

**To: All Pastors & Parish Staff**

From: Bishop Medley and the Office of Evangelization & Discipleship

Date: March 23, 2022

Re: A Six-week Diocesan Prayer Project for the Easter Season, April 23/24 through May 28/29

(A digital copy is available at: <https://owensborodiocese.org/prayer-mission-plan-2022/>)

Overview-

As we continue our journey as a diocese to learn about and embrace the call for a New Evangelization, we do so with a new mission “To be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God.”

We are inviting each of our 78 parishes to join in prayer together during the Easter Season. It is recommended that the prayer be distributed in your pews and prayed as a community following the “Prayer after Communion.” (See the note below from the Worship Office to clarify the placement and limited duration of the prayer). **Please pray the Prayer for Evangelization as a parish, beginning the Weekend of April 23/24 through May 28/29, 2022.** You are encouraged to use the Preaching Series below and to be creative in promoting the mission and evangelization prayer throughout the parish.

Following this prayer effort, we invite you to collect the prayer cards from the pews and use them throughout 2022 at parish meetings. This will help to highlight our mission and to pray for a powerful movement of the Holy Spirit throughout our diocese.

You are receiving 2-3 posters with the mission statement and 25-175 prayer cards, depending on your parish size. Our 14 parishes with Hispanic ministry received 1-2 Spanish-language posters as well. If you need additional prayer cards or posters, please contact Jeff Andrini at [jeff.andrini@pastoral.org](mailto:jeff.andrini@pastoral.org) and we will mail them to you.

**Preparation Checklist:**

- Determine if you have enough prayer cards and posters, request more immediately if needed
- Submit bulletin announcements to bulletin editor by April 1
- Hang posters by April 9
- Submit “Prayers of the Faithful” suggestions by April 1
- Place prayer cards in pews by April 20
- Remove prayer cards prior to Pentecost by June 1
- Participate in the Preaching Series during this prayer period

## **A word from Lauren Johnson from the Worship Office...**

The holy Mass is the most powerful prayer of the Church. In the Mass we truly participate in our Lord's salvific work to both glorify God the Father and make holy the Body of Christ (SC 10). We are being transformed by the Word of God and uniting ourselves with Christ's ultimate sacrifice and outpouring of love on the cross. When we hear the words of dismissal to "go and announce the Gospel of the Lord" (RM 144), we have been fully equipped for that timeless mission through our participation in the great prayer of holy Mass. After partaking in such a sublime mystery, the practice of adding additional prayers to the end of Mass are ordinarily unnecessary and discouraged. However, if prayers are added on a temporary basis due to a legitimate need, it would be most appropriate for it to come after the Prayer after Communion, which is where the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* considers a suitable place for comments or "brief announcements, should they be necessary" (GIRM 90).

Many initiatives and goals arise throughout the years, and after this time of pandemic many of us are trying to get back on track. As a diocese, we believe that it is integral now more than ever to remember our *common and never-changing* mission of evangelization. So, throughout the month of January, every parish is invited to join together in praying the "Prayer for Evangelization" following the Prayer after Communion. As we collectively and intentionally lift up our mission in prayer to the Lord in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass, may God hear us and supply the grace we need to live out our mission courageously together as the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Owensboro.

### **Bulletin Announcements:**

April 9/10- The Diocese of Owensboro is promoting our mission in our work for evangelization throughout our diocese. We are 78 parishes, 17 schools with 1 mission: "To be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God." Please join us in prayer as we pray the prayer for evangelization for six weeks of the Easter Season April 23 through May 29. Prayer cards will be placed in the pews in the coming weeks.

April 16/17- Beginning next week at all weekend Masses, we will join with the other parishes of the diocese praying a prayer for evangelization for six weeks. Our diocese is striving to incorporate the learning of our leaders over these past four years and to mobilize our parishes to be welcoming places that make present God's kingdom in the here and now.

April 23-24- This weekend is the beginning of a six-week period of prayer for evangelization that we might live our mission, "to be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God." We are so blessed to have our Catholic faith and to gather as a community each week to receive the presence and power of Jesus. Please join us in praying as we discern how God is calling us to grow as disciples of Jesus and to share our faith with others.

