

**To: All Pastors & Parish Staff**

**From: Bishop Medley and the Office of Evangelization & Discipleship**

**Date: December 2, 2021**

**Re: A Diocesan Prayer Project to begin 2022, January 15/16 thru February 12/13**

**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 ordinary time between Christmas and Lent. 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 January 15/16 through February 12/13, 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 Hispanic parishes received 1-2 Spanish 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 December 15.
- Hang posters by January 1
- Submit “Prayers of the Faithful” suggestions by January 3
- Place prayer cards in pew by January 14
- Remove prayer cards prior to Lent by March 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" after 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:**

January 1/2- 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, along with the entire diocese, for the five weeks of January 15 through February 13.

January 8/9- Beginning next week at all weekend Masses, we will join with the other parishes of the diocese praying a prayer for evangelization for the following five 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. The theme next week is "Live the Mission- Intimacy with God."

January 15/16- This weekend marks the beginning of a five-week period of prayer and preaching that highlights our need 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. Please join us in praying and discerning how God is calling us to grow as his disciples and to share our faith with others. Begin by making 10 minutes each morning to encounter Jesus and be filled with his love. Stay tuned next week for "Live the Mission- Rely on the Holy Spirit."

January 22/23- What are the values of God's kingdom? What is it that we pray in the Our Father for that we need on earth? It is these values that we need in our daily lives to be happy and to invite others to participate in through our parish community. Pause this week in your prayer to invite the Holy Spirit to direct you to experience these values personally and to share them with others. Make a special point to tell someone how the Spirit is working in and through your life. Next week's theme is "Accept the Challenge."

January 29/30- What challenge did Jesus offer us today at Mass? The challenge is one word, love. Where are you being called to love? The world needs love, but human love is so fickle and selfish. We need to experience divine love every day and be filled with this love, to be transformed into this love, so that the world will know God's love through us. How can you live this message out this week? Stay tuned next week as we talk about the importance of fishing. Our theme is "Live the Mission: Fish for People."

February 5/6- Not everyone enjoys fishing, after all, the worms are slimy, fish have teeth and spiny fins and if they swallow the hook, you will cause the fish pain trying to get it out. Fishing for people can be messy too. The needs of people in our world today are many. Some just need someone to talk to and others have serious physical, emotional and financial needs. Pope Francis calls the Church a "Field Hospital." How does our parish provide care and support to those in need? How do we actively "fish for people" to help them experience the love and mercy of God?

February 12/13- "Help Lord" is a great little prayer. It acknowledges our dependence on God and our need to receive divine love and grace each day, and to allow that love to flow through us to those in our families, workplaces and wider community. As Catholics, we all have a mission, "to be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the Kingdom of God." We cannot do this alone. As disciples, we are invited into the communion of the Trinity and sent forth as individuals and a community to "Live the Mission" of Jesus. Let our prayer be, "Help Lord!"

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

January 15/16- 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.

January 22/23- Let us pray that our parish will embody the values of God's kingdom and be a source of encouragement and support to all who enter and to all those we come in contact with over the coming week. We pray to the Lord.

January 29/30- As each of us hear God's challenge to follow him with our lives, may we experience the grace to be transformed by God's love into a people that love others and are open to being led by the Holy Spirit. We pray to the Lord.

February 5/6- We pray that our parish would constantly look to Jesus for wisdom and direction as we seek to live his mission in our local community. We pray to the Lord.

February 12/13- As the parishes of our diocese complete our five-weeks of prayer for evangelization, we ask you Lord for the help we need to Live the Mission you have given us to make present your kingdom. We pray to the Lord.

### **Preaching Series- Live the Mission!**

You are invited to run with this preaching series and to be creative in promoting the theme each week and speaking to the overall mission of our diocese, our 78 parishes and 17 schools. 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 invite people into the series. Finally, try to illustrate the points with stories from your own life and ministry that 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 Spirit throughout our diocese.

### January 15/16- Live the Mission- Intimacy with God!

“Do whatever he tells you.” These words from Jesus’ mother have a clear message to you and I today. Over the last four years, the leadership of our diocese has been on a journey reflecting on the U.S. Bishop’s document titled, “Living as Missionary Disciples.” Perhaps you recall reading about or hearing about the four themes of Encounter, Accompany, Community and Send. During these gatherings the Holy Spirit has been challenging and equipping us to grow in our relationship with God and refocus our mission to follow Jesus. “Do whatever he tells you” is a wonderful word to each of us as disciples of Jesus. We are called to be in an intimate relationship with Jesus, so much so that we recognized his voice and follow his leading in our lives. Every day we need to begin by allowing God’s love to overwhelm and fill us to the point that our daily lives overflow with this love from God lived through us. It is this intimacy is the first step to live the Mission.

