



COURAGEOUSLY  
Living the Gospel

# COURAGEOUSLY

## Living the Gospel 2.0

### A Fresh Start for a New Day

Summer 2021

## “GOD HAS CALLED EACH OF US” Message from Bishop Gregory Parkes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our world has changed and so have we. We’ve grown, stretched our imaginations, discovered new possibilities and have endured the dark days of a global pandemic. At this time, change is continuing in our Church and in our world. We trust that God’s plan is at work through all of this. We also believe that **God has called each of us for a time such as this**. Working and praying together, let us focus on the priorities that matter most for evangelization and advancing God’s kingdom. This includes welcoming families, youth and young adults back to our churches.

With renewed enthusiasm and building on the creativity we have demonstrated, we are reminded that our sacred purpose is to proclaim the Good News and invite all to encounter the love and mercy of Jesus Christ. Our vision of **Courageously Living the Gospel** continues to guide us on this path.

I invite you to read about the new goals we seek to accomplish together as we renew our vision and look forward to a fresh start for this new day that the Lord has made. Let us respond with courage, faith, hope and joy.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
Bishop Gregory Parkes



“Stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong.”  
1 CORINTHIANS 16:13



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# YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

**Original Goals:** One hundred percent of parishes will establish and/or enhance youth ministry opportunities by July 1, 2020. The Diocese will hire three diocesan Regional Associate Directors of Youth and Young Adult Ministry by July 1, 2019.

**Why these goals are essential for our future:** Statistics show young people are leaving the church at an alarming rate. However, young people are essential to the Church. We are called to accompany them on their faith journey so that each may encounter Jesus Christ and know that He is the Way, the Truth and Life.

**What We Accomplished:** Sixty-five percent of parishes have a Youth Ministry program. Mike Buckler was hired as the new Regional Associate Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the northern counties of the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

**New Goals:** One hundred percent of parishes will establish and/or enhance Youth Ministry opportunities by July 1, 2022 as determined by annual responses to our diocesan youth ministry survey. Mike Buckler's territory will be expanded into Northern Hillsborough County effective immediately. The Diocese will hire a Spanish speaking Associate Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministry by July 1, 2022 and the final Associate Director will be hired by July 1, 2023. The Diocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry Office will continue to support parishes through training, mentoring and program development.



## CAMPUS MINISTRY

**Original Goal:** We will increase student participation by 1,000% (4,000 individuals) at established Campus Ministry communities and create new Catholic student communities for all local colleges and universities in the Diocese by Easter of 2021.

**Why this goal is essential for our future:** Young adults are increasingly claiming no religious affiliation. However, young adults are also more likely to experience the negative effects of isolation, fear and hopelessness. An encounter with Christ and a faith-filled community can set them on a positive path.

**What We Accomplished:** We are increasing our student community by approximately 100 new students per academic year at the University of South Florida Tampa Campus. During the pandemic year all events and liturgies were offered on virtual platforms to keep the community engaged. Post-graduate and Praise & Worship ministries were added. (See Catholic Impact Initiatives on page 4 to learn about other Campus Ministry achievements.)

**New Goal:** Our Campus Ministry will be expanded to include Saint Paul's Outreach missionaries in the Fall of 2021 academic year. Additional missionary resources will enable us to double our new student contacts each academic year at the University of South Florida Tampa Campus.

## CATHOLIC EDUCATION

**Original Goal:** The diocese will establish a new Catholic elementary school (location to be determined) to open for the 2021-2022 school year.

**Why this goal is essential for our future:** Catholic schools are centers for evangelization that teach the whole child, intellectually, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

**What We Accomplished:** Due to COVID-19, the timing was not right to pursue the establishment of a new school. However, a feasibility study for a new Catholic school has been completed and submitted to Bishop Parkes.

**New Goal:** Planning for a new Catholic school will be initiated in 2023.



## FAMILY MINISTRY

**Original Goal:** All parishes will enhance or establish family ministries to respond to the diverse needs of families by Pentecost 2020.

