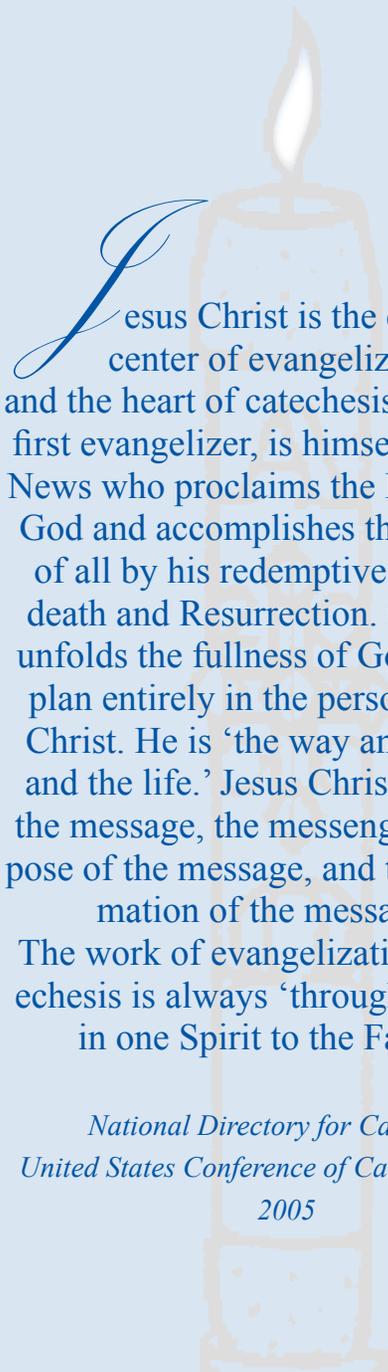
to other outreach services to parishes and regions that may develop from this position.

22 Parish youth religious formation programs should be approved by the Diocesan Catholic Formation Services and incorporate the eight components of faith formation found in *Renewing the Vision* (RTV), a framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1997, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which addresses Youth and Young Adult Ministry. The eight components include: advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, prayer and worship.

23 Sacramental preparation programs should be evaluated and established according to Diocesan guidelines.

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

24 An emphasis on creative Young Adult ministry (for those in their 20s and 30s) should be pursued by Catholic Formation Services. We need to engage the gifts of this group, and to explore best practices for reaching and connecting this group more closely to the Church.



Jesus Christ is the energizing center of evangelization and the heart of catechesis. Christ, the first evangelizer, is himself the Good News who proclaims the Kingdom of God and accomplishes the salvation of all by his redemptive suffering, death and Resurrection. Catechesis unfolds the fullness of God's eternal plan entirely in the person of Jesus Christ. He is 'the way and the truth and the life.' Jesus Christ is at once the message, the messenger, the purpose of the message, and the consummation of the message. ... The work of evangelization and catechesis is always 'through (Christ)... in one Spirit to the Father.'⁸

National Directory for Catechesis
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
2005

MINISTRY TO FAMILIES

25 Families, especially young families, are especially vulnerable and in need of programs to reflect on their life experiences in light of the Gospel. Efforts of parishes and Diocesan programs to connect families meaningfully to their faith community, mentoring and forming relationships within the community and ongoing support for their life journey are encouraged.

CAMPUS MINISTRY

26 Catholic presence and ministry on our college campuses is an important component in supporting the faith life and promoting the Catholic leadership of our young people studying on Catholic or state campuses. Campus Ministry should be networked and cooperative, sharing a common vision.

CARROLL COLLEGE

27 Carroll College continues to pursue the challenge of developing to the fullest initiatives that position its Catholic Identity and Mission in line with *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Greater dialogue between the Diocese and Carroll College provides another avenue for the fruitful development of lay ecclesial ministry and ministry formation.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

28 Aware of the extensive geography of the Diocese of Helena and the limits that sometimes imposes on those who want to access Diocesan programs, it would be helpful to explore distance learning possibilities where appropriate including:

- ✧ Training videos for various programs featuring the Bishop, clergy and lay people of our Diocese in areas of their expertise.
- ✧ Video conferencing
- ✧ On-line training opportunities
- ✧ Other technology as it is available and appropriate.

SOURCE BOOK UPDATE

29 The Source Book, provided by the Diocesan Catholic Formation Services, needs to be updated in light of the new NDC (*National Directory for Catechesis*) and those updates communicated to parishes.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

30 The adequacy of the number of trainers for the National Program, mandated by the Dallas Charter, Protecting God's Children, needs to be assessed annually to assure that the program is easily accessible.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

31 The American Catholic Bishops in 2005, reflecting on the reality and challenges of the Catholic schools in America, wrote in their document, *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*: “Young people of the third millennium must be a source of energy and leadership in our Church and nation. Therefore, we must provide young people with an academically rigorous and doctrinally sound program of education and faith formation designed to strengthen their union with Christ and his Church.”⁹

32 Much of the conversation around schools concerned funding questions and the development of processes and guidelines in considering the possibility of a new Catholic school. Schools should be looked at through the lenses of accessibility - who can/cannot attend; affordability - how schools are financed; accountability - Catholic identity and quality education.

33 Where there are existing schools it is recommended that there be ongoing dialogue initiated by the Superintendent and principals with the pastors and parish leadership in their area regarding Catholic identity and ongoing funding of the schools.

34 Guidelines and processes for establishing, staffing, financing (initial and ongoing) and assuring the Catholic identity of any new school need to be developed by the Superintendent of Schools with the approval of the Diocesan Bishop. Any new “Catholic” school or existing “Catholic” school is to be affiliated with the Diocese of Helena, under the supervision of the Superintendent of Schools and observing Diocesan policies and guidelines.

35 Curriculum development within the Catholic Schools is done under of the auspices of Education Services, with the direction of the Bishop, to assure that the dual criteria of providing an “academically rigorous and doctrinally sound program of education and faith formation” is met.

LEGENDARY LODGE

36 Legendary Lodge is a valuable resource of the Diocese of Helena and, as such, should be well maintained, preserved, and utilized to the fullest. In the years ahead, the Lodge should be explored for expanded use to benefit the faith formation efforts of the Diocese of Helena and should be staffed appropriately.



Evangelization

The entire mission of the Church, then, is concentrated and manifested in evangelization. Through the winding passages of history the Church has made her way under the grace and command of Jesus Christ: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation”

(Mk. 16:15)

“...and lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age”

(Mt. 28:20)

“To evangelize,” writes Paul VI, “is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her most profound identity.”¹⁰

The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II - 1988

We heard a great longing that we live our faith so expansively that our parishes become beacons of invitation that others will join us and those who have fallen away from the practice of their faith will return. There is a deep understanding that to embrace the mission of Jesus is to spread the “Good News” far and wide, embracing “The New Evangelization” called for by Pope John Paul II.

