

Unleash the Gospel:

Items Pertaining to Parishes & Pastors *(from Archbishop Vigneron's June 2017 Pastoral Letter)*

Preaching and Teaching the “Hard Topics”: “We must provide our pastors, catechists and others with practical help and a systematized approach to presenting Christian morality. In particular, priests and deacons need training and resources for successfully preaching on the ‘hard topics.’ Our presentation of the Gospel’s demands must be pastorally wise, meeting people where they are at and avoiding ‘truth bombs’ that will only turn them away. It must honestly engage the culture, looking for ‘seeds of the Word’—partial truths and inklings of the Gospel even where mixed with error and confusion” (pp. 11-12).

Encounters With Jesus: “Preaching and catechesis in our local Church must foster such encounters [with Jesus], especially by explaining our love relationship with Christ as the purpose of the liturgy. . . For many us, even for clergy, there is need for a renewed encounter with Jesus” (p. 13).

Preaching the Kerygma: “Priests and deacons, in particular, should consider how to make use of opportune moments to preach the kerygma, especially to those who are not practicing the faith—occasions such as weddings, funerals, parish social events, baptismal preparation for parents, and sacramental preparation for children and families” (p. 14).

Building Up Community: “Pastors and other leaders should reflect on how to deepen the experience of communion among their parishioners. Do some people attend Mass in isolation, not knowing or being known by others? Do some have the impression that relating to God is sufficient and relating to others in the parish is unnecessary?” (p. 15).

Bible Study: “An evangelizing parish is one in which parishioners continually study, talk about, and pray with the Scriptures. To this end, parishes must make Bible study resources available, particularly to put the Scriptures in context for those who know them only through the readings proclaimed at Sunday Mass. Parishioners also need to be taught how to do lectio divina, reading Scripture in prayerful conversation with God” (p. 16).

Quality of Sunday Liturgies: “Parishes must also focus sustained attention on the quality of the Sunday liturgy experience, especially from the perspective of newcomers and newly returning Catholics” (p. 17).

Fostering Charisms: “Discerning and pasturing the use of charisms is one of the most challenging and yet rewarding aspects of ecclesial leadership. Priests, deacons and lay ecclesial ministers in the Archdiocese should consider how to foster the use of charisms and to make all their evangelistic and pastoral endeavors ‘charism-based’” (p. 19).

The New Evangelization: “The leadership of our priests and deacons in unleashing the Gospel is crucial for this mission; every pastoral work must make a contribution to the new evangelization. As priests, we must resist the idea that we are ecclesiastical civil servants whose primary task is to maintain the organization. Rather, the organization is always at the service of the Gospel. Our role is to be spiritual fathers who bring God’s children to birth and nurtures them to maturity in Christ” (p. 20).

Boldly Proclaiming the Gospel: “Although a priest’s highest role is the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, it is preaching the Gospel that draws people to Christ in the first place and enables them to receive the full saving benefit of the sacraments. Priests and deacons need to be bold in proclaiming all the elements of the Gospel, not only those parts that people want to hear. Preachers need ongoing formation in how to do so with compassion, conviction and clarity” (p. 21).

Ministry to Families: “Among the many ministries entrusted to our parishes, the first priority is to assist families to live as domestic churches. . . . Parishes must look for ways to make catechesis and sacramental preparation family-based, helping parents grow in discipleship so that they can then form their children. Parishes also need to do everything possible, within their limits, to ensure that struggling families are being cared for. . . .” (p. 25).

Joyful of the Gospel: “A parish of glum faces and grumpy attitudes will attract no one. Let our faces show our joy, which is not based on our changing circumstances but the unchanging presence of the risen Lord in among us” (p. 26).

Importance of Hospitality: “Every parish should deliberate on how to welcome those who have never come to church, or who have not been there in years, and who may cross the threshold with some trepidation. . . . Let us make our parishes places where everyone who attends Mass can also make friends, find mentors, and feel known, loved, and supported” (p. 27).

