

“THE CHURCH: A CENTER OF HOPE”

LIVING OUR FAITH WITH JOY



A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO



Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo

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A Pastoral Letter to the Faithful People
of the Diocese of Kalamazoo

November 2014



By Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley, D.D., M.S.W.
Bishop of Kalamazoo



Episcopal motto: *“Waiting in Joyful Hope”*

DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

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“THE CHURCH: A CENTER OF HOPE —
LIVING OUR FAITH WITH JOY

Dear Family of Faith — My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It is with both a joyful and a grateful heart that I write to you, the faithful members of the Church here in the Diocese of Kalamazoo. I write with joy because this past June I observed the fifth anniversary of the great privilege of being the bishop of our beloved diocese; I write with gratitude because I give thanks for all the blessings God has bestowed upon us during these years. As we continue in our sixth year together, I take this occasion to write my third pastoral letter¹ regarding the challenges of our times, and how we can strengthen our local Church so that we can live our faith with joy, while remaining anchored in our faith in Christ our hope.

During these more than five years, we have been experiencing profound and troubling changes throughout our world. We witness continued and growing unrest, civil and racial strife, war and religious persecution in many parts of the world, especially in the Ukraine, the Middle East, and the Holy Land. In the United States, including here in southwest Michigan, we have witnessed the beginning of some economic recovery; yet a large percentage of our fellow citizens continue to suffer economically and socially. The rapid growth of secularization and distorted ideas about individual rights have contributed to an erosion of society’s moral principles and an affront against the foundational principle of religious liberty in our beloved country. Though we face many societal and cultural challenges, there are signs of hope. We are witnessing a renewal of faith in Jesus Christ, lived joyfully and vibrantly in the Church, from increasing participation in adult faith formation to countless examples of charity and

service to those in need. It is with this hope of a growing faith in Jesus Christ that we confront our many challenges.



Pray for vocations: During the next five years as many as 15-18 priests for the diocese may choose to retire while, God willing, five to nine men may be ordained. Shown above is the current 2014-2015 group of seminarians for the Diocese of Kalamazoo.

In addition to the many cultural and societal shifts, one of the particular challenges facing our diocese is how we can most effectively plan for the pastoral and sacramental care of all the faithful, even as we experience a decline in the number of priests due to significantly more priests' retirements than priestly ordinations in the coming years (over the next 5 years it is likely that as many as 15 priests may retire while, God willing, we will ordain three to nine men to the priesthood). Due to this reality, and in keeping with our call to the New Evangelization, I announced the Diocesan Pastoral Plan (March 2014), which focuses on the importance of strengthening each of our parishes to become as vibrant and active as they can be. It is within this plan that I am calling all 59 of our parishes to enter into “Partnerships” (see appendix A) with one or more of the neighboring parish communities to collaborate and to share resources with one another, and in the process to help each to become stronger and more vibrant.

My dear sisters and brothers, we face an amazing opportunity to

allow our hearts to be centered on Jesus as our one true hope, to build our communities of faith, and to work toward a better world for generations to come. As St. Paul proclaimed: *Therefore, since we have this ministry through the mercy shown us, we are not discouraged.*² And the reason we do not lose heart is because of our faith in Jesus and His words: *I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.*³ It is the victory of Jesus that gives us reason to always live in hope and to live our faith with joy. As we read in the Letter to the

*“God created man
in His image,
in the image of God
He created him;
male and female
He created them.”*

Hebrews: *Let us persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God.*⁴

Encouraged by the joy of our faith, I write this letter to remind all of us that we are *fearfully and wonderfully*⁵ made in God’s image and destined to live in union with the Triune God and with each other; that this union calls us to be united as the Church here in the Diocese of Kalamazoo; and that we can be renewed in living our faith through greater collaboration and in “partnerships” for the purpose of strengthening our parishes to be “centers of hope” and beacons of light shining in this world.

I. WHO WE ARE: THE CHURCH LIVING IN COMMUNION WITH THE GOD OF COMMUNION

God made us for communion with each other. As human beings, this longing for family and community is a part of our spiritual DNA. St. Augustine, our diocesan patron, brilliant theologian and Doctor of the Church, writes in his famous autobiography, “Confessions” that the



deepest longing of the human heart is to be in communion with our Creator: “Our hearts are restless, oh God, and they remain restless until they rest in You.”

