

“PARISHES MAKING IT HAPPEN”

Message from Bishop Gregory Parkes



Introducing ***Courageously Living the Gospel*** as our vision has brought new life and hope to our Diocese. We introduced it during our 50th anniversary and it has been well received. It has given us a renewed sense of purpose and a renewed sense of mission.

Right now we are in the process of bringing that vision to life and it’s our parishes that are breathing life into the vision. Our parishes are making it happen by developing a parish pastoral plan in union with ***Courageously Living the Gospel***.

I thank all of our priests, deacons, religious and parish leaders who have given so generously of their time to make this first year a time of excitement, hope and most all of joy!



Sincerely Yours in Christ,
Bishop Gregory Parkes



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Our Sacred Purpose

We, the Catholic Diocese of St Petersburg, are a joyful community of disciples proclaiming the Good News and inviting all people to encounter the love and mercy of Jesus Christ.

The Diocese of St. Petersburg includes all people in the counties of Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco, Hernando and Citrus. While many people identify as Catholic, it is also our “mission territory.”



A Daily Reflection

This reflection is focused on the three priorities for ***Courageously Living the Gospel*** and is meant to help us become more mindful of how God is working through us every day.

MY SACRED PURPOSE

PROCLAIM	INVITE	ENCOUNTER
Thank you, God, for those who have proclaimed to me. In what ways have I proclaimed the Gospel by an act of kindness or by sharing the Word or a blessing?	Who inspired me to be closer to Jesus today? In what ways did I encourage others by listening or sharing an invitation to serve or worship when prompted by the Spirit?	How did I encounter the grace of God today in the Eucharist, an uplifting conversation or in the beauty of creation? In what ways did I give my time to truly encounter another?

DIOCESAN INITIATIVES

Affordable Housing Forum

Close to 30 individuals with experience in affordable housing gathered at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of St. Petersburg on August 14, 2018 to discuss how to address an important community need – housing for low-income, working families and individuals. “We believe every person has the right to a decent and safe place to live,” said Bishop Gregory Parkes. “We as a Church believe we can make a difference.”

The meeting was the first-ever “Bishop’s Community Forum on Affordable Housing” and it was the first step in achieving one of the goals set forth by the new mutually shared vision of the Diocese. One of the goals identified in the vision is to establish 8-10 new locations of affordable housing in our community.



New School Plan in the Works

The Office of Catholic Schools and Centers is in the process of studying demographic data, enrollment trends, and financial projections toward the goal of establishing a new Catholic elementary school (location to be determined) for the 2021- 2022 school year. Identifying the location is based on a number of factors including enrollment and financial support, proximity to and availability at other Catholic schools, and analysis of population trends and movement.



New Hires Will Expand Services for Youth & Young Adult Ministry

Mike Buckler will serve as the new Regional Associate Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Northern Counties of the Diocese of St. Petersburg effective June 3, 2019. Mike will be working closely with parishes in Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco counties to help establish and enhance youth and young adult ministry.



Mike has 13 years of experience in full-time parish youth ministry and a Master of Divinity from the University of Notre Dame. He has served as Director of Youth Ministry at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Land O’ Lakes for the past five years.

The plan is to hire a second Regional Associate Director for Hillsborough in the Fall of 2019 and a third Regional Associate Director for Pinellas in the Spring of 2020.

Partnering with Parishes

The Diocese of St. Petersburg partnered with Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI) to conduct training to help parishes understand the vision. We have provided guidance on the process for creating Parish Action Plans that are aligned to **Courageously Living the Gospel**.



Last Fall and Winter, over 500 leaders participated in training to deepen their understanding of the vision and prayerfully discern how they can contribute to the vision, renew their faith and boldly proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Maria Flores of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission attended the training with her pastor, Father Gilberto Quintero and 10 other parish leaders.

“I am so grateful to our diocese and our bishop for being supportive and open-minded to our community. As we prepare for the vision, we see lots of great ideas for growth,” said Flores.



Embracing Cultural Diversity

Earlier this year, four diocesan leaders, Carlos Flores, Dale Brown, Father Gilberto Quintero and Jeri Drummond were trained in the Intercultural Competencies program of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Ministry leaders who attend these trainings increase their capacity to welcome, receive, and encourage all emerging cultural groups to assume their role of leadership in the Church and, in turn, to train other ministry leaders to do the same. They are planning to train parish leaders so that all can flourish in this area!



Faith on Campus

Campus Ministry seeks to increase participation by 1000% (4,000 individuals) and it all starts with prayer. Father Justin Paskert, USF Director of Campus Ministry, led an Advent prayer campaign for and by students. More than 40,000 Memorares were offered for the faith of students on campus.



