

Called, Formed, Sent: Missionary Discipleship and Its Consequences for Ministry in the Diocese of Birmingham

Pastoral Planning Workbook

Convocation for Catholic Leadership

August 3, 2018 - St John the Baptist, Madison

August 10, 2018 - Our Lady of Sorrows, Homewood

Introduction

“Missionary Discipleship is not a program, but the Pope says that it should have “programmatic significance.”¹ We should be willing to invent, revise, subordinate, or even eliminate programs that do not serve the ends of missionary witness.”

(Bishop Baker - Forward Letter, Called Formed, Sent.)

In the following worksheets we will examine, reflect, but (very importantly) plan our parish’s possible response to Bishop Baker’s pastoral vision of “Called, Formed, Sent.”

This process will require a certain level of **TRUST-BASED VULNERABILITY**. If we are to serve the people of God, there should be a level of trusting relationship. We should do our best to be honest with one another, while remaining encouraging and looking towards the future.

For each section, we should write down 2-3 practical changes/tweaks/areas of growth for existing parish activity, as well as 2-3 practical and realistic new initiatives. These solutions should be specific to the individual community, **CUSTOMIZED** to the particular needs of each.

We should establish for ourselves a timeline in which this work should be accomplished. In this way, we take **RESPONSIBILITY** for one another, in an intentional way.

We should establish for ourselves a system of **ACCOUNTABILITY** for both timeline, and the implementation of the work done here.. One of the best ways to do this is to find an accountability partner. One of the individuals or groups present here today would be a great choice. You could speak or meet occasionally to follow up on each others progress.

***Please note:** this workbook is meant to facilitate ongoing conversations about how we live out missionary discipleship in our parish communities. Although it encourages creativity, this workbook is not a criticism or indictment of any existing ministries or programs.*

The highlighted words on this page correspond to Greg Ogden’s Four Earmarks of good Discipleship.²

¹ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 25. Cited hereafter as EG.

² Ogden, G. (2016). *Transforming discipleship: Making disciples a few at a time*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press.

Called - Theia Klisi - Vocation

The message of missionary discipleship is a call to discernment of vocation, not a definite, preformulated plan to be imposed on every parish. Pope Francis encourages each particular church “to undertake a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform.”

(Bishop Baker, Called, Formed, Sent...)

Discuss:

Is every visitor, new member, or guest greeted, welcomed, and in some fashion connected in such a way that they can be contacted or followed up with?

Does every member, visitor, and neighbor in our parish community have the opportunity to hear the Gospel message, of Salvation through Jesus Christ, and the fullness of the truth of that Salvation through His Catholic Church? How do they encounter this?

Does every member, visitor, and neighbor in our parish community know and believe they have been uniquely called by God into an encounter, and a relationship, with Him? How is this idea made known to them?

How have members, visitors, and neighbors indicated that they experienced an Encounter with Christ that was provided by our Faith Community? How do these experiences of Encounter with Christ assist members, visitors, and neighbors in hearing, listening to the voice of God? Have we heard this from them?

In what ways have the faithful been helped in understanding and discerning the call of God through our parish? Who within the parish participates in this?

Times of transition in life require particular attention to God’s call: Confirmation to High School, High School to College, College to Vocation/Career, Dating/Engagement/Marriage, Becoming Parents/Raising Children, Bereavement/Widowed... How are these people in transition guided in discernment?

How have members of our Parish community experienced support and assistance with Vocational Discernment for priesthood/religious life or Marriage?

Once a permanent vocation has been discerned, is there ongoing support for the “call within the call” as St Teresa of Kolkata calls it... How do members of our community discern how God is both calling and how He has gifted them for supporting the parish faith community and sharing the Gospel?

Respond:

1. What are the 2-3 tangible adjustments to existing ministries and 2-3 possible new areas in which to implement the above?
2. What are obstacles or struggles that make this outreach difficult?
3. What are practical, realistic solutions to overcoming those obstacles?
4. What is our timeline?

Formed - Kerygma, Koinonia, Diaconia

“The beginning of this inward transformation is conversion. Conversion starts at a definite point but is not simply a one-time event. True conversion initiates us into a life characterized by contrition for sin, repentance, and continual renewal.”

(Bishop Baker, Called, Formed, Sent...)

Discuss:

Do new, visiting, unchurched or uncatechized people find at our Church shallow points of entry, or reasonable access points into the faith, in proportion to their need and interest?

Do we see evidence that our parish culture, and programming, encourage formation that addresses the moral, intellectual, social, and physical needs of our community?

With regards to Catechesis, how much of our time and resources are spent on parents and how much is spent on children? Is this in line with the Church directives that say Adult Formation should be the preferential option?

Which of these areas receives the most attention and resources in our parish programming: Prayer, Study, Community, or Evangelization?

Do our formation students (adults or children), our disciples, receive mainly informative education, or are they formed in a lifestyle which imitates Christ?

What opportunities for Mystegogia (ongoing catechesis after the reception of sacraments) are offered for the newly confirmed (youth and adult)?

What formation or training do we provide for leaders, facilitators, catechists, teachers, etc...? Is it one-time only, or ongoing? Is it in a mentorship style? Why or why not?

In *The Church in America*, St John Paul II requests our parishes consider ways to “become smaller” and “promote true, human relationships...” Are there formation opportunities that are given in a way that promotes personal relationships, such as small groups, bible studies, off-site, in homes? Why or why not?

Respond:

1. What are the 2-3 tangible adjustments to existing ministries and 2-3 possible new areas in which to implement the above?
2. What are obstacles or struggles that make this outreach difficult?
3. What are practical, realistic solutions to overcoming those obstacles?
4. What is our timeline?

Sent - Kerygma, Koinonia, Diaconia

“I urge parishes to enter a time of discernment to consider the extent to which they embrace the priorities of missionary discipleship. Pastors may wish to consider the formation of leadership teams charged with the analysis and ongoing implementation of a process of missionary reform.”

(Bishop Baker, Called, Formed, Sent...)

Discuss:

Would our parish be described as in maintenance mode, or in mission mode? Why?

Is our bulk of resources set towards preserving what we have done, or is it set towards outreach and growth?

Do many members of our community, particularly parents, believe they share the responsibility of sharing the gospel with others (particularly their children)?

Would people in our parish community say they feel prepared to share the gospel with others? What opportunities exist for them to gain this sense of preparedness?

How easy is it for members, especially new members and recent RCIA confirmandi, to find and participate in ministries of outreach? How easy is it for them to participate in starting a new one, if they believe they have a genuine call to do so?

Respond:

1. What are the 2-3 tangible adjustments to existing ministries and 2-3 possible new areas in which to implement the above?
2. What are practical or struggles that make this outreach difficult?
3. What are practical, realistic solutions to overcoming those obstacles?
4. What is our timeline?