(Introduction)

37 Pope John Paul II exhorted the whole Church to embrace The New Evangelization, a rebirth of life and energy in preaching the Gospel, bringing people closer to their faith, reaching out to those fallen away or marginally active and welcoming and inviting those who are seeking and unchurched. It is a task that must permeate the lives, the ministries and the prayers of all the faithful. The following elements directed toward that mission are recommended:

☞ Every Diocesan office should have Evangelization as part of its mission and one office of the Diocese should be designated as the office responsible for studying, promoting, developing and sustaining The New Evangelization as an element within our programs and ministries. This office should provide education and formation in promotion of The New Evangelization.

☞ Existing programs in other dioceses for The New Evangelization should be investigated leading to the development of programs to teach, encourage and direct our efforts to evangelize. Programs similar to “Renew” that would extend over a period of time should be considered to make evangelization a part of the spirituality of the laity. Existing programs that are specifically focused on the ministry of The New Evangelization must be supported, encouraged and expanded.

☞ Celebrations of weddings, funerals, first communions as well as other celebrations of the sacraments are evangelical moments in the life of the parish and care is to be taken in the meaningful celebration of these rites and in the welcome extended to those attending.

✧ RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) and Remembering Church (for those returning to the Catholic faith): Successful and fruitful models of RCIA and Remembering Church should be resourced for sharing between parishes.

✧ The Diocesan Communication Services is an effective resource for positioning the message of welcome and invitation to those who are seeking a faith community, hoping to return, become active again, or those who desire to deepen their commitment to the Church.

ECUMENISM

38 The Diocese of Helena has been involved in ecumenical cooperation and ministries primarily through membership in the Montana Association of Churches with our priest liaison and delegates to this body. The arena of ecumenical cooperation extends often to our parish communities. Ecumenical dialogue and cooperation are areas that are often not well understood. Formation around ecumenical issues for the faithful is helpful so that opportunities for joint ministries can be developed to their fullness at levels that are appropriate and

respectful of the individual Christian denominations. The Ecumenical community should find opportunities for conjoint ministry to the poor in Montana.

INTERRELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

39 Current events in the Middle East highlight the heightened need for understanding and deep appreciation for the faith traditions of other communities. Interreligious opportunities for education and understanding deepen appreciation and enhance relationships with peoples of faiths differing from our own. Where educational programs and encounters can be provided, they are valuable experiences for the Catholic faithful and reaffirm the dignity of every person before God.



Communications

*W*e heard a need to utilize the most effective means of communication among and between us and outward to the larger reality of our communities and our world, heeding the mandate of Jesus to preach the Gospel “even to the ends of the earth.” (*Introduction*)

40 The Diocesan Pastoral Council is mindful of the church’s teaching that “Communication in and by the church is essentially communication of the Good News of Jesus Christ.” (*Aetatis Novae – On Social Communication, 1992*) Even in this age of ever changing and increasing technology, church communication should flow from the foundation of God’s self-revelation in the world. The Church has the obligation to be in dialogue with and transform society and culture in the light of the Gospel. Therefore, “communication must lie at the heart of the church community.”¹¹ (*Aetatis Novae. – On Social Communication, 1992*)

41 The Diocesan Pastoral Council affirms the work of the Diocesan Communications Ser-

vices, recognizing that many of the needs expressed through the planning process Listening Sessions are being met or developed. We heard additional communication needs surface as well, such as development of a formal Diocesan communication plan, need for increased visibility in secular media, increased publicity, and concerns about the limitations of the office due to the restriction of funding.

42 To form the foundation for a comprehensive review of communications within the Diocese, it is recommended that the Diocese of Helena conduct a formal communications audit and develop a Diocesan Communication Plan based on the data gathered. This should be done as soon as fiscally possible.

43 Some possibilities to explore for enhancing communications throughout the Diocese include:

☞ Increase use and education about electronic communications (intranet, websites, electronic mail, video-conferencing, etc.). “It is also necessary to integrate that message into the new culture created by modern communications.” (*Pastoral Plan for Church Communication, USCCB, 1997*)

- ☞ Expand use of a Diocesan master calendar.
- ☞ Find cost-effective ways to expand the distribution of The Montana Catholic Newspaper.
- ☞ Investigate Catholic and secular media opportunities that are useful and appropriate to carry Catholic Diocesan messages.
- ☞ Provide user-friendly formats for those with disabilities.
- ☞ Assess communications staffing in light of increased expectations and make personnel available as fiscally possible.

PART II

Ministers for our Faith Communities

“The Light shines on in darkness, a darkness that did not overcome it.”

John 1:5

P. Sullivan
12-IV-04

Diocesan-wide Study

We live a common faith in Jesus Christ through our Baptism. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to:

Proclaim the good news of God's love for all;

Celebrate in word and sacrament;

Build community: serve our church, neighbors and world."

*1983 Diocese of Helena
Mission Statement*

We heard a pressing need to initiate a process to look at the equitable distribution of priest personnel in our parishes in the next years and to form realistic strategies by collaborating with parishes and regions to plan in light of the numbers of ordained priests who will be available to serve. Believing that strong, vibrant parishes make a strong, vibrant Diocese, we know that new parish configurations and initiatives will need to emerge so that the Church can provide quality pastoral care to our people gathered in faith around the Eucharistic Table. *(Introduction)*

44 Throughout all the regions of the Diocese there was a widespread acknowledgement, support and affection for our priests who serve in our parishes, missions, and faith communities, and a concern for them as their workload has increased. There is genuine care for the ministry of all the priests of the Diocese as they have touched the lives of families and individuals bringing in tangible ways the Light of Christ to the places of joy and places of sorrow in the lives of those they serve.

There was also much concern as the faithful of the Diocese see this precious resource stretched and a voiced anxiety that we cannot continue to operate as we have in the past for the sake of our priests and our communities.

45 Currently the Diocese of Helena lists 58 parishes and 37 missions in its demographic information. There are not currently enough ordained ministers to pastor all the parishes and many are generously pastored by priests who are on senior status. In some cases one priest may be pastor for multiple parishes or for a parish with missions; the gracious service of religious and deacons as Pastoral Administrators with a priest sacramental minister is another model for a parish community currently being used in the Diocese. A practical look at this reality must be undertaken with widespread collaboration among the various regions of the Diocese that would propose new structures, new configurations, and new models for serving the needs of a geographically diverse Diocese.

46 The Pastoral Planning Services, in collaboration with the Bishop, Presbyteral Council and College of Consultors, should initiate a process that will bring together the resources of each

area to formulate a realistic plan that will address the equitable distribution of priest resources within the Diocese. This plan will project the use of priest personnel, with wide regional collaboration, using models that are appropriate and practical for the parishes and areas involved. Great sensitivity is to be given to the rural parishes in the priest personnel redistribution process. The goal of providing sacramental ministry to all regions of the Diocese and of maintaining a priestly presence without compromising the health and well being or safety of our priests will be among the guiding principles of this effort. Emphasis will be placed on assigning personnel in each parish, providing a good healthy fit for the priest and the people of the parish.