God’s plan was specific. *God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female[a] he created them.*⁶ What should strike us about those words is this: as a human person, whether a male or female, neither one contains the complete meaning of what it is to be a human without the other. *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.*⁷

Thus, the true meaning of humanity is fully revealed and fulfilled through communion, a word which means in its Latin origin “union with.” Humanity’s first parents, Adam and Eve, rejoiced in this great gift of spiritual and physical communion because they found their wholeness in their unity. For the same reason, down through the millennia, the human family rejoices every time a man and woman are joined together in marriage, because they find the unity for which they were made: *At last, bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!*⁸

As the familiar creation account in the Book of Genesis details, we find that the original happiness and perfection of creation was soon disrupted and broken. The Original Sin was the first time a human

being broke the loving relationship with our God who loves us unconditionally. Sin is a pulling away from God who loves us beyond limitation. If sin had been the end of the story, this would be a tragedy.

But God did not let the human story end in tragedy. God immediately offered redemption. That was the very beginning — the foreshadowing — of the Good News. God promised to restore and heal the *wounds of sin and division* by reconciling us — making us one — with God and with one another. The meaning of redemption is constant: God is love, and His love heals us of our brokenness and restores our communion and community. When God’s plan was ready, *in the fullness of time*,⁹ God sent His only begotten Son to redeem the world.¹⁰ Jesus’ Body, the Church, shares in and continues His saving mission.

As the Second Vatican Council taught so beautifully in the Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* (Light of the Nations):

“God however does not make people holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring people together as one, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness... Christ instituted the new covenant, the new testament, that is to say, in His Blood, calling together a people made up of Jew and Gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the new People of God.”¹¹

The Church — the people of God — *is* the Body of Christ. The Church is our restored community; it renews our unity with God and with one another. The Church is the family of God and the “House of Unity” where Jesus’ mercy and forgiveness heals our wounds, breaks down the walls of division, and restores us into a community of faith. The Church is that place where the treasury of God’s love and mercy, like the pearl of great price hidden in a field,¹² is available for all



people. Pope Francis, in his typically straightforward style of teaching, reminds us that: “It is an absurd dichotomy to want to live with Jesus without the Church; to follow Jesus outside the Church; to love Jesus without the Church.”¹³

THE CHURCH IS A CENTER OF HOPE

The New Evangelization, to which the entire Church is called, begins with the renewal of the practice and understanding of our faith for each of us. The Church truly is a “center of hope” for each of us, and for all those members of the Body of Christ who come together to celebrate faith together in our homes and with our parishes throughout our diocese. As our Holy Father teaches us we cannot be satisfied to be baptized within the Body of Christ and live our faith in isolation. As he wrote:

“It would be good to ask ourselves what are the signs that we belong to the Church, that we think and feel with the Church. The Christian isn’t someone who is baptized and then goes his own way...**the first**



fruit of baptism is that we belong to the Church, to the people of God; a Christian without the Church is incomprehensible. We receive the Gospel message in the Church and we are sanctified in the Church. Our way is in the Church.”¹⁴

We must be rooted in our knowledge of all the ways in which we are in communion with each other as Church — through our connection to our diocese and our parish.

THE DIOCESE

In the Nicene Creed, which we profess every Sunday, we proudly proclaim that we believe in one God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — and we conclude: “I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” We recognize these as the four marks or identifying characteristics of the Church. One of those characteristics, or marks, is that the Church is catholic, which literally means, universal. Following the resurrection and just before His ascension, Jesus gave the great commission: *Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.*¹⁵ Over these more than 2,000 years, the Church has been established on every continent, in every country throughout the world, teaching the faith and celebrating the sacraments in every language. That is what it means to be catholic with a small “c.”

With a capital “C,” Catholic also identifies the Church that we belong to as the Church of Jesus Christ, governed by the pope, the Vicar of Christ on earth.

Throughout the world, the Church is more locally organized into territories called dioceses. There are 2,846 dioceses (local churches) throughout the Catholic Church, each under the pastoral guidance and shepherd’s care of a bishop. Each bishop is a “successor to the Apostles” and is united to the pope in a direct relationship, and all bishops are members of the College of Bishops, with our Holy Father as the head of the college.