April 30-May 1- What does it mean to have a mission in life and how does your faith impact this mission? As baptized members of Christ's Church, we are called to live the mission of Jesus. Please pray that as a Diocese and parish, we are equipped to live our mission.

May 7/8- Rate yourself 1 to 10, (1 being not at all and 10 be extremely close). How closely do I follow Jesus in my life? Spend 10 minutes each morning this week sitting with Jesus and reflecting on his teachings and your desire to follow him as closely as possible. As you are touched by God in this prayer time, be ready to share God's love with others.

May 14/15- The teachings of Jesus are not easy. In fact, the commandment that Jesus offered in today's reading is extremely difficult, "love one another." It is only when we receive God's love personally, that we are then transformed to be bearers of God's love to others! Look for ways this week to spend time with God and look around you to see people that need to experience God's love through you.

May 21-22- Come Holy Spirit! Evangelization is not just our work; it is a participation in the work of God. It is done in collaboration with God and we need to learn to experience and trust the Holy Spirit. As we move toward Pentecost, please keep praying for a new Pentecost in our Church!

May 28-29- Each of us have gifts that are needed in our Church to love, support and lead others to a deeper experience of God's love and daily provision. It is up to all of us to be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God. What is one step you can take in being a closer disciple of Jesus?

### **Prayers of the Faithful:**

April 23/24- We pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all the parishes in our diocese as we embrace the mission "to be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God." We pray to the Lord.

April 30-May 1- We pray that each member of our parish would come to understand the mission of Jesus more fully and grow in their knowledge and practice of missionary discipleship. We pray to the Lord.

May 7/8- We pray for the grace to more clearly hear Jesus' voice in our daily lives and to experience his presence in new and powerful ways and to reflect his love to others in all we do and say. We pray to the Lord.

May 14/15- We pray that all our members would come to experience the powerful love and mercy of Jesus and that we would reflect his love to the wider community. We pray to the Lord.

May 21/22- We pray for a deeper understanding and knowledge of the Holy Spirit and that we would be inspired and equipped to be a parish that lives the mission of Jesus. We pray to the Lord.

May 28/29- We pray that each of us would experience God's love in our daily lives and live the mission of Jesus in all the various places our careers and lives take us. We pray to the Lord.

### **Easter Preaching Series- On Mission!**

You are invited to participate in the following preaching series and to be creative in promoting the theme each week and speaking to the overall mission of our diocese. Integrate the following ideas as you are able and see how the weekly bulletin announcement and prayers of the faithful help to do the same. Consider promoting the themes in your bulletin column and in promotion throughout the week prior to inviting people into the series. Finally, try to illustrate the points with stories from your own life and ministry that will help people see how God is working in and through your life. It helps people to think, "If God did that in your life, maybe, he could do that in mine too." We will be praying for you as you prepare and proclaim this series and asking for a movement of the Holy Spirit throughout our diocese.

### **April 23/24- Theme: We have a mission! (Second Sunday of Easter)**

The parishes of our diocese were asked to pray a prayer for evangelization beginning this weekend and throughout the Easter Season after the prayer after communion. Parish priests and parish staff members have been on a journey together over the past four years studying the Living as Missionary Disciples document from the United States Catholic Bishops. The fruit of this experience is a clear mission, which is on the prayer card in all our pews. We have 78 parishes, 17 schools, and ONE Mission: "To be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God."

In today's gospel, we hear that Jesus came to visit the disciples as they were huddled in fear and he comforts them by saying, "Peace be with you." Like the early disciples we too have many worries and fears in our lives today. Name some worries or fears you have or that others may be experiencing. Jesus comes to us with that same message, "Peace be with you." But he does not stop there. He not only comforts their fears and spends time with them. He sends them on mission. Once comforted, once touched by the love and peace of Jesus, we too have something to offer the world. Jesus says, "As the Father sent me, so I send you." And still, he does not send us alone, he breathes on us and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit." The mission of the Church is not a mission simply for our priests and parish staff, in fact, it is not primarily for these employees of the Church. Rather, the mission is for all of us, in all the places our lives take us, we are called to live and proclaim the goodness and love of our great God. We are called to be missionary disciples, disciples on mission.