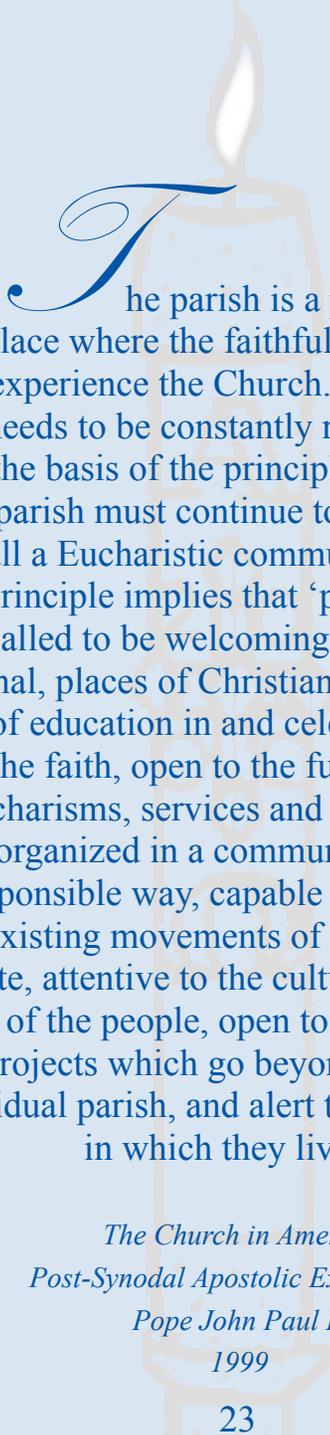
47 This may mean a realignment of parishes and missions, commissioning of Pastoral Administrators, merging congregations, and considering priest assignment models that accommodate the challenges of travel and distance. Successful models already being used in other Dioceses will be studied to learn from their experiences.

48 Change presents challenges and opportunities and parishes may need help to work through transitions. Thought must be given to how

parishes will be consulted, how they will have a voice in their own future and how they will be supported through any changes that are necessary.

49 For those Sundays when a priest is not available and parishioners do not have access to a Sunday liturgy in the area, deacons, sisters and lay leaders should be trained to lead the congregation using the approved ritual for *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*. Diocesan policies regarding the use of the approved ritual should be in place so that it is clear when this is an option for a parish.

50 Support for the ministry of our priests is of utmost importance and whatever is needed to sustain the healthy and fruitful service of our ministers should be provided. Mentoring programs for young priests, availability of ongoing education opportunities, health screenings, wholistic care of the presbyterate, counseling for those who have need of it, spiritual direction, and Jesu Caritas groups are all tools to enhance the life and service of our Diocesan priests. A program of pastoral review is a reflective opportunity afforded to priests in the fifth and eleventh years of their assignment.



The parish is a privileged place where the faithful concretely experience the Church. The parish needs to be constantly renewed on the basis of the principle that ‘the parish must continue to be above all a Eucharistic community.’ This principle implies that ‘parishes are called to be welcoming and fraternal, places of Christian initiation, of education in and celebration of the faith, open to the full range of charisms, services and ministries, organized in a communal and responsible way, capable of utilizing existing movements of the apostolate, attentive to the cultural diversity of the people, open to the pastoral projects which go beyond the individual parish, and alert to the world in which they live.’¹²

The Church in America
Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation
Pope John Paul II
1999

*I*t is necessary to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life where they first develop, and Christian families must be invited to support their children if they feel called to follow this path.¹³

The Church in America
Pope John Paul II
1999

51 Good preaching has great power in the formation and evangelizing of the parish. With this in mind, workshops and continuing education regarding preaching are to be provided for priests and deacons, always understanding the import and primacy of the liturgical homily. In addition, the Diocese should provide regional training opportunities for those commissioned to lead *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*.

52 That the Word may be heard more clearly in our individual parishes, it is recommended that parishes conduct periodic professional testing of their sound systems and upgrade as possible and necessary. For some who experience difficulty hearing, there is need to provide external devices that enhance the sound so that they may not be isolated from the congregation.

VOCATIONS TO PRIESTHOOD AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

*W*e heard concern for promotion of vocations to the priesthood, religious life, permanent diaconate and

formation of lay ministers within our parishes that the leadership in our parishes may be vibrant and vital. There was strong support for reinstating a training program for the permanent diaconate.

(Introduction)

53 The Diocese of Helena will expand its efforts in recruiting and preparing future priests so that we will have committed priests to celebrate the sacraments and lead our parish communities now and in the future. Strategies and structures that have been used effectively in other Dioceses of our size and challenges should be explored.

54 We recognize that families of the Diocese play an integral role in nurturing and fostering vocations within their children. To this end methods will be devised that will call each family and faith community to dedicated prayer, urging them to encourage and support their children as they hear the call to priesthood or religious life. Age appropriate materials should be made available for families and faith formation programs as they bring to young minds and hearts the option of service in the priesthood and religious life, as well as the single and married life.

PERMANENT DIACONATE

*T*here was strong support for reinstating a training program for the permanent diaconate.

(Introduction)

55 The Diocese of Helena will reinstitute the program of preparation for the Permanent Diaconate. This program will be in compliance with norms and directions of the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons* in the United States published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004. Appropriate and professional screening of candidates applying to begin formation for the permanent diaconate is a requirement. Ongoing formation and enrichment programs for those already ordained to the permanent diaconate should reflect the new guidelines for deacon formation.

56 The Diocesan Pastoral Council encourages continued dialogue with Carroll College to explore formation resources for permanent deacons and lay ecclesial ministers.

LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY

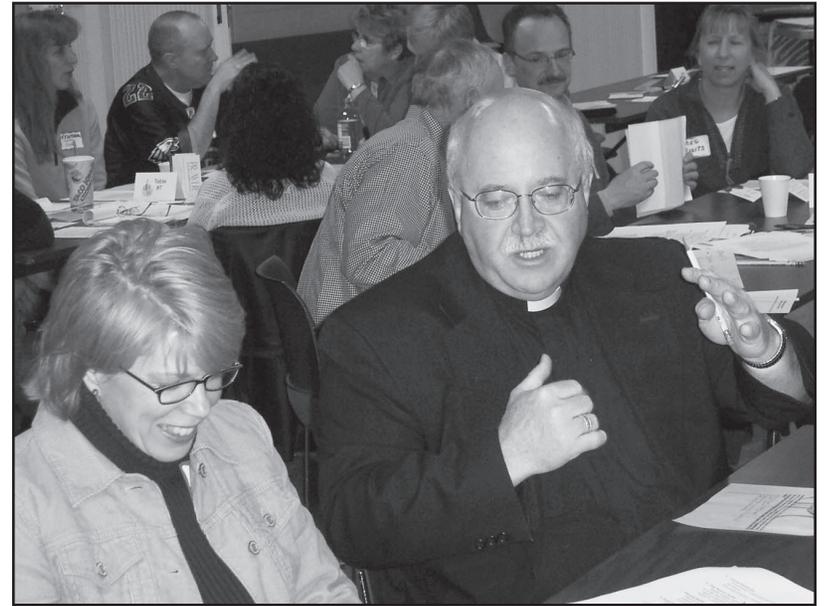
57 More and more lay women and men are hearing a call to live their Baptism in service to their parishes, participating in the ministry of Christ. Providing appropriate and accessible training for individuals in service to the parishes of the Diocese will be an important way to help parish communities maintain their vitality.