Intercessory Prayer Teams: “One way to avail ourselves of the power of intercession is for each parish to form an intercessory prayer team which is regularly informed of the parish’s evangelistic initiatives, prays specifically for their success, and receives regular updates on how their prayers are being answered” (p. 30).

Family Mentoring and Accompaniment (summary): Parishes are to mentor and accompany families by (1) implementing the plan developed by AOD Central Services by January 2020; (2) form family discipleship groups; (3) promote family life and evangelization; (4) use existing parish programs and events as opportunities for families to encounter, grow, and witness; (5) help parishioners reclaim their sacrificial role as Christian husbands/wives and fathers/mothers (p. 33).

Parish Culture (summary): Pastors are to recommit to daily personal prayer and intercession as their highest priority, and lead their parish to do the same. They are to provide regular time for Eucharistic Exposition and Marian Devotion, and provide generous availability of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. By June 2019, they are to create a transformational Sunday experience; lead the parish in a spirit of radical hospitality; and provide “shallow entry points” for people who are seeking Jesus (p. 34).

Parish Functions (summary): By December 2017, parishes are to have in place a prayer and intercession team. By December 2019, parishes are to begin incorporating a model of total evangelization developed by the AOD Central Services (p. 35).

Parish Leadership (summary): Parishes are to establish a parish leadership team around the pastor as a normative practice, with team members accountable to the vision of the Archbishop and the mission of the parish (p. 35).

Ongoing Clergy Formation (summary): By August 2019, the Episcopal Council and Presbyteral Council are to create a system of support to clergy, including “calling the presbyterate to ongoing formation and ensuring they have time for it” (p. 36).

Unleash the Gospel:

Items Pertaining to Individuals & Families

(from Archbishop Vigneron's June 2017 Pastoral Letter)

Evangelization: “Evangelization is, very simply, proclaiming the good news of Jesus to those around us. This proclamation is to be both in word and in deed. If we share the good news of Christ’s love in words only, not demonstrably living what we preach, people will rightly suspect us of hypocrisy, and we may even give Christianity a bad name. On the other hand, if we share the good news in deeds only, people will not learn of the One who is the source of the joy and divine love we carry within us” (p. 4).

“‘Heart speaks to heart,’ as Cardinal John Henry Newman put it. The invitation is effective if it is made by a joyful disciple, one who has found joy in responding to the Lord’s demands” (p. 12).

“The new evangelization is not a membership drive, nor is it an effort to shore up a code of conduct. Rather, it is a love affair. All are invited to encounter Jesus and let their hearts be captured by Him” (p. 13).

“Personal testimony has an indispensable role in evangelization. Testimony has a unique power to touch hearts, since it is almost impossible to ignore the witness of someone who has encountered Jesus personally and whose life has been transformed by Him” (p. 14).

“Evangelization leads to the Eucharist, since the Eucharist is the fullness of communion with Jesus and His whole Church. On the other hand, the Eucharist leads to evangelization, since our ability to announce the Gospel springs from the passion and resurrection of Christ which is made present anew in the Eucharist. . . . At every Mass the Church—that is, all her members—are newly empowered and sent forth to bring Christ into the world” (p. 17).

“ . . . an urgent priority is to ensure that those who are to invite others to Christ have a deep personal relationship with Christ themselves. Some signs of this relationship are: receiving the sacraments regularly; engaging in personal prayer every day; reading Scripture daily; constantly learning more about the faith and seeking to live by it; and engaging in long-term regular service activities” (p. 18).

“The engagement of every lay person, according to their gifts and state in life, is essential for the mission of the Church to be fulfilled. ‘Each member of the lay faithful should always be fully aware of being a member of the Church yet entrusted with a unique task which cannot be done by another and which is to be fulfilled for the good of all’ (Pope John Paul II, *The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People*). Each one should reflect on how the Lord is calling them to bring the Gospel into their particular spheres of influence both through their deeds and their words” (p. 20).