**Why this goal is essential for our future.** Families are struggling with many pressures of the modern life. Yet our Church teaches that families are a sign of God's presence. "The family is where we are formed as people. Every family is a brick in the building of society." – Pope Francis

**What We Accomplished:** In partnership with the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers, many parishes participated in remote formation for equipping families to pass on the faith. English and Spanish Language sessions were offered in the Fall of 2020 and Winter of 2021. Parish training sessions in Strong Catholic Families/Strong Catholic Youth are ongoing.

**New Goal:** Parish teams will gather in regional sessions to plan strategies for enhancing or establishing family ministries (January 2022 to August 2022). All parishes will enhance or establish family ministries to respond to the diverse needs of families by July 1, 2022.



# EVANGELIZATION & MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

**Original Goals:** The Diocese will partner with pastors and parishes for successful assessment, training and implementation of effective evangelization and family ministry strategies, including hospitality and intercultural competency by Pentecost 2019. Every parish will equip parishioners as Missionary Disciples who are inspired to invite and accompany others by Pentecost 2020.

**Why these goals are essential for our future:** In March of 2021, a U.S. Gallup Poll found that U.S. Church membership across all faith traditions fell below the majority of adults for the first time in the survey's history. Each Catholic is called by baptism to be a disciple of Christ and to make other disciples.

**What We Accomplished:** Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI) conducted training to help parishes understand assessment and implementation of effective evangelization strategies. They provided guidance on the process for creating Parish Action Plans that are aligned to **Courageously Living the Gospel**. Many parishes have remained connected to parishioners via technology and communication tools and are helping children, teens, and adults to continue their growth in the faith despite the challenges of COVID-19. Diocesan partnerships with Dynamic Catholic/Dynamic Parish, Revive Parish, and other best practice resources have provided numerous parishes the opportunity to equip parishioners as missionary disciples.

**New Goal:** Parish teams will gather in regional sessions to plan strategies for fostering and empowering missionary disciples (September 2021 – December 2021). Every parish will equip parishioners as Missionary Disciples who are inspired to invite and accompany others by July 1, 2022.



## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Why this goal is essential for our future.** Everyone deserves a safe place to live but our community has a shortage of affordable homes and homeless men and women still struggle to find shelter. "When somebody has a home and an address, they have safety, they have security and they have dignity. That's something that every single person should have." – Bishop Gregory Parkes

**Original Goal:** We will establish 8 – 10 new locations of affordable housing facilities for families and/or singles throughout the Diocese by the end of 2021.

**What We Accomplished:** While in the midst of a global pandemic, we are still on track to meet and exceed our goal with six projects completed and seven projects under construction/renovation.

### 🏠 Hernando County

St. Teresa Apartments, Brooksville  
Opened in 2019

### 🏠 Citrus County

St. Benedict Apartments, Crystal River  
Under Construction

### 🏠 Hillsborough County

Bella Vista Apartments, Tampa  
Opened in 2019

Mercy Oak Apartments, Tampa  
Under Construction

Las Villas Apartments, Ruskin  
Under Renovation

Angels Senior Living, Tampa  
Under Construction

Angels Senior Living, Lutz  
Under Construction

Vincent Oaks, Tampa  
Under Renovation

La Tierra Verde, Tampa  
Opened in 2021

### 🏠 Pasco County

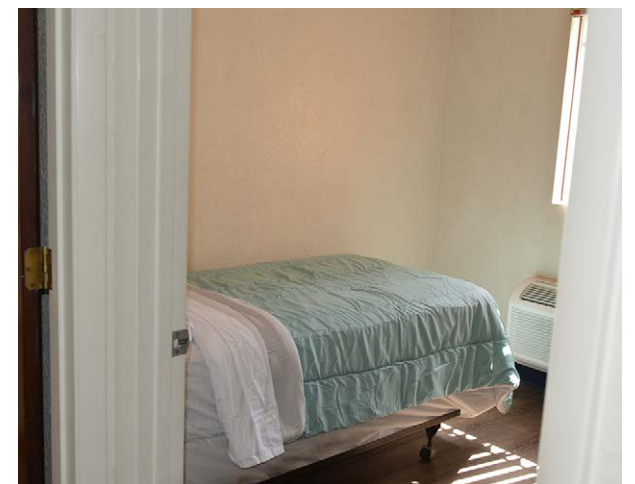
Bethany Family Apartments, Dade City  
Converted into Affordable Housing in 2020