58 The Diocese of Helena will develop and implement a formation program for Pastoral Administrators who serve parishes in the Diocese supporting the work of a priest who tends the sacramental needs of the parish.

59 Continuing education is important to develop efficient and effective parish ministers. Building pastoral skills and providing continual updating in theology will be an ongoing endeavor for all those ministering in a parish. Parish personnel, paid and volunteer, will be regularly evaluated by the pastor or administrator using materials and processes provided by the Diocese of Helena.

*T*he ministry is ‘lay’ because it is service done by laypersons. The sacramental basis is the sacraments of initiation, not the sacrament of ordination. The ministry is ‘ecclesial’ because it has a place within the community of the church, whose communion and mission it serves and because it is submitted to the discernment, authorization and supervision of the hierarchy. Finally, it is ‘ministry’ because it is a participation in the three-fold ministry of Christ, who is priest, prophet and king.¹⁴

*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord
US Catholic Bishops
December 5, 2005*

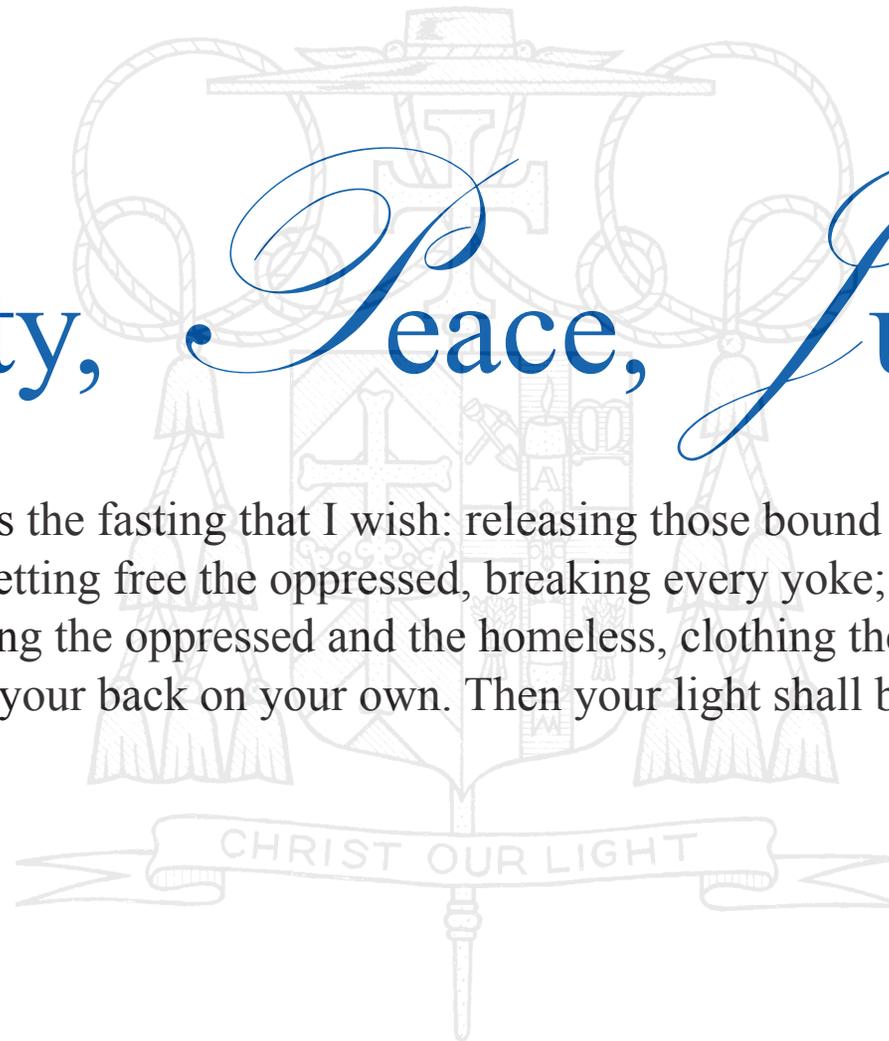


PART III

Charity, Peace, Justice

“This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless, clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn...”

Isaiah 58:6-8



P. Sullivan
12-IV-04

The Church in America must incarnate in her pastoral initiatives the solidarity of the universal Church toward the poor and outcast of every kind. Her attitude needs to be one of assistance, promotion, liberation and fraternal openness. The goal of the Church is to ensure that no one is marginalized.¹⁵

The Church in America
Pope John Paul II
1999

We heard an awareness of the need to listen to the voices that are not always around our tables with an exploration of expanding Catholic Social Services, and through support of the legislative and educational efforts of the Montana Catholic Conference.

(Introduction)

60 Concerns for the Diocesan Church - with geography and human needs as broad as those found in western Montana - prompted a series of recommendations that include charity, addressing immediate needs of those with few resources, as well as social justice, addressing and countering the root causes and systems that create and sustain unjust situations. The bedrock of Catholic social teaching informs all of our efforts, resolutely preserving the dignity inherent in every human person, and the sanctity of all human life.

61 It is recommended that the Diocese make more extensive and effective use of existing agencies and structures within the Diocese and between Dioceses, working with the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, as necessary and possible.

62 In the light of our commitment to the Catholic vision of justice and peace, Catholic Social Services' structure should be studied for the possibility of expanding services to reach a broader range of people and issues.

63 The Montana Catholic Conference should make use of the considerable expertise available among the laity to assist it in its mission and consider the gifts of the laity in promoting Catholic Social Teaching.

64 Diocese/Parishes/Montana Catholic Conference: Attention should be given to the ongoing need for the faithful to be educated with regard to Catholic Social Teaching with its basis in Scripture and in the Tradition of the Church. Social justice formation and ministry programming should be sponsored by the Diocese, parishes and/or the Montana Catholic Conference. Parishioners should be challenged to be politically educated and active to appropriately promote the social justice teachings of the Catholic Church in the political arena.

65 Pastoral leadership should raise awareness concerning Catholic relief agencies and social services locally, nationally, and internation-

ally. Parishioners should be aware of and support agencies of the Catholic Church that offer unique outreach services, some of which include: Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities and, locally, Catholic Social Services.

GUATEMALA MISSION

*W*e heard enthusiasm for a greater connection throughout the Diocese to our Guatemalan mission, through education, increased awareness, resources, and support, and through pursuing opportunities for service there.