Community & Parish Membership: “Although it is common for people today to say they are ‘spiritual but not religious,’ or that they believe in Jesus but not in the Church, in truth there can be no relationship with Jesus that does not include His Church. God relates to His people not as isolated individuals but as a people, a family, united with one another in deep bonds of love (Eph. 4:1-6). We learn to give and receive God’s love in and through our relationships with one another. As St. Augustine taught, when we say ‘amen’ before receiving Holy Communion, we are saying ‘amen’ not only to Christ the head, but to all the members of His body” (p. 15).

“Do some people attend Mass in isolation, not knowing or being known by others? Do some have the impression that relating to God is sufficient and relating to others in the parish is unnecessary? Are all aware of their responsibility to encourage and build up the faith of others? Do all recognize the need to forgive the offenses of others, to bear with their faults and failings, to avoid cliques and factions, to overcome social and cultural barriers, and to reach out to those who may feel lonely or neglected?” (p. 15).

Social Media: “I encourage all Catholics who use social media to recognize it as a powerful platform to engage others in conversation about the faith. At the same time, we must studiously avoid the temptation to lower our standards of charity when using social media. . . . Our goal is not to win arguments but to win souls” (p. 24).

Family-Based Catechesis: “In recent generations, the pattern for many Catholics parents has been to delegate their children’s religious education entirely to the parish, assuming that by doing so they fulfill their obligation to pass on the faith. Parishes must make every effort to resist this pattern, since catechizing children has little effect if parents themselves are not living as disciples of Jesus. Parishes must look for ways to make catechesis and sacramental preparation family-based, helping parents grow in discipleship so that they can then form their children” (p. 25).

Importance of Parents: “Parents are the primary evangelizers as well as the primary catechists and educators of their children. Their role is absolutely irreplaceable. The role of fathers in particular is essential, since one of the greatest factors influencing a child’s future practice of the faith is the religious involvement of his or her father. . . . parents need to realize there is no greater success and no greater gift they can give their children than a relationship with Jesus and His Church, which endures through eternity” (p. 25).

Evangelization within Families: “A family of joyful missionary disciples is one where sacrificial love, after Christ’s example and in the power of His Spirit, is the principle that governs all of life. The first priority is given to participation in the Sunday liturgy and daily prayer; decisions about activities and finances are made according to the mind of Christ; the spouses talk freely to one another and to their children about the Lord; the faith is enculturated through various family and cultural traditions and celebrations; and, above all, the mutual gift of self is the norm for all relationships. In such families, the spouses are witnesses of Christ to one another, and often even the children, through the simplicity of their faith, evangelize their parents” (pp. 25-26).

The Witness of Families: “I encourage families who are living the Gospel to exercise radical generosity in inviting others to share in your family life, even if you are well aware that it is not perfect. For instance, consider engaging in a ministry or ongoing service project *as a family*, so that others can witness how you relate to one another and how you raise your children” (p. 26).

Encounter, Grow, Witness: “Every person in the Archdiocese is called to encounter Jesus anew, to grow daily as His disciple, and to give witness to the power of His mercy” (p. 28).

“To follow Jesus is to be in a constant process of growth, like the seed that fell on rich soil. We seek to be more like Jesus, to treat others as He did, to pray as He prayed, to love as He loved, and to honor God in every area of our lives, including marriage, family life, finances, work, and leisure activities. Growing as His disciple demands a daily surrender to the one who loved us and gave His life for us. . . .” (p. 29).

“Many Catholics tend to think our goal is essentially to be good and make it to Heaven. In fact, our goal is to extend the Kingdom of God on earth by making the world a place where Christ is known and loved, so that as many people as possible are brought with us to eternal life. To live fully as a disciple is to make disciples. All we need is this conviction: ‘Knowing Jesus is the best gift that any person can receive; that we have encountered Him is the best thing that has happened in our lives, and making Him known by our word and deeds is our joy’” (p. 29).