The mission of our diocese is “to be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God.” Beginning today and for the next five weeks, we will pray the Prayer for Evangelization at Mass and reflect on how we grow in intimacy with Jesus and live his mission.

- **First Reading:** The author of this section of Isaiah is saying “I will not be silent.” He is encouraging the people that were living in exile, that no longer would they feel forsaken and that God was rescuing them. Today, we have an amazing mission to tell of the good

news of our God who comes to us in the Eucharist and who walks with us every day of our lives and who calls each of us “my delight.”

- The Responsorial Psalm: We are called to proclaim God’s deeds not only from the Bible, but perhaps even more importantly, from our own lives. We are missionary disciples and the mission is to share how great it is to live in union with our God who is love.
- Second Reading: As a community, we need one another. No one has all the gifts. It is necessary that each one of us recognized that by our baptism, we are called to be priest, prophet and king. In our common baptism, we are brothers and sisters in Christ and each have important and necessary gifts to share as we live the mission of Jesus. As your pastor, I have a special role, but so do each of you and we need everyone to be effective as a community.

### January 22/23- Live the Mission- Rely on the Spirit!

“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Jesus initiated the kingdom of God in the midst of the people. The very values that we pray for each week in the “Our Father,” when we say, “on earth as it is in heaven” are the values that Jesus said were fulfilled in their hearing of Isaiah’s prophecy that he just proclaimed. The kingdom of God is not only in heaven. St. Paul tells us that we have a foretaste of it here, when we live in union with God. The values of God’s kingdom are attractive to everyone in our world, but people are jaded and as a Church we are not always living the best of God’s values. Every person that comes to our parish, or meets us at work or in the grocery store, should experience the values of God’s kingdom through us.

The second part of our Diocesan Mission to “make present the Kingdom of God” is not something we do on our own. It is done in communion with Jesus and our entire faith community, from the universal church to the particular church in the United States to our Diocese, right down to our parish. Each of us are called to be in union with God and with Jesus to make present God’s kingdom by the way we love, welcome and care for others. The Spirit of the Lord is upon all of us. And we need to turn to the Holy Spirit and daily receive these gifts of the Spirit and trust the Spirit to guide our lives.

- First Reading: Rejoicing in the Lord is our strength as a community. We come together to celebrate the love and mercy of our God and to extend that to others. We gather and look at the chaos of our world with a hope that only comes from God, in our trust that God is at work in our lives and wants to work through us to bring the values of his kingdom into all the places we find ourselves. Let us rejoice at how good God is and acknowledge our trust in God’s power and plan.
- The Responsorial Psalm: Your words are Spirit and Life. The more you and I come to depend on God’s love and presence in our life, the more we come to see that God’s words are Spirit and life, the more our lives will reflect God’s kingdom in what we do and say.
- Second Reading: We are the body of Christ in the world today. Our parish is the local manifestation of Christ’s Church and all of us are responsible for our mission. We each

have different gifts, skills and personalities, and the Church needs each of us to be engaged in the mission. By allowing Jesus into your heart and encountering his love every day in your life, through prayer and receiving him in the Eucharist, you respond to the gift of your baptism into his body and help his body, the Church, to be a force for good in the world. In union with the Spirit, which we receive at Baptism and Confirmation, we will be able to live the mission and change the world around us!

January 29/30- Live the Mission- Accept the Challenge!

As we heard last week in Luke's gospel, Jesus is announcing the kingdom of God is at hand and that it is coming through him! He is saying that the values of God's kingdom are here and they are for all. Jesus should have just "dropped the mic" (make the motion of holding a microphone straight out to your side and dropping it.) Jesus was a home town hero. "All spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth." But Jesus kept talking and in a few simple sentences, he really made people mad. What did he say?

He said, "You don't really get it" and basically went onto say "Your faith is not sufficient to believe that God sent me to this world and therefore, I cannot offer you any signs." He went from hero to zero in a minute. And they wanted him gone!

Jesus has a way of challenging people to examine their life and faith. He asks us, do we really believe he is coming to us in the Eucharist? Do we really believe that God loves us unconditionally and wants a daily and intimate relationship with us? Even if we live with some doubt or distance from God, which apparently even Saint Mother Teresa experienced, are we willing and able to be open to the divine presence working in and through our lives? Are we willing to be kind, compassionate and loving, even toward those that are not easy to love?