(Introduction)

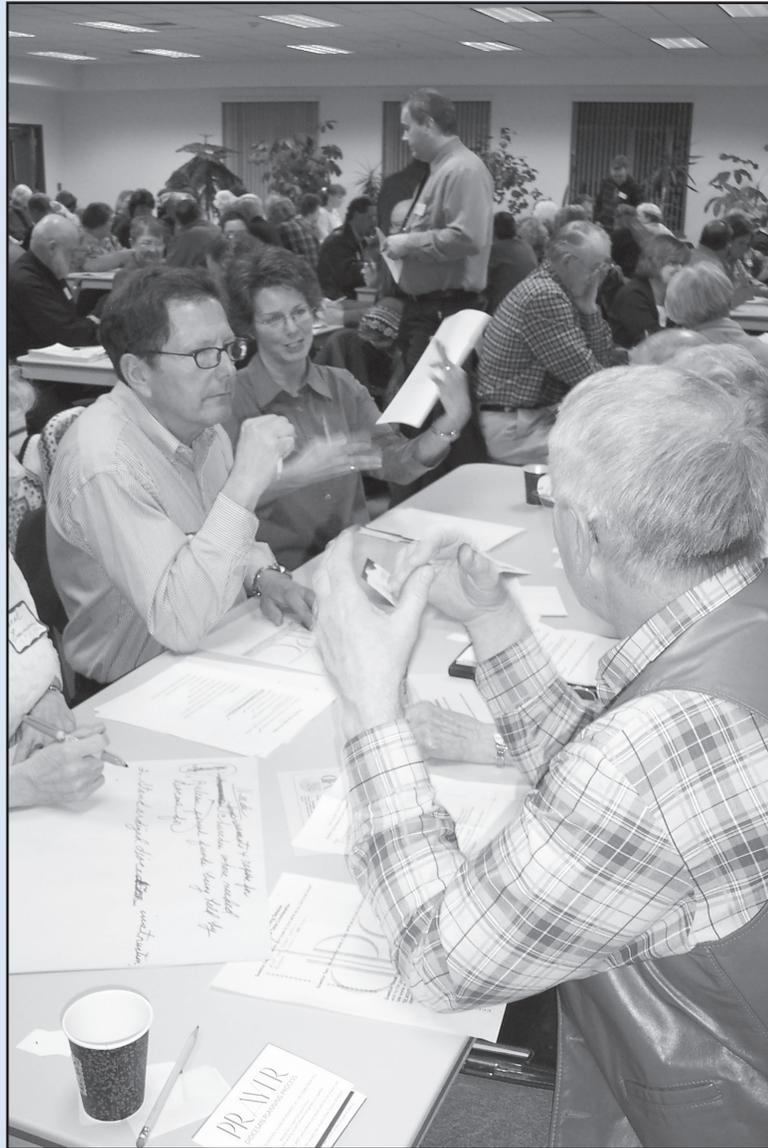
66 Since 1964, the people of the Diocese of Helena have sponsored a mission in Guatemala. It is important to continue and broaden the commitment of the whole Diocese to our mission in Guatemala through education, exchange programs, sharing of resources, increased awareness and other ways of connecting this important ministry to the consciousness of the faithful of the Diocese.



*T*he Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. ¹⁶

Deus Caritas Est
Pope Benedict XVI

2006

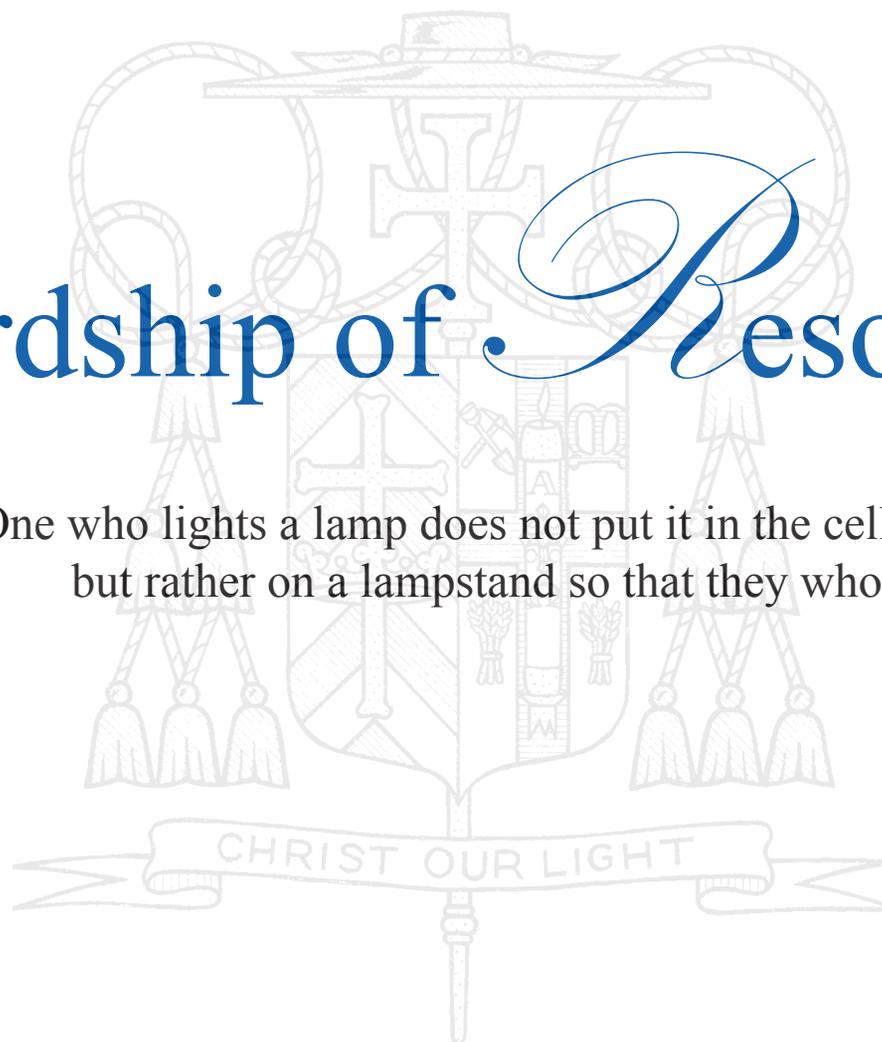


PART IV

Stewardship of Resources

“One who lights a lamp does not put it in the cellar or under a bushel basket, but rather on a lampstand so that they who come in may see the light.”

Luke 12:33



P. Sullivan
12-IV-04

Resource Management

We heard the need to strengthen our fiscal infrastructure, with transparency and accessibility in reporting, appropriate accounting procedures, updated technology in the Diocese and our parishes. There is an urgency to pursue a capital campaign to provide a new revenue stream for the realization of this pastoral plan and to promote an attitude of stewardship throughout the Diocese. There is also recognition that, in order to support charitable giving, it is important to be structured so that the Diocese can comply with the intention of the donor for the use of the gift.