St. Vincent de Paul CARES,  
Ozanam Village II and III, New Port Richey  
Opened in November 2020/May 2021

Angels Senior Living  
Under Construction

### 🏠 Pinellas County

To Be Determined



## NEXT STEPS

### Courageously Living the Gospel Parish Team Empowerment Sessions

Parish teams are invited to interactive sessions on Priority Areas of Ministry that will advance our mission for **Courageously Living the Gospel (CLG)**. These gatherings will be led by diocesan leaders along with national ministry leaders.

### Mentoring Sessions for Priority Areas of Ministry

- Building Intercultural Competencies – (Already completed May, 2021)
- CLG: Continuing our Mutually Shared Vision – September 14, 15, 16, 2021
- Missionary Discipleship – November 16, 17, 18, 2021
- Family Ministry – February 15, 16, 17, 2022
- Youth and Young Adults – April 26, 27, 28, 2022
- Deanery/Diocesan Initiatives - Dates TBA





# CATHOLIC IMPACT INITIATIVES

**Original Goal:** Each deanery will launch a Catholic Impact Initiative that addresses one local community issue and mobilizes cross-parish creativity to establish desired outcomes. Initiate implementation by December 31, 2019.

**Why this goal is essential for our future:** Compassion for our brothers and sisters who are facing numerous challenges motivate us to bring the love of Christ to a hurting world.

**What We Accomplished:** Each deanery identified one area to address through collaboration and sharing of resources, time, talent and treasures. Specific projects are listed below.

## Renovate Youth/Family Cabins

**Original Goal:** Update the 12 camper cabins at Our Lady of Good Counsel Camp, including the insulation of cabins, new doors and windows, air conditioning/heating and new bunk beds

**What We Accomplished:** The first step has been completed; the insulation of the cabins. All six parishes in the deanery agreed to contribute a combined total of \$33,000 per year. This project will take five to six years to complete.

**Location:** Citrus County (Northern Deanery)

## Host Multi-Parish Youth Events

**Original Goal:** Host two youth events to increase faith and the community's broader sense of Church and host an annual major youth event at Bishop McLaughlin Catholic High School.

**What We Accomplished:** St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish held a Youth Retreat entitled "Risen" in April of 2019 with nearly 100 participants from the northern part of the deanery. The second event was a Youth Rally on March 7, 2020 at Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish with 85 participants from the southern part of the deanery. These events helped to inspire teens to understand their call to holiness and to grow closer to Christ and to be open to God's plan for their lives. The major event planning was paused due to COVID-19.

**New Goal:** Plan and host a major youth event at Bishop McLaughlin Catholic High School during the 2021/2022 school year. The hope is that all nine parishes in the area will participate in the event.

**Location:** West Hernando County and West Pasco County (West Central Deanery)

## Expand Services to the Hungry

**Original Goal:** Relocate and expand the area Food Bank (Nativity Outreach) in order to better serve the hungry in southeast Hillsborough County.

**What We Accomplished:** A 12,000 square foot food bank is under construction in Dover, near a major food supply distributor in Lakeland. The project started in January of 2021 and should be completed by October 2021. To help support this endeavor financially, parishes have made a specific financial commitment over three years to offset a portion of the \$1 million mortgage.