Christian Family Identity (summary): The Archbishop charges families to (1) *reclaim Sunday* by attending Mass, and by spending time together; (2) *place Scripture at the center* of family life; (3) *share family meals* without distractions; (4) *pray together* as a family; (5) *demonstrate reconciliation* through mutual forgiveness; (6) *model Christ’s love* by welcoming and helping neighbors; and (7) *have parents be the primary witnesses of faith* to their children (p. 33).

An Outline of *Unleash the Gospel*

Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron's 2017 Pastoral Letter

1. **Introduction** - the pastoral letter is the charter for implementing the fruit of Synod 16 (p. 3).
2. **Foundational Conviction** - the Church in the Archdiocese of Detroit is resolved to obey the Holy Spirit and be made by Him into a band of joyful missionary disciples (p. 3).
3. **Catechetical Exposition**
 - 3.1 ***The Missionary Nature of the Church*** - we must proclaim the good news of Jesus to those around us, in both word and in deed (p. 4).
 - 3.2 ***Reading the Signs of the Times in Southeast Michigan*** - Synod participants recognized the many challenges facing the AOD (p. 5).
 - 3.3 ***The Roots of the Crisis*** - society's rejection of Christianity is rooted in *scientific fundamentalism, moralistic therapeutic deism, and secular messianism* (pp. 6-7).
 - 3.4 ***Good and Bad Habits*** - bad habits are (1) a worldly notion of the Church, (2) spiritual lethargy, (3) a status quo mentality, (4) fear, and (5) a complaining attitude (pp. 7-8). Good habits the AOD needs are (1) docility to the Spirit; (2) apostolic boldness; (3) a spirit of innovation; (4) a spirit of cooperation; (5) confidence in God; and (6) an attitude of gratitude (p. 9).
4. **Guideposts** (guides for implementing the propositions endorsed by Synod 16)
 - Guidepost 1: The New Pentecost** - we seek a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit (pp. 10-11).
 - Marker 1.1: Acts 29:** we are writing (and living) a new chapter of Acts of the Apostles
 - Marker 1.2: Repent and Believe in the Gospel** (pp. 11-12).
 - Marker 1.3: Signs and Wonders** (pp. 12-13).
 - Guidepost 2: With Eyes Fixed on Jesus** - we propose Jesus to all people as their Savior
 - Marker 2.1: Encounter with Jesus** - we need a renewed encounter with Christ (p. 13).
 - Marker 2.2: The Kerygma** - the initial, ardent proclamation of the Gospel which a person to accept the Gospel and entrust his or her life to Christ (p. 14).
 - Marker 2.3: Testimony** - personal testimony is indispensable in evangelization (p. 14).
 - Guidepost 3: The Word Made Flesh** - Jesus is encountered today in His Church (p. 15).
 - Marker 3.1: The Communion of the Church** - Christ is present in His Church (p. 15).
 - Marker 3.2: Scripture** - God's word is living and active; need for Bible study (p. 16).
 - Marker 3.3: Reconciliation** - a renewal of the Sacrament is needed in the AOD (p. 16).
 - Marker 3.4: The Holy Eucharist** - essential for evangelization; importance of Eucharistic Adoration; need to focus on quality of the Sunday liturgy (pp. 17-18).
 - Guidepost 4: Equipping for the Service of the Gospel** - parish as school of evangelization
 - Marker 4.1: Evangelizing the Evangelizers** - everyone is in need of evangelization, because everyone is always in need of a deeper conversion (p. 18).
 - Marker 4.2: Equipping the Evangelizers** - need to develop practical skills (pp. 18-19).
 - Marker 4.3: Charisms** - everyone has gifts from the Holy Spirit; these must be discovered, developed, and used to build up the Body of Christ (pp. 19-20).
 - Guidepost 5: No Bystanders** - *everyone* in the AOD is called to the New Evangelization
 - Marker 5.1: The Laity** - their involvement is crucial to fulfilling the Church's mission
 - Marker 5.2: Priests and Deacons** - essential role in unleashing the Gospel (pp. 20-21).
 - Marker 5.3: Consecrated Life and Movements**
 - Marker 5.4: Youth and Young Adults** - unique ability to reach their peers (pp. 21-22).
 - Guidepost 6: Person-to-Person Engagement** - most effective way of sharing the Gospel
 - Marker 6.1: Going Out** - evangelization must become more person-to-person (p. 22).
 - Marker 6.2: Accompaniment** - we must help and encourage new disciples (p. 23).
 - Marker 6.3: Healing** - role of Reconciliation, Anointing, and healing ministry (p. 23).
 - Marker 6.4: Media** - social media is a powerful platform to engage others (p. 24).