- First Reading: In today's first reading we hear Jeremiah experiencing a movement of the Spirit as hears God's word saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you..." And God says to him, "I am with you to deliver you..." These words are proclaimed today for you and I. God knew each of us in our mother's womb and God is with us every moment of our lives. Can you accept the challenge to believe this truth of our faith is real?
- Responsorial Psalm: Let us truly be individuals that are not afraid to "Accept the Challenge" and live lives that will "Sing of God's Salvation." You God are our rock, our hope, our refuge.
- Second Reading: Finally, we come to the second reading and perhaps the greatest challenge God ever offered and he did so through St. Paul. A man who for much of his life was a staunch Pharisee, who even participated in the persecution of the early disciples of Jesus. St. Paul says to strive for the greatest gifts, which he says is Love and in so many ways he lays out the life of a disciple of Jesus. As we journey through life and realize that God is with us every moment and as we spend time growing in union with

God, we change and our human hearts become more like God's heart. The real challenge that God is inviting us to accept is to live the mission of Jesus, by becoming more and more like him. As a community, let's keep being a community that leads with love and reflects God's kingdom to the world!

February 5/6- Live the Mission- Fish for People!

Is the mission of Jesus completed? It's a fair question. Churches are being consolidated around the country. Less people are attending Churches these days. For the past 20 years we can see the declines in many of the parishes in our diocese and we might just reason that that maybe the mission is no longer needed. However, it seems that our world is in desperate need of God's love and mercy. Jesus came to those on the margins in our world and those numbers are growing by the day. The good news that Jesus preached was to the poor and the disenfranchised, and there is plenty of these segments of society to go around.

To live the mission of Jesus is as important now as it has ever been, but we need to truly discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to us as a Church and we need to look to Jesus as our leader. What would he do? As our diocese spends time this year on the Synodal Process, which was started by Pope Francis as a way for the world's Bishops to listen to what the Spirit is saying through the people of the world. We are discerning where God is leading? We are asking parishioners and those on the margins, what are your needs and how can the Church help you find God?

This five week preaching series is titled, "Live the Mission" and today, we are challenged to "Fish for People." If you wanted to catch people today and tell them about a God who loves them unconditionally and come along side and accompany them through their difficulties, what more might we have to do as a parish? As we pray the prayer for evangelization today at the end of Mass, let's be open to the Lord asking us to "move our boat, change our strategy, find a new bait, and catch some people!"

- First Reading: Like our first reading today, we often hear God's call for other people to do something. But what gifts has God given you and how can you use them in our parish and around our community more fully? Jesus is calling, let us respond, "Send me!"
- Responsorial Psalm: The psalmist reminds us that God is our strength. God is with us and his kindness endures forever.
- Second Reading: Like last week, we again hear from St. Paul. He shares the gospel message that Jesus died for you and me and was raised from the dead and we can have life in his name. And then Paul humbles himself and explains that he is not fit to be called an apostle as he persecuted the church of God. Then he says a line that hopefully you and I can say everyday of our lives, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective." May the Lord lead us to be missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the Kingdom of God in our parish and wider community. And may he teach us to fish for people.

February 12/13- Live the Mission- Help Lord!

Have you ever worked on a project long and hard and you come to an impasse? After a choice word or two, you pause and say, “Help Lord.” Sometimes it is immediate and sometimes the struggle continues, but that is an important moment. Today’s gospel presents us with that same impasse, to which we must say, “Help Lord.” I have food in the refrigerator, I like to laugh and some people like me. It appears that I have more in common with the “Woe” group.

These words that Jesus speaks are the words that we, the disciples of Jesus, are invited to speak in his name. To live the Mission of Jesus is to proclaim his love and compassion to those on the margins. When we use our gifts and our resources to care for those in need and to make room in our lives for these little ones, we are overwhelmed with God’s blessings. (Share a story of God’s provision and blessing in your life.)

- **First Reading:** Our first reading tells us that “Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord. This person is like a tree in the desert planted beside the waters, that stays green in the drought and bears fruit. You and I are called to be that tree. To be rooted in an intimate and daily relationship with a God who is crazy about us and wants us to be fully alive and fruitful. We cannot do it on our own. Our human will power and plans are not enough to help us to live our mission. We need to encounter the divine presence of God and become one with this God through Jesus!
- **Responsorial Psalm:** So many people have lost hope today, but we have a mission and God is leading us to a renewed hope. The psalmist reminds us, “Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.” They are like a tree planted near running water that yields fruit in due season and whose leaves never fade.” Let us bring this hope with us today into all the places we find ourselves in the coming week and share our stories of how God shows up in our lives with one another.
- **Second Reading:** Our second reading lays it out there and even here we can say, “Help Lord.” Give us faith to believe and understand the meaning of your life, death and resurrection and to live the Mission you gave us to make present your kingdom in the here and now in this little corner of your creation.