(Introduction)

67 The Diocese of Helena should present a vibrant theology and practice of stewardship, acknowledging that we are each called to receive God's gifts gratefully, tend them carefully, share them justly, account for them openly and return them lovingly to God. The Diocese must make its goals known in a clear, compelling way that includes open accountability for use of resources, and convey the message that each person's gifts and personal involvement in the Church's mission are not just welcome but needed.

68 The Diocesan Pastoral Council would like to acknowledge the professional accomplishments of the Financial Services staff in raising the reporting standards and for attention to the timeliness of Diocesan financial statements. We support the efforts of the staff and Councils to create a sound infrastructure for the Diocese and acknowledge that many of the initiatives listed below are already in some stage of development.

OPERATIONS

69 The following initiatives are currently in process and are affirmed and acknowledged by the Diocesan Pastoral Council:

☞ All Diocesan audits and financial reporting shall continue to be completed according to GAAP (General Approved Auditing Procedures). The Financial Services staff is encouraged to expedite the development of a format for the monthly financial report to the Diocesan Finance Council.

☞ It is recommended that a standardized bookkeeping system be designed for parish financial reporting to the Diocese, and that the parishes fulfill their responsibilities regarding the timely submission of those reports.

☞ The initiation of a position for Development Services Director for the Diocese of Helena is commended; this position will help identify high-potential donors, agencies and organizations and increase funding to Diocesan endowment resources as well as provide leadership for a Capital Campaign.

☞ The Diocesan Deposit and Loan Fund (D&L), which is now automated, must be maintained with transparency and with the capacity of providing parishes and institutions with accurate reports on all accounts up through the previous day's activity.

☞ The Financial Services staff, in conjunction with the Diocesan Building Commission and Finance Council, should expedite their review and update of the existing policy guidelines for new Diocesan and Parish capital projects.

☞ The existing policy/practices regarding the award of Diocesan general liability insurance coverage should be reviewed by the appropriate consultative bodies. If feasible, competitive bids should be solicited for the Diocese's insurance coverage.

☞ Working through the Catholic Mutual Group, our current carrier, all Diocesan properties are in the

process of being appraised. It is recommended that a qualified volunteer be identified within each Vicariate to conduct an annual inspection of all parish facilities located within the Vicariate, recommending any needed repairs or replacements.

☞ The Diocese should evaluate staffing levels, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of personnel in all Chancery offices to insure that priority objectives are achieved. Position descriptions should be written for all employees and the Diocese should commit to paying fair and competitive wages that are based on a market matrix.

FINANCIAL GROWTH

70 It is imperative that the Diocese launch a Capital Campaign. The initiatives in this Pastoral Plan will not come to fruition without a significant infusion of resources and it is critical that the Diocese engage in a Capital Campaign as soon as possible following the release of the Pastoral Plan. With consultation from all appropriate Councils, the Bishop with the Diocesan Administrative Staff should consider the timing, strategy, case statement and financial goal of a Diocesan Capital Campaign.





71 In order to support charitable giving, it is important to be structured so that the Diocese can comply with the intention of donors for the use of their gifts.

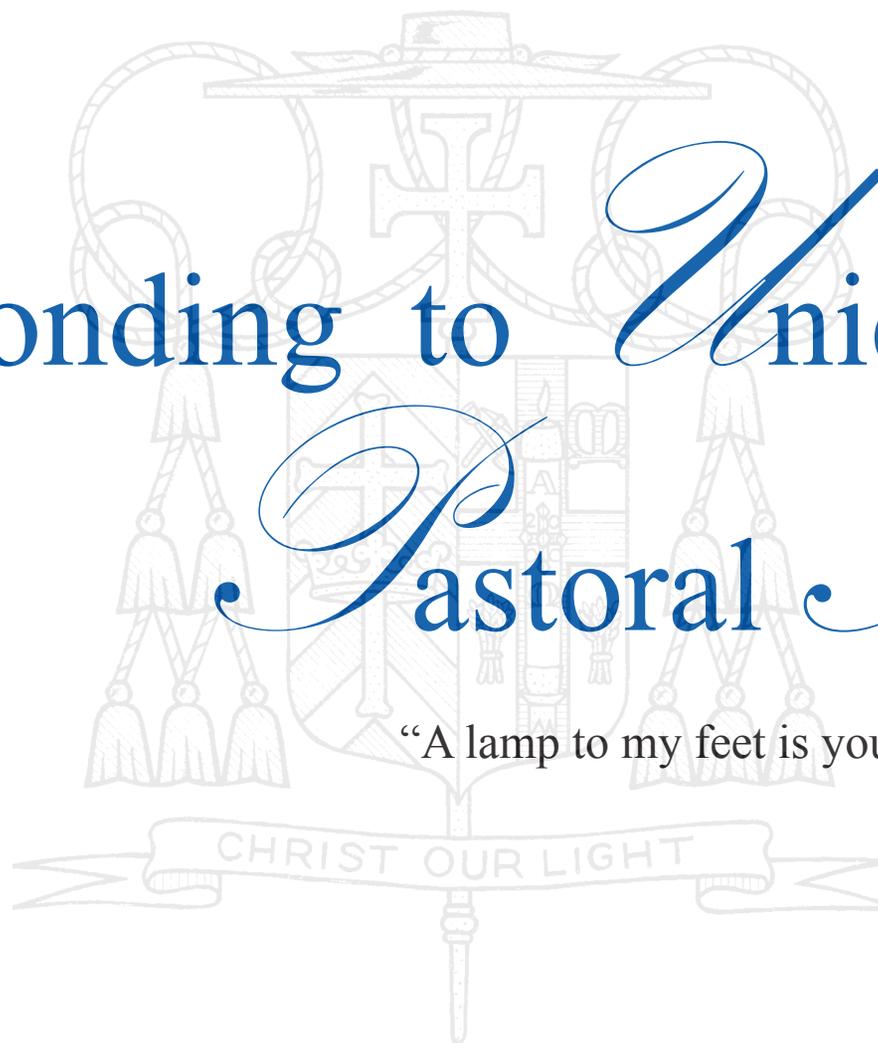
72 To help generate a predictable and increased cash flow, and to build a strong Diocesan financial base for the future, all parishes should establish a Stewardship Committee and implement a Stewardship program. Parishes are encouraged to engage the services and resources of the Diocesan Stewardship Manager. It is hoped that a “Home Mission” mentality will be developed whereby those parishes that are blessed with greater financial resources are supportive of those parishes with limited financial resources.

PART V

Responding to Unique Pastoral Needs

“A lamp to my feet is your word, a light to my path.”

