



DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

Office of the Bishop

August 25, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When I announced *Courageously Living the Gospel* to you in 2018, it was an ambitious set of priorities and goals that revolved around three major areas: serving the poor, accompanying families and youth and sharing our faith. These are the areas you said were most important to move forward, prepare for the future and spread the Kingdom of God, right here, right now.

Now, two years into our new vision, here's how things have progressed with the goals we set out to accomplish.

CATHOLIC IMPACT INITIATIVES

Our plan called for parishes to collaborate on regional Catholic Impact Initiatives that address issues of great need in our communities. Because of these efforts, our Church has been able to promote new family counseling services, start a sports league to engage with families and instill values of faith on the field. We are establishing a large food bank in southern Hillsborough County and obtaining funds to renovate cabins at Our Lady of Good Counsel Camp. We are also coming together to feed the homeless, minister to youth and young adults and assist older adults with educational workshops.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We also committed to establishing 8 to 10 new affordable housing properties to address this critical need in our community. I am pleased to say, so far, we have added three additional affordable housing properties in our Diocese. In the works, are at least 6 other affordable housing initiatives. Everyone deserves to have a safe place to call home. We are doing our part to make this possible with your support and generosity.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

In the area of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, we asked our parishes to make this a priority, and possibly start new ministries if none existed. Each community has young people that need our support. At the

diocesan level, we had planned to hire three regional associate directors of youth and young adult ministry to support and guide our parishes. Due to COVID 19, we have only been able to hire one so far, but what an impact this has had on youth ministry in the northern parishes of our diocese. **CAMPUS CATHOLIC MINISTRY**

Our goal to increase participation in Catholic Campus Ministry by Easter of 2021 is moving forward with so much grace, spirit and joy! At the Catholic Student Center at USF, young people are encountering Christ's love and mercy, and it is changing hearts and lives in a real, concrete way.

NEW CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Our goal of establishing a Catholic elementary school by 2021 has been delayed due to COVID 19 but with God's continued guidance, we will make this school a reality. To date, we have been researching what is feasible and where the greatest need for a school would be. When more details are available, I will share them with you.

EVANGELIZATION

Our goal to partner with parishes to develop evangelization strategies, including hospitality and intercultural competency and to equip parishioners as missionary disciples is ongoing. Diocesan-wide trainings were held in 2018 and 2019 and we continue to emphasize the need for each parish to be more welcoming and to show hospitality. This includes becoming, as our Holy Father calls it, a "field hospital" for those who are wounded by the emotional and traumatic forces at work in our world.

THANK YOU

Thank you for all you have done to make these steps forward possible. With God all things are possible. It has been God strengthening us through prayer, the Sacraments and most of all, love. With the Lord to guide us, we will not quit, abandon our dreams, or feel helpless. But instead, we will hold on, move on and lean on the One who is almighty, powerful and all loving, God. This is our faith. May you continue to "stand firm in the faith, be courageous and be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

May God bless you!

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Most Reverend Gregory Parkes
Bishop of St. Petersburg