**Location:** Southeast Hillsborough County (Southeast Deanery)

## Establish Youth Soccer League

**Original Goal:** Establish a Catholic youth soccer league with multiple parish participation with the hope of attracting families and instilling values of faith on the field.

**What was accomplished:** The first season kicked-off September 7, 2019 and was enormously successful. Parish teams were formed at Our Lady of the Rosary, St. Mark, St. Timothy, St. Mary, and Most Holy Redeemer. At the end of the season, a championship tournament was held and the winner in each division played for the "Catholic Cup" trophy. Half-way through the second season, all games were canceled because of the pandemic.

**New Goal:** The league plans to resume play this fall. Our Lady of the Rosary, St. Mark, and St. Mary will participate. Other parishes in the area will be encouraged to participate.

**Location:** North Central Hillsborough County and South Central Pasco County (North Central Deanery)

## Develop Campus Ministry at UT

**Original Goal:** Develop comprehensive Campus Ministry at the University of Tampa.

**What we accomplished:** Weekly Mass was offered in the campus chapel and regular confessions were also offered on campus. Plans were in place to offer faith enrichment, Eucharistic Adoration and retreats. All that came to a stop with COVID-19. The University is now permitting clergy on campus and the plan is to restart a robust program for the fall semester. About half the parishes in the deanery have sent at least one priest to celebrate Mass or hear confessions at UT.

**Location:** South Central Hillsborough County (South Central Deanery)

## Offer Educational Workshops

**Original Goal:** Collaborate to provide an array of educational classes across the parish communities that will be geared to spiritual growth and common needs encountered in daily life.

**What We Accomplished:** Over 1,200 parishioners responded to a survey soliciting feedback on topics of interest. Based on those results, several offerings were scheduled. The first workshop, "How to Make the Most of Your Doctor's Appointment" was offered in the fall of 2019 at three parishes. Other presentations that were scheduled for Spring of 2020 were canceled due to COVID-19. The deanery shifted to a virtual format and workshops were offered on understanding Medicare and coping with loss and grief. Participating parishes were Sacred Heart, St. Anthony the Abbot, St. Joseph, St. Mary Our Lady of Sorrows, St. Rita.

**Location:** East Pasco County and East Hernando County (East Central Deanery)

**New Goal:** Educational offerings will be planned for the fall of 2021 using a mix of in-person and virtual sessions.

## Provide Food for the Homeless

**Original Goal:** Every parish in the deanery will provide a meal to Pinellas Hope Residents at least monthly, provide financial support to Pinellas Hope and raise awareness about Pinellas Hope and the issue of homelessness.

**What We Accomplished:** Parish volunteers have prepared and delivered meals to residents of Pinellas Hope throughout the pandemic. After a COVID-19 interruption, Mass or a Communion service is offered at Pinellas Hope each Sunday once again, supported by parishes in the deanery. COVID-19 has prevented the level of awareness and fundraising that was originally envisioned. However, the commitment to Pinellas Hope remains strong.

**Location:** Central Pinellas County (Southwest Deanery)

## Increase Access to Counseling Services

**Original Goal:** Create opportunities for counseling, especially regarding marital problems, divorce, family challenges, adolescent difficulties, grief, anxiety and depression.

**What We Accomplished:** Parishes joined together to create a network of counselors able to assist parishioners and promoted ways to access counseling, grief support and spiritual direction services. These services have continued virtually throughout the pandemic and provided much-needed support as people suffered personal, physical, financial and spiritual difficulties.

**Location:** North Pinellas County (Central Deanery)

## Minister to Students on College Campuses

**Original Goal:** To reach out in ministry to the Catholic students at Eckerd College and USF, St. Petersburg

**What We Accomplished:** Parish priests started visiting the campus at Eckerd College for Sunday Mass, meals and faith sharing. Parish priests also started visiting the St. Pete campus of USF for Bible study and fellowship. COVID-19 paused these efforts but the hope is that activities will resume in the fall of 2021 and continue to grow.

**Location:** South Pinellas County (Southern Deanery)

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