Psalm 119:105



P. Sullivan
12-IV-04

Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life...Only a Church which preserves the awareness of her universality and shows that she is in fact universal is capable of having a message which can be heard by all regardless of regional frontiers.¹⁷

Evangelization in the Modern World
– Pope Paul VI – Apostolic Exhortation –
December 8, 1975

We heard concern that we find more effective ways of inclusion so that the voices and needs of our rural parishes and Native American parishes may be more clearly heard. There is need for recognition and support of other cultures that enrich our parishes so that their needs may be more effectively addressed. (*Introduction*)

NATIVE AMERICAN CONCERNS

We acknowledge and celebrate the Native American communities as the first to hear the word of God in this land and invite missionaries, asking for the seven medicines.

73 The Diocese of Helena, in order to fully and effectively sustain and expand the Catholic faith within the Native American tribes and their peoples living within the Diocese, must be in continuing and fruitful dialogue and responsive to the unique needs of these communities.

74 To facilitate this dialogue and to provide a structured way for it to occur, the Diocese

will gather representatives from each Tribe to serve as Tribal Liaisons with the role of communicating and assisting the formation of Diocesan ministers within the Tribal Communities.

75 The Diocese will select Diocesan representation to work with the Tribal Liaisons to tailor the ministries and response to Tribal needs in a manner true to the faith and effective within their communities and cultures.

OUTREACH TO CATHOLICS OF DIVERSE CULTURES

76 Within the Diocese there are Catholics of diverse cultural heritage who bring special needs and gifts that require consideration. Local parish planning should take into account the culture, history, tradition and language of all cultural groups in the parish. Programs and resources need to be developed on the Diocesan level in order to respond to and incorporate cultural groups most effectively into the life of the parish. *Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry*, USCCB, 2002, provides models for responding to the needs of the Hispanic Catholic community. Other dioceses in the U.S. that have larger numbers of cultural groups may provide resources for best practices.

RURAL CONCERNS

77 The Diocese of Helena is located in an area of 51,922 square miles; much of that area is in rural Montana. The rural parishes throughout the Diocese exist in individual and unique circumstances, yet many of their needs, desires, concerns, hopes and expectations are similar. It is important that communities are prepared for any changes. Through careful dialogue, collaboration and consultation, ministries to and within rural areas can be developed and sustained in a manner that effectively meets the realistic expectations and needs of individual rural communities.

78 The Diocesan Pastoral Council recommends that the Diocese of Helena form a Rural Vicariate, consisting of pastors, pastoral administrators and a lay representative from each rural parish. The Rural Vicariate should meet regularly with appropriate Diocesan personnel to explore their needs and concerns and to develop programs and plans to address those in a mutually effective manner.

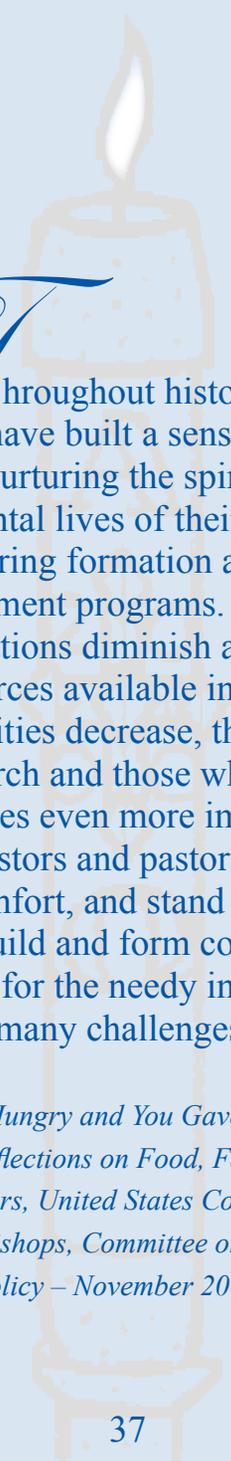
79 Where there is a non-resident pastor, rural parishes need a designated resident liaison serving as the central communicator of information between the community, the non-resident pastor and the Diocese.

80 Rural parishes that, because of their location and/or changing demographics, may be subject to closure or consolidation need to be a full participant in the exploration of the options and eventual decisions that impact their future. This dialogue is done early in the process.

FORMATION

81 Special attention needs to be given to rural communities and their need to be people well formed in the proper role of the laity as leaders in their local Church. Those who take on the additional roles need to be encouraged and affirmed by the Diocese and provided with regular training.

82 Rural parishes need resident parishioners trained for the full cross-section of parish staff roles and ministry roles such as in administration, bookkeeping, adult formation, youth formation and sacramental preparation. The training programs need to be developed in collaboration with rural parishes and the personnel, once trained, must be formally installed and empowered by the Bishop to carry out their duties.



Throughout history, rural parishes have built a sense of community, nurturing the spiritual and sacramental lives of their people, and offering formation and faith development programs. As rural populations diminish and the resources available in rural communities decrease, the role of the Church and those who serve it becomes even more important. ...Rural pastors and pastoral workers serve, comfort, and stand with their people, build and form community, and care for the needy in the face of many challenges.¹⁸

For I was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Domestic Policy – November 2003

Conclusion

*F*ill us with your Holy Spirit,
and enflame our hearts with
the fire of your love.

Renew by the light of the Gospel, the
Church of the Diocese of Helena.

Prayer for the Diocesan Planning Process
– 2005-2006

I have come to the world as its light.