- First Reading: As we enter into the Easter season, we hear the Book of Acts proclaimed, which is filled with the story of God's power and presence among the people and this presence was often felt through the followers of Jesus. They actually made the kingdom of God present through their actions. In the Our Father prayer, we ask that values of God's kingdom would be present "on earth, as it is in heaven." God makes these values present in

the world through his followers. As disciples of Jesus, we are invited into union with God and God's purposes in our world.

- The Responsorial Psalm: As we reflect on how God is working in our lives and in our community, we must respond with the words of today's responsorial psalm, "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting."
- Second Reading: Like John in the book of Revelation, we too can be overwhelmed by what God asks of us. We too might feel that we are not worthy or the job is too big or dangerous, but God has these same words for us today, "Do not be afraid." For God is always with us and the mission of Jesus is still being lived out through you and me throughout the Church today. We have a mission! How is God inviting you to live it out within our Church and in our wider community?

### **April 30/May 1- Theme: Are you on Mission?!? (Third Sunday of Easter)**

The Easter Season readings are so amazing. We see how the disciples of Jesus come to the understanding of who Jesus is and their role in the Church and world. The fruit of their experience of God is awe inspiring.

In the gospel today we hear the story of Jesus visiting some of the disciples after the resurrection. He yells out to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" and they respond, "no." He tells them to cast their nets to the other side and all of a sudden their luck changed. Are you and I ready for this kind of move of the Holy Spirit in our midst? I believe that Jesus wants to bless our parish and give us new energy and vision to make a difference in the lives of people who live in our parish boundaries, but do you see yourself on mission for Jesus? Are you a missionary to the people far from Jesus in our area? What did you think a missionary was when you were growing up? And how has this definition changed for you today? (Share your personal thoughts to this question.)

Jesus is asking you and me the same question he asked, St. Peter, "do you love me?" If we answer yes to this question, our lives ought to make present God's kingdom in the here and now. Each of us know people that doubt God's existence and at times we may have doubts as well. Each of us meet people regularly that have difficult crosses to bear and we can help ease their suffering and walk with them. The mission of Jesus is for each baptized members of the Church. Will you invite Jesus to be the center of your life today and ask him to inspire you for the mission he has for you this week and for the rest of your life?

- First Reading: We all have different gifts, personalities, abilities and dispositions, but we are all called by God to reflect God's love and be on the mission of Jesus. In the first reading, the disciples are face to face with the Jewish authorities giving an account of their words. They are in hot water, but they are filled with the spirit and bold in speaking God's name. Not everyone can speak in front of crowds or articulate all of our Catholic teachings, but each of us are called to be on mission to live lives that reflect God's love and plan.
- The Responsorial Psalm: If you hear his voice today, harden not your hearts and invite Jesus into the center of your life.

- **Second Reading:** The second reading is a vision of heaven and challenges us, on this side of eternity, to worship God with our lives. Our worship of God and our intimate relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the very things that lead to an abundant life this side of eternity. God deserves our love, honor, respect and worship. When we live for God and take the focus off of us and accept the mission we are called to embrace as followers of Jesus, so many good things can happen. And like those fishermen in today's gospel, be ready to be awe inspired, because our God works in abundance. Let's all pray today that every member of our parish will recognize and accept that we each have a role to play in the mission of Jesus. Our Church needs all of us to be fully engaged disciples of Jesus, sharing our gifts and talents with the world. I invite each of us to grow in our relationship with Jesus and to recognize that everyone of us has a role to play in our parish and in the world.

**May 7/8- Theme: Follow Jesus! (Fourth Sunday of Easter)**

Pope Francis is known for doing things a little unconventional. This story may or may not be true. One day, he asked his personal driver to take him out for a secret ride in the country side of Rome- no guard and no reporters. As soon as they got out of the city, the Pope asked his driver, a 30 year old olive skinned guy with a beard and long hair if he could drive. Pope Francis got behind the wheel and floored it. He was blasting down the road and when right by a police car. He got pulled over and the officer approached the car. Pope Francis rolled down the window and asked the rookie officer if he could help him. The officer panicked and went back to his car and radioed in. Sergeant, I've made a terrible mistake. I've pulled over someone really important. Is he the governor? No sir, more important. Is he the president of Italy? No, more important. I think I just pulled Jesus over. The sergeant tried to control his laughter and said why do you think you pulled over Jesus? Well, I can't be sure it Jesus, but this much I know for sure- the Pope is his chauffeur.