In our diocese, as bishop, I have been entrusted with the pastoral care and responsibility for the spiritual well-being of all the people living within the territory of the nine counties of our diocese. I am the pastor of the entire church, shepherd of the flock of Jesus Christ in the Diocese of Kalamazoo. My closest collaborators — those who directly share in my duty of teaching, sanctifying, and governing — are the ordained priests, each of whom are assigned by me to particular parishes or ministries to provide you, the people of our diocese, with pastoral and sacramental care.

I am charged with a three-fold responsibility: 1) to teach and defend the faith with enthusiasm, 2) to sanctify — help people to grow in holiness (including myself), and 3) to govern the diocese and lead us all to Christ. My authority is that of Christlike service. Remember what Jesus taught: *Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.*¹⁶ That call to servant leadership begins with me as your bishop and applies to all of us as Jesus’ disciples. It is for all these reasons that we pray for our Holy Father and for me by name in every Mass, asking God to help us be faithful to our responsibilities, and praying that we as the Church of the Diocese of Kalamazoo will be joyful witnesses in our faith and be strengthened and grow in unity.



Living Diocesan Church: Each year Bishop Bradley welcomes the elect—members of the faithful from parishes across the diocese coming into full communion with the Catholic Church—during the annual Rite of Election held at St. Augustine Cathedral.

THE PARISH

Our diocesan Church exists as the community of parishes. In the Diocese of Kalamazoo, each of the 59 parishes is under the pastoral care of a pastor, and each pastor is united directly to, and shares in, my authority as the chief pastor of our local church. For many Catholics, the most familiar experience of the Church is through their parish. While we live our faith every day in the church of the home (also known as the Domestic Church), we come to the parish church to receive the sacraments, to take formal instructions in our faith, and most especially, to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. It is in our parishes that we are baptized, married, and say our fond farewells to our loved ones. It is where we watch our children grow in faith in our parish schools and religious education programs. The parish church is rightly considered our home base, where we grow as disciples of Jesus in the world.

It is through this call to discipleship that it is especially important

for us to understand all the many dimensions of what the parish is. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a diocese; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop. It is the place where all the faithful can be gathered together for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life; it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ’s saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love.”¹⁷

Several canons in the Code of Canon Law detail the specific duties of pastors and the responsibilities of parish life (see Appendix B). In his recent Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), Pope Francis provides a beautiful and insightful definition of what a parish is and should be: “The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a **community of communities**, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach.”¹⁸

That definition is rich in meaning. Here in our local church, the entire diocese is only as strong and vital as the combined strength and vitality of all our 59 parishes. As Pope Francis beautifully wrote, we are a “community of communities.”

II. THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A STRONG AND VIBRANT PARISH

Within Pope Francis’s insight into what a parish is, he defines for us five key elements, which I suggest can serve as important building blocks for a strong and vibrant parish community. The five building

blocks call for parishes to:

I. Develop a sense of community: Since a healthy parish is a “community of communities,” then each parish must focus on building a sense of community. A parish should be a place of hospitality — a place where all are welcomed and made to feel at home, whether one has been a lifetime member of this parish or simply a first-time visitor. A parish is like our spiritual home where we all are loved as a sister or brother in Christ, and where each person experiences the love of Jesus the Good Shepherd. While every parish has its own particular customs and activities, its strengths and its limitations, all parishes should extend the warmth of Christ’s saving love to members, visitors, and those who are neighbors in the surrounding community. Besides extending welcome to those who come to our parishes, each parish also needs to reach out to those who may have fallen away from the practice of their faith, for whatever reason, or to those who have not yet been evangelized or catechized in the faith. As Pope Francis reminds us, we cannot just sit and wait for people to come to us; we must go out to invite them in.¹⁹

II. Have foundational and comprehensive catechesis: Jesus very clearly instructed His Apostles to go and teach: to hand on the faith, to preach the Good News, and to pass on the teachings of the Church to successive generations. While all parents are the “first teachers of the faith for their children,”²⁰ each parish and every priest has a primary responsibility to develop strong programs and people properly trained to formally teach the faith in our parish schools, religious education programs, and adult faith formation programs. Catechesis is a process of building a relationship between the Teacher, that is Jesus, and the students, the disciples. Catechesis involves information (communicating content) and formation (helping to form a relationship of being a disciple of Jesus). The strength of our faith in future generations depends on the quality of our catechetical programs. Every parish must take this responsibility very seriously.