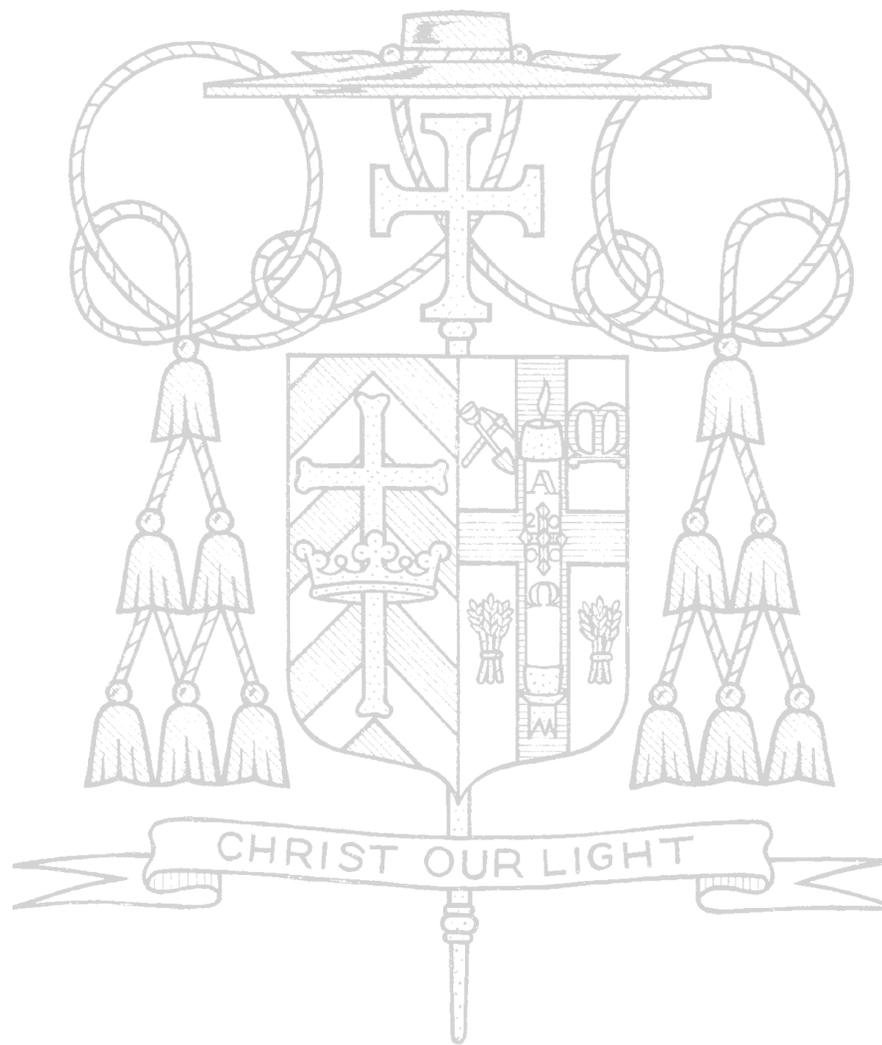
John 12:46

83 It will be the focus and concern of many within our Diocese in the next five years to take the initiatives outlined in this plan from paper to reality. Some will be more easily accommodated and some will involve a more radical look at structures, procedures and staffing questions. It is our sincere desire that the actions that enliven these efforts will be attended by the Holy Spirit and that, as we move forward, we will be renewed and refreshed in our life of faith as the Diocese of Helena. It is our great hope that through our work together we will experience the imperative of the title of this document *Come to the Light!*

P. Sullivan
12-IV-04

Endnotes

1. *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* is a book written by John Steinbeck detailing his travels in 1960 throughout the United States with his poodle, Charley. He wrote that he was moved by a desire to see his country on a personal level, since he made his living writing about it.
2. *The Montana Catholic* is the Diocesan newspaper of the Diocese of Helena. The quotation cited is from the column of Bishop George Leo Thomas in the April 14, 2006 issue.
3. *Ecclesia in America* (The Church in America) is an apostolic exhortation by Pope John Paul II issued in January 1999. *Ecclesia in America* focuses on conversion, communion and solidarity in North and South America. Pauline Books and Media, “*Ecclesia in America*.” paragraph 36 (Boston, MA 1999) 60.
4. *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope) is the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world from the Vatican Council II, promulgated on December 7, 1965. (Guild Press, New York) paragraph 1.
5. Prayer for the Diocesan Planning Process is a prayer said throughout the Diocese of Helena as the process of planning leading to this document moved forward. The Diocesan Pastoral Council recommended that the prayer be printed and widely distributed throughout the Diocese.
6. Pauline Books and Media, *Ecclesia in America*. paragraph 36 (Boston, MA 1999) 60.
7. *Christifideles Laici* (The Lay members of Christ’s Faithful People) is an apostolic exhortation by Pope John Paul II issued in 1988. “The Lay members of Christ’s Faithful People” focuses on the vocation and the mission of the Lay Faithful in the world. Pauline Books and Media. paragraph 15 (Boston, MA 1988) 38.
8. *National Directory for Catechesis* is a document developed by the Committee on Education and the Committee on Catechesis of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. It was approved by the full body of U.S. Catholic bishops at its June 2003 General Meeting. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “National Directory for Catechesis.” paragraph 1 (Washington, D.C. 2005) 4.
9. *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium* is a document from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2005 reflecting on the reality and challenges to the Catholic schools in America. (USCCB Web site 2005) 3.
10. Pauline Books and Media, *Christifideles Laici*. paragraph 33 (Boston, MA 1988) 82.
11. *Aetatis Novae* (On Social Communication) is a Pastoral Instruction on Social Communications written on the anniversary of *Communio et Progressio*, by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in 1992. (Vatican Web site) paragraph 9.
12. Pauline Books and Media, *Ecclesia in America*. paragraph 41 (Boston, MA 1999) 67.
13. Pauline Books and Media, *Ecclesia in America*. paragraph 40 (Boston, MA 1999) 65.
14. *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* is a document of the United States Catholic Bishops which is a resource document to guide the development of lay ecclesial ministry. Promulgated on December 5, 2005 (Origins 2005) 408.
15. Pauline Books and Media, *Ecclesia in America*. paragraph 58 (Boston, MA 1999) 92.
16. *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) is the first Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI issued in 2006 and directed to bishops, priests and deacons; men and women religious and all the lay faithful on Christian Love. (Vatican Web site) paragraph 25.
17. *Evangelization in the Modern World* is an apostolic exhortation written by Pope Paul VI and promulgated on December 8, 1975, (Vatican Web site) paragraph 63.
18. *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers*, Part V, “Responding In Faith,” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Domestic Policy – November 2003 (USCCB Web site).



P. Sullivan
12-IV-04

Prayer

DIOCESAN PLANNING PROCESS

YOU ARE TRULY BLESSED, O GOD OF HOLINESS, ALL LIFE COMES FROM YOU.

Blessed too is your Son Jesus Christ
who is present among us and whose love gathers us together.

FILL US WITH YOUR HOLY SPIRIT, and enflame our hearts with the fire of your love.

RENEW, by the light of the Gospel, the Church of the Diocese of Helena.

KEEP US ALERT in faith to the signs of the times;
OPEN our eyes and our hearts to the needs of all;
INSPIRE US with words and deeds to comfort those who labor and are burdened;
Keep our service of others faithful to the example and command of Christ.

INSTILL in us courage to bear steadfast witness to your love;
ROUSE us to profess the truth of your justice and the wonder of your mercy.

NOURISH AND SHAPE us in ministry and mission;
STRENGTHEN our bonds of unity with the whole Church;
SEND US FORTH to love and serve that all may be lifted up
by the hope of a world made new.

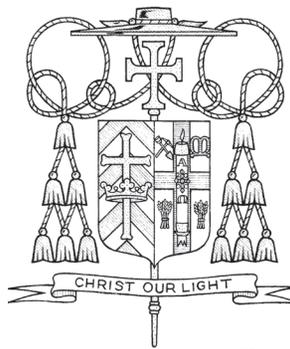
You are truly Blessed, O God of Holiness,
you accompany us with love.
We offer our prayer in the name of your Blessed Son,
Jesus Christ the Lord forever and ever.

AMEN

Prayer based on Eucharistic Prayer for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions III & IV

*Reverend Ed Hislop
Diocesan Liturgical Commission*





P. Sullivan
12-10-04

The Most Reverend George Leo Thomas
Bishop of Helena

Design & Theme Photo by Linda McCray, Clancy
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