Also, last September, Father Justin added a new Sunday Mass on campus to increase student participation. This is in addition to the Sunday Mass that is celebrated at the Catholic Student Center across from campus.

Father Justin also launched eight Disciple Groups during Lent that met once a week to be formed as intentional disciples. He had hoped to sign up 80 students but more than 100 enrolled!

In Addition, a new Catholic Bulls Alumni Society has been established! They held their first event on April 6 at Bellarmine Hall, the faith-based housing complex on the campus of the Catholic Student Center. The organization seeks to strengthen the future of the USF Catholic community by providing opportunities for faith-based fellowship and service to support current students and alumni.

“The energy that Courageously Living the Gospel has brought to our parish and to the diocese as a whole is helping to bring new life to the parish and new energy that we haven’t seen in a long time.”

Joshua Dowling, Communications Coordinator
St. Joseph Parish, Zephyrhills

DEANERY INITIATIVES



Catholic Impact Initiatives

Two deanery-wide projects will impact the lives of many college students as they grow, learn and explore their identity in Christ.

PROJECT: Develop a comprehensive Campus Ministry to the Catholic Students at the University of Tampa and those interested in the Catholic Faith.

PARTICIPATING PARISHES: Christ the King Catholic Church, Tampa; Incarnation Catholic Church, Tampa; Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church, Tampa; Our Lady of the Bay Chapel MacDill AFB, Tampa; Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Tampa; St. Joseph Catholic Church, Tampa; St. Lawrence Catholic Church, Tampa; St. Patrick Catholic Church, Tampa; St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, Tampa (South Central Deanery)

PROJECT: Establish a Catholic Campus Ministry for University of South Florida-St. Petersburg Campus.

PARTICIPATING PARISHES: Blessed Trinity Catholic Church, St. Petersburg; Cathedral of St. Jude the Apostle, St. Petersburg; Holy Family Catholic Church, St. Petersburg; Mercy of God Polish Mission. St. Petersburg; Most Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church, Gulfport; St. John Vianney Catholic Church, St. Pete Beach; St. Joseph Catholic Church, St. Petersburg; St. Mary Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church, St. Petersburg; St. Paul Catholic Church, St. Petersburg; St. Raphael Catholic Church, St. Petersburg; Transfiguration Catholic Church, St. Petersburg (Southern Deanery)

In addition to the two projects listed above, parishes are collaborating to address community issues and mobilize cross-parish creativity to make a difference! Seven other “Catholic Impact Initiatives” listed below will harness the good will of our faith community and make an impact.

PROJECT: Provide an array of educational classes offered by the local Catholic community to support the daily life needs of individuals and families within our parishes and surrounding communities.

PARTICIPATING PARISHES: Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Dade City, St. Anne Catholic Church, Ridge Manor, St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, San Antonio, St. Anthony the Abbot Catholic Church, Brooksville, St. Joseph Catholic Church, Zephyrhills, St. Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, Masaryktown, St. Rita Catholic Church, Dade City (East Central Deanery)

PROJECT: Provide counseling services to families and individuals at a convenient location and time to help those struggling with family and divorce difficulties, stress, anxiety or other issues.

PARTICIPATING PARISHES: Espiritu Santo Catholic Church, Safety Harbor; Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, Dunedin; St. Matthew Catholic Church, Largo; St. Cecelia Catholic Church, Clearwater; St. Brendan Catholic Church, Clearwater, Light of Christ Catholic Church, Clearwater, All Saints Catholic Church, Clearwater, St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church, Clearwater, St. Ignatius Catholic Church, Tarpon Springs, St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church, Palm Harbor. (Central Deanery)

“We’re hoping to give people more opportunities to be a living witness to what it means to be a missionary disciples and a witness to Christ.”

Father John McEvoy
St. Anne Parish, Ruskin

PROJECT: Upgrade the cabins at Our Lady of Good Counsel Camp in Citrus County to better serve youth in the community.

PARTICIPATING PARISHES: Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church, Inverness; Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church, Beverly Hills; St. Benedict Catholic Church, Crystal River; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Citrus Springs; St. Scholastica Catholic Church, Lecanto; St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, Homosassa Springs (Northern Deanery)



PROJECT: Develop a Catholic Youth Sports League with a focus on good sportsmanship, fun and faith.

PARTICIPATING PARISHES: Corpus Christi Catholic Church, Temple Terrace; Epiphany of Our Lord Catholic Church, Tampa; Immaculate Conception Haitian Mission, Tampa, Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, Tampa; Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church, Land O’Lakes; Santa Maria Mission, Tampa, St. Joseph Vietnamese Mission, Tampa, St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, Tampa; St. Mary Catholic Church, Tampa; St. Paul Catholic Church, Tampa; St. Timothy Catholic Church, Lutz; USF Catholic Student Center, Tampa (North Central Deanery)

PROJECT: Relocate and rebuild the area Food Bank in order to better serve the hungry in southeast Hillsborough County. A new location and a new facility will allow for a more robust response to the 40 (plus) Food Pantries in that geographical area – including seven Catholic parishes.