Celebrating our diversity: The Diocese of Kalamazoo is home to a significant population of our Hispanic sisters and brothers: more than 40,000 residents and an additional 20,000 migrant farmworkers and their families. Shown above is Bishop Bradley celebrating the annual Diocesan Fiesta Mass.

III. Practice joyful and reverent worship: It would seem to go without saying that every parish should have as its primary purpose to be the place where God’s holy people come together to offer praise and thanks to God — to celebrate our faith through worship, especially the Holy Eucharist. Parishes exist ultimately for one reason: “to house the altar.”²¹ As the Second Vatican Council teaches: “The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith and life.”²² Therefore it makes absolute sense that the most important purpose of a parish is to help people be in communion with Jesus and each other by receiving Jesus’ Body and Blood in Holy Communion as our spiritual food and drink. In addition to the primacy of the celebration of the Eucharist, the parish also helps to sanctify its members through the devout and joyful celebration of the sacraments and devotional practices of our Catholic tradition. Our diocese is blessed to have people from many diverse cultures, including a significant Latino/Hispanic population and Burmese community. Our parishes must make sure that we are providing for particular language needs so people can worship in ways that will be most helpful to their spiritual growth; at the same time, we also need to make sure that we are



Charity and love across the world: The Diocese of Lodwar, Kenya, led by Bishop Dominic Kimengich, is the sister diocese to the Diocese of Kalamazoo. Efforts are underway to strengthen the connection between our two dioceses. Shown above (from left) are Rev. John Peter Ambrose, MSFS, Msgr. Michael Hazard and Bishop Bradley (far right) during a pilgrimage to Lodwar, October 2013.

all growing together as one community of faith. Every pastor and parish community should strive to make sure that the worship life of the parish is respectful, joyful, and in keeping with the guidelines of the diocese and the Universal Church, so that we can fittingly and worthily give thanks and praise to God in union with one another.

IV. Take care of those in need through acts of charity/outreach:

On the night before Jesus died, during the Last Supper, after He had given us the gift of the Holy Eucharist, He showed us what it means for us to be in true communion with Him. He taught volumes before saying any words. St. John was the eyewitness and he records what Jesus wanted us to learn. At the end of the meal, Jesus got up and washed the feet of every one of His apostles, in spite of Peter’s protest. When He was finished, Jesus taught the lesson: *If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.*²³ St. Paul puts it very beautifully in his great hymn to love: *If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love,*

*I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*²⁴ And St. James strongly states: “...faith without works is dead.”²⁵ Every parish must encourage works of charity and outreach to those in need. Pope Emeritus Benedict taught in his encyclical letter *God is Love* (*Deus Caritas Est*) that: “The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the sacraments.”²⁶ As Pope Francis has taught us: “A parish needs to be a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey.”²⁷ Our Catholic social teaching is a rich resource of reflection on this aspect of our Catholic life, which is essential to our Catholic faith. Our tradition has given us beautiful devotional summaries of what we are called to do, summarized in the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and Catholic Social Teaching. (See Appendix C)

V. Use responsible governance/administration: Saint Paul teaches us that administration is a gift of the Holy Spirit.²⁸ A good administrator, or one who oversees the governance of the parish’s life and resources, must do so prayerfully and with collaboration, discernment, and prudent responsibility. The pastor, of course, is ultimately responsible and, as in all things, oversees the temporal and spiritual resources of the parish in collaboration with his trusted and competent parish advisors, and always in union with the diocesan bishop, for the well-being of the parish and the diocese.