Guidepost 7: Families - at the very heart of our efforts to unleash the Gospel (pp. 24-25).

Marker 7.1: Ministry to Families - parish must help family live as a domestic church

Marker 7.2: Evangelization within Families - essential role of parents (especially fathers); faith must be lived out as a family; members evangelize each other (pp. 25-26).

Marker 7.3: The Witness of Families - families are to witness by their example (p. 26).

Guidepost 8: Attraction - need for joy, hospitality, and generous service to the poor

Marker 8.1: The Joy of the Gospel - we must appear joyful, not glum (p. 26).

Marker 8.2: The One Sheep - reaching the unchurched must be a priority (p. 27).

Marker 8.3: The Parish as a Place of Welcome - churches must be welcoming places, offering friendship, community, love, and support (pp. 27-28).

Marker 8.4: Evangelical Charity - service to the poor must witness to Jesus (p. 28).

Guidepost 9: Encounter, Grow, Witness - meant to include everyone in AOD (p. 28).

Marker 9.1: Encounter - encountering Jesus is meant to change our lives (pp. 28-29).

Marker 9.2: Grow - discipleship is a constant process of spiritual growth (p. 29).

Marker 9.3: Witness - our goal “is to extend the Kingdom of God on earth . . . so that as many people as possible are brought with us to eternal life” (p. 29).

Guidepost 10: Calling Upon the Advocate - prayer links us to the power of the Spirit (p. 29).

Marker 10.1: The Star of Evangelization - we must call upon Our Lady (pp. 29-30).

Marker 10.2: The Role of Intercessors - need for intercessory prayer teams (p. 30).

Marker 10.3: Victory over Spiritual Opposition - learn to resist the evil one (p. 30).

5. Propositions and Action Steps

Action Step 1.2: Family Mentoring and Accompaniment - parishes must help families by (1) implementing the AOD Central Services plan; (2) form family discipleship groups; (3) support movements promoting family life and evangelization; (4) use all existing parish programs and events to help families *encounter* Jesus, *grow* as His disciples, and *witness* to Him; and (5) help adults understand and live their identity as spouses and parents (p. 33)

Action Step 1.3: Christian Family Identity - families must (1) reclaim Sunday; (2) place Scripture at the center of family life; (3) share regular meals without distractions; (4) have regular family prayer times; (5) practice reconciliation; (6) model Christ’s love; and (7) have parents become the primary witnesses of faith to the family (p. 33).

Action Step 2.1: Parish Culture - parishes must “build a culture of life-changing personal encounter with Jesus that permeates every aspect of parish life and that leads to a loving encounter of our neighbor (e.g., children, youth, adults, and seniors)” (p. 34).

Action Step 2.2: Parish Functions - AOD Central Services and parishes must “equip, empower, support and send forth individuals and families in mission (e.g., evangelization, social and economic transformation, and spiritual and corporal works of mercy)” (p. 35).

Action Step 2.3: Parish Leadership - parishes must “establish a parish leadership team around the pastor as a normative practice, where team members develop shared responsibility and accountability both to the vision of the Archbishop and the mission of the parish. Extend the same team dynamics and practices to all parish and/or school staff” (p. 35).