PARTICIPATING PARISHES: Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, Tampa; Mary, Help of Christians Catholic Church, Tampa; Nativity Catholic Church, Brandon; Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission, Wimauma; Prince of Peace Catholic Church, Sun City Center; Resurrection Catholic Church, Riverview; St. Anne Catholic Church, Ruskin; St. Clement Catholic Church, Plant City; St. Francis of Assisi, Catholic Church, Seffner; St. Stephen Catholic Church, Valrico (Southeast Deanery)

PROJECT: Provide increased assistance to the homeless population of Pinellas Hope to include direct service, education and financial support.

PARTICIPATING PARISHES: Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, Seminole; Holy Cross Catholic Church, St. Petersburg, Holy Martyrs of Vietnam Pastoral Mission, Largo; Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Pinellas Park; St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church, Clearwater; St. Jerome Catholic Church, Indian Rocks/Largo; St. Justin Martyr Catholic Church, Seminole; St. Matthew Catholic Church, Largo; St. Patrick Catholic Church, Largo (Southwest Deanery)



PROJECT: Support youth in the community by offering special faith enrichment, social and service events.

PARTICIPATING PARISHES: Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, New Port Richey; St. Frances X. Cabrini Catholic Church, Spring Hill; St. James the Apostle Catholic Church, Port Richey; St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, Spring Hill; St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church, Hudson; St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church, Trinity; St. Theresa Catholic Church, Spring Hill; St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, New Port Richey; St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, Holiday (West Central Deanery)

PARISH INITIATIVES

Growing Young

A major focus of ***Courageously Living the Gospel*** is to accompany youth and young adults to help them be courageous in their faith. Parish implementation teams have been researching ideas, engaging in constructive dialogue and developing initiatives that enhance opportunities for youth and young adult formation, fellowship and involvement in parish life. Parishes have submitted a pastoral plan that help these young people feel welcomed, needed and most of all loved.

"I am excited to see how our parishes are expanding their programming, training their leaders and collaborating with other parishes to give our young Church an encounter with Jesus Christ," said Ryan Phelan, Diocesan Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

For example, Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission has hired a new youth minister who is organizing weekly events for youth to help them become disciples. Our Lady of Fatima is starting a new youth newsletter to connect teens/parents with the larger parish community. Our Lady of Grace in Beverly Hills is recruiting volunteers for the youth program to develop service opportunities. St. Joan of Arc Parish, in Spring Hill is creating an outdoor recreational space for youth.



Sharing Jesus

Parishes that equip parishioners to be missionary disciples are fulfilling the mandate of Jesus from Matthew 28:19, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations."

New pastoral plans are in place to help parishioners enter more deeply into a relationship with Jesus and share the graces that flow from this encounter.

Last fall, 30 parishes in the Diocese of St. Petersburg participated in the survey called "Disciple Maker Index," which was developed by the Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI).

Parishes are developing missionary disciples who share Jesus with their families, neighborhoods and wherever God may lead them. For example, Mary Help of Christians Parish, in Tampa is starting a new outreach to the neighborhood to address local needs and concerns. After 90 years in the neighborhood, leaders say, "It's about time we make a personal effort to know, assist and positively impact those nearest to us."

Also, St. Anne Parish, in Ruskin is establishing a quarterly training opportunity to teach people how to share their personal witness stories. and St. Clement is starting the Good Shepherd Neighborhood Program to keep parishioners from falling through the cracks.

"Courageously Living the Gospel has enlivened a new spirit of excitement. It's brought a lot of different people together to refocus and realize what it means to be a missionary disciple."

Mylene Taylor, Youth Minister
Our Lady of Grace Parish, Beverly Hills



Strengthening Families

Courageously Living the Gospel places a renewed emphasis on marriage and family life to inspire families to be courageous in the vocation to which God has called them.

"Parishes that are family-friendly and family-oriented provide a wonderful support system to parents and couples who are sometimes facing enormous pressures and challenges," said Brian Lemoi, Executive Director of the Diocese of St. Petersburg's Department of Evangelization, Formation, Youth and Family Life.

For example, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish, in Spring Hill is creating a new Family Ministry team to attract and welcome new families. St. Theresa Parish, in Spring Hill is launching the Strong Catholic Families program. Christ the King Parish, in Tampa will host a yearly forum for small group leaders to better serve families and respond to their needs.



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