The point of my story is that like this young police officer, some people think they are following Jesus, but how can they know for sure? In our gospel today, Jesus tells us that his followers know his voice and they follow him. To be disciples of Jesus, is to actually do what he did. This is not an easy thing to do. Jesus tells us to be kind, generous, to provide for those in need, to love our enemies and to not judge others. These are hard teachings to be sure, but as disciples, we are called to strive to be holy and reflect God's love to the world. This comes about as we foster an intimate and personal relationship with God. As we come to Mass today and receive Jesus's body and blood, let us recommit ourselves to lives that are positive advertisements for what it means to be a Christian. Let us strive to live a life that looks like the values of Jesus and follow where he leads us. And to do this we need to spend time with Jesus every day.

The truth is, that Jesus is with us every moment of our lives. So it is not hard to spend time with him. We simply need to make time to recognized God's presence and speak and listen for God's voice. Consider taking 10 minutes each day to just be with God and watch the many ways the presence of God is revealed in your life.

- **First Reading:** In our first reading today, we are given a picture of wild success. So many people came to Church to hear the teachings of Paul and Barnabas. Some of the people did not accept their teaching, so they explained that it is for all people and many Gentiles came to believe in Jesus. Paul and Barnabas did experience some persecution, but they went away joyful and full of the Holy Spirit. And many people were transformed by their teaching as they invited Jesus into their lives.
- **Responsorial Psalm:** In our responsorial Psalm today we proclaimed that “We are his people, the sheep of his flock.” Let us be so grateful to be here and open our hearts fully to Jesus in his word and in the gift of his body and blood. May we truly become his followers, his disciples, and experience the abundant life he invites us to live.
- **Second Reading:** In John’s vision in our second reading today, he says that the Lord will be our shepherd and that he will guide his sheep to springs of the water of life and wipe away every tear. Follow Jesus and allow him to lead you to be a missionary disciple, making present the kingdom of God and be amazed at how close God is and how much you are loved. To follow Jesus is the most important decision that any of us make in our entire lives. Make this choice every day and learn to know the shepherd’s voice and God’s tender care for you.

**May 14/15- Theme: Embody Love! (Fifth Sunday of Easter)**

Every Easter Season is a reminder that the early disciples were filled with God’s love and shared that love with fellow believers and everyone they met. Their lives were so powerfully changed and they lived in Christian community and made present God’s kingdom in the way they behaved and believed. They embodied love, by embracing God and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

In what ways are we similar to the early Church and where do we need renewal and transformation? It is awesome to see the spread of the Catholic Church around the world. Our Church has long been a world leader in promoting virtue and serving the human family by creating schools, universities, hospitals and humanitarian agencies. Perhaps more than anything, let us be reminded today that to live the mission of Jesus our number one goal needs to be Jesus’ new commandment, “Love one another.” He goes on to say, “Just as I have loved you, you should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.” Our greatest tool to evangelize the world is to love.

- **First Reading:** In our first reading today we hear how new Churches were being formed and how elders were set up and how each church took on the responsibility of the mission of Jesus. They prayed together, fasted, sought out God’s presence and embodied God’s love to their wider communities and their churches grew. Today, like in the early church, each member of our community has an important role to play in the mission and each of us are called to Embrace Love and reflect Jesus to the world.
- **Responsorial Psalm:** Our Psalm response is our response to God for loving each of us unconditionally and transforming us to be more like Jesus. “I will praise your name forever, my king and my God.” It is God work in us, not of anything we have done or how great we are, but rather, how great God is and what God has done in our lives!

- Second Reading: In John's vision this week, we hear that God's home is among us. God is with us always and when we all lean into God, embody love and live the mission of Jesus, that God will make all things new. Are you ready to embody love and watch God make all things new before our very eyes? Just how do we embody love? It comes from receiving this love in the Eucharist and in our daily prayer. The more we experience the love of God, the more we are transformed by this love and the more we embody it for others.