Action Step 3.1: AOD Central Services—First Priority - “build a framework for mutual accountability between pastors, parishes, schools and the Central Services. To build a foundation for this, heal wounded relationships, build trust and practice transparency”

Action Step 3.2: AOD Central Services—Second Priority - “invest in people, processes and tools that ensure effective, anticipatory and responsive communication to all those engaged or seeking engagement with the Church” (p. 37).

Action Step 3.3: AOD Central Services—Third Priority - partner with SHMS to develop ongoing formation opportunities for all (p. 38); help individuals and parishes acknowledge and break down barriers that divide us (race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc.) (p. 39); and help re-envision the mission, funding, and governance of Catholic schools (p. 40).

Conclusion - the AOD can benefit from the loving example of Father Solanus Casey (pp. 41-42).

PRAYER SERVICE: “UNLEASH THE GOSPEL”

Opening Hymn (Melody: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore You*)

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| May our faith Unleash the Gospel | In life's labors and encounters |
| In the Name of Christ the Lord, | God wants us His love to share; |
| That our local Church, thru God's grace, | Reaching out to those who suffer |
| Might be renewed and restored. | Loneliness, fear, or despair. |
| We are called to share the Good News, | We are heralds of God's kindness, |
| Bearing witness in Christ's Name; | Bringing peace to broken hearts; |
| So that all might believe in His Love, | Letting His Spirit work through us, |
| And thus His praises proclaim. | Sharing the grace Love imparts. |

Psalmody

All: Praise the Lord from the heavens, alleluia.

Left: Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the heights.
Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts.

Right: Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, shining stars.
Praise Him, highest heavens, and the waters above the heavens.

Left: Let them praise the Name of the Lord. He commanded: they were made.
He fixed them forever, gave a law which shall not pass away.

Right: Praise the Lord from the earth, sea creatures and all oceans,
Fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy winds that obey His word;

Left: All mountains and hills, all fruit trees and cedars,
Beasts, wild and tame, reptiles and birds on the wing;

Right: All earth's kings and peoples, earth's princes and rulers;
Young men and maidens, old men together with children:

Left: Let them praise the Name of the Lord, for He alone is exalted.
The splendor His Name reaches beyond heaven and earth.

Right: He exalts the strength of His people. He is the praise of all His saints,
of the sons of Israel, of the people to whom He comes close.

Left: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit . . .

Right: As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.

All: Praise the Lord from the heavens, alleluia.

Reading

Is. 52:7,10

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, "Your God is King!" . . . The Lord has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.

The Word of the Lord.

Intercessions

Father, touch our hearts and bless us, *And help us bear witness to Your love for all.*

Fill us with Your life and peace, O Lord, *That we may glorify Your Holy Name.*

Guide and protect Your Church, O God, *And let her be a true light to the nations.*

Send the Holy Spirit to renew Your people, *So we may serve You with all our hearts.*

Show us the way to true peace, *And help us work for the coming of Your Kingdom.*

Give us wisdom, courage, and strength, *That we may truly help Unleash the Gospel.*

Our Father

Synod Prayer (revised)

God our Father, You have called us to be witnesses to Jesus and have sent us on a mission to lead all people to encounter Him. Send Your Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and enkindle our hearts, so that we may grow daily as Your disciples. Empower us to face bravely the challenges of our time. Keep us close to You, together with Jesus Your Son, Mary our Mother, and St. Anne our patroness as we strive to Unleash the Gospel. Transform us into a band of joyful missionary disciples, who will bring the message of Jesus' power and mercy to every person in southeast Michigan. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Closing Hymn: (Melody: *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You*)

May our parish be transformed by
The power of Divine Grace,
That the mission we are called to
We may now with joy embrace.
As God's people, we now gather,
With His Spirit as our guide;
That a renewed Church may come forth,
In which Christ's love does abide.

Let us share our faith in Jesus
In our witness, words, and deeds;
That all may believe as they see
The joy to which true faith leads.
Joining hands to work together,
Preaching Christ to all today:
Let us place our trust in Jesus
As we live, and share, and pray.