Canon Law requires a Parish Finance Council to be established in every parish, actively assisting the pastor in the oversight of good stewardship of all aspects of the parish’s finances and temporal resources.²⁹

It is also my strong hope that every parish will also establish a Parish Pastoral Council, which is a consultative body to advise the pastor on matters of parish life and pastoral activity.³⁰ (see Appendix B)

These five building blocks, or indicators for parish vitality, may more easily be realized when parishes enter into partnerships with each other.³¹ As our parishes grow stronger and ever more vibrant, so will our diocese grow and become a more dynamic expression of the strength of faith here in the Diocese of Kalamazoo. I hope that our shared goal for the entire diocese is for us to be a strong and faithful witness of our faith in Jesus Christ. Pope Francis puts it this way: “I want to emphasize that what I am trying to express here has a programmatic significance and important consequences. I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. ‘Mere administration’ can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be permanently in a state of mission.”³²

In other words, Pope Francis tells us we cannot just settle for the ways things have always been. As the Church, we are on a mission that challenges us to keep growing and moving forward toward the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven. This in part is what the New Evangelization means. And it is the New Evangelization that will guide us in confronting and dealing with the challenges we face in our day and time.

My dear sisters and brothers, it is with this sense of hopefulness that we can combine our efforts to help all our parishes to be the “centers of hope” they are called to be to transform the world that I ask all Catholics to be active, regular, and faithful in participating in the life of their parish church. Each person and family lives the faith within the church of the home, the domestic church. However, it is within our parish church where we are able to receive all the spiritual gifts that are available to help us grow in our relationship with Jesus (Mass, sacraments, liturgical devotions, catechesis, and so much more). Our parish family also provides us the opportunity to give of ourselves in loving, Christlike service to others.



Bishop Bradley meets with Pope Francis shortly after his election in April 2013..

III. A CALL TO SPIRITUAL ACTION: A TIME OF HOPE AND RENEWAL

“The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters. If indeed “the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics,” the Church “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice”. All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. This is essential, for the Church’s social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ. At the same time, it unites “its own commitment to that made in the social field by other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, whether at the level of doctrinal reflection or at the practical level.”³³ — Pope Francis

With these words, Pope Francis reminds us that the church cannot “remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.” The Church has been very active at every level of our society’s political and social system to call attention to work against the deleterious effects these dramatic changes are having on society within the culture of our country, including here in the territory of our own diocese. Our mission must

always remain faithful to the Church’s mission: to proclaim the Good News of Jesus “in season and out of season,” and to always speak with the voice of hope. However, as important as it is for the Church to be engaged in the political and social processes, there are even more important actions that we need to take. As faithful members of the Church, we always live in the time of ongoing conversion, renewal, and hope. In the ancient world the Greeks had two different ways of understanding time. There is time as we live it day in and day out, which we call “chronos.” Over and above that, however, there is time that is always now — in the time made real in Jesus’ abiding Presence with us in the Church. We call that time “kairos.” In that “kairos” sense, I believe it is time for us as a diocese to begin a **special time of hope and renewal**. Given all the current challenges confronting us and all of society, and given our conviction that there is nothing more powerful than prayer, I call on our entire Catholic family of faith to make this upcoming new liturgical year (beginning on the first Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2014) a **time for special prayer, fasting, acts of charity and personal growth, and ongoing education in the faith**.

There are many intentions for which our special prayers and acts of devotion during this **time of hope and renewal** can be offered:

- We need to pray for the success of our parish partnerships and that our collaboration will move all our communities to be the “centers of hope” they are called to be.
- We need to do all that we can to pray for an end to violence and terrorism in the world, especially when it is done blasphemously in the name of God or religion. Our God is a God of peace and not a God of war or violence.
- We need to pray for protection of our first and foundational freedom, the freedom of religion and the freedom to practice our faith without being forced to violate our conscience in matters of morality. We need to pray for respect for all human life, from



Photography by Allyson Keller

the moment of conception until the final natural breath, and at all points along the life spectrum.

- We need to pray for the strength to stand up for our faith against the growing attempts to remove God and respect for basic moral and ethical principles of God's ways from society.
- We need to pray for our families, the building blocks of our society, that they may feel the love of Jesus Christ and share that with each other so they create strong domestic Churches. We especially remember during this liturgical year to pray for the upcoming World Meeting for Families and the Ordinary Synod for the family to be held in Rome in October 2015.³⁴

As the Bishop for the Diocese of Kalamazoo I am strongly inviting all Catholics to join with me to observe each Friday throughout the liturgical year from November 30, 2014 (The First Sunday of Advent) through November 22, 2015 (the Feast of Christ the King), as a designated "Day of Prayer and Sacrifice" in thanksgiving for