**May 21/22- Theme: Come Holy Spirit! (Sixth Sunday of Easter)**

At times, it feels like the Holy Spirit is the forgotten part of the Trinity. It seems mysterious, hard to picture and even harder to pray to, yet Jesus tells his early followers that "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach everything and remind you of all I have said." It seems that getting to know the Holy Spirit is pretty important. As we move toward the celebration of Pentecost in two weeks, let us daily pray for a new Pentecost and a deeper awareness of the love and power of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray, "Come Holy Spirit" and when the Spirit does come, let us be ready to receive the gifts and graces that are offered to us. (Share a story of how the Holy Spirit has worked in your life recently.)

- First Reading: In our first reading, we see how the Holy Spirit worked in the early Church. They had a difficult question to respond to and there were different opinions on how it should be handled. In fact, it created divisions among the leaders, but over time and with patience and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they came to understand what God was calling them to decide. And let's just say, there were some very happy Gentiles when the decision was made.

It is also worth drawing attention to the Synod process that is taking place in our church today. Our diocese is compiling the information from all the listening sessions of the past several months and we will be submitting it this summer to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. All the episcopal conferences of the world will be compiling the responses from their territories and then submitting a summary to the Vatican this fall. Then in the fall of 2023, the world's Bishops will gather to reflect on all this information and discern where the Holy Spirit is leading. Come Holy Spirit and lead this process for your Church.

- Responsorial Psalm: O God, let all the nations praise you. For you love your creation and are full of mercy for the world.
- Second Reading: In John's vision, there is no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And he goes on to say that the city has no sun or moon, for there is no need for the glory of God is its light. When we as individuals and as a Church put God at the center, in this right place, then we have the wisdom, grace and power through Jesus to live our mission to be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God. Let us learn to pray, "Come Holy Spirit" and trust that God will guide us according to the divine will.



## **May 28/29- Live the Mission! (Ascension of the Lord, with Ephesians 1:17-23)**

Today's gospel is Jesus' summary before his ascension. He tells the disciples, "The Christ would suffer, rise from the dead and then repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to all nations." He then tells them that they are "[eye] witnesses to this and that they should wait until they are clothed with power from on high."

We are the living descendants of the mission that began with Jesus and has been lived throughout the centuries until this very day. We are the disciples today that God desires to work in and through to bring life to his Church and to the world. We each have been blessed with so many gifts and talents. Think of all the places members of our parish go in a given week. We have members working in the grocery store, doctor's office, plumbers, electricians, (Look around and name the occupations of people sitting in the congregation) retired CEO's, bankers and teachers. The gospel of Jesus Christ is being lived out in so many places around our community, but do we each recognized that we have a role to play in the mission of Jesus in our daily lives? We are called to live the mission of Jesus as individuals and as a community of faith. How do you live this mission daily and in our parish community?

- First Reading: Let's look to the early Church and ask, how did they live the mission of Jesus? Did they listen to the words and teachings of Jesus and just get it? We might even be tempted to think they had it made. They could ask Jesus questions and watch his every move and we see they made all kinds of mistakes trying to figure Jesus out, but to think they had it easy is a mistake. In the first book of Acts, we hear that after his resurrection he was "speaking about the kingdom of God" with them. They were still learning and so are we! We have the teachings of Jesus in one place and have lots of time to study, reflect, and pray on the scriptures. We can go on retreats, meet Jesus in our daily prayer and receive him in the Eucharist. The truth is that the early disciples did not really get it, until they were filled with the Holy Spirit and even then, this side of eternity had ups and downs for them. Let us commit ourselves as young people, teens and adults to learn the teachings of Jesus and to seek the Holy Spirit that we might have the grace and power to live out these teachings of Jesus. We can only "Live the Mission" when we surrender our lives to God and follow Jesus as his disciples daily.
- Responsorial Psalm: Life is best lived according to God's plan, therefore let us proclaim that "God mounts his throne to shouts of joy; a blare of trumpets for the Lord."
- Second Reading: Today St. Paul sums up my prayer for each of us today. For if we are to "Live the Mission" it is so necessary that God "give us a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in the knowledge of him." And that, "the eyes of our hearts be enlightened, that we may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, and what are the riches of his glory." It is important that we see ourselves as life-long learners as disciples of Jesus and that we learn to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit so we can be "missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God." This is a high calling to be sure, but the Lord is depending on us and can live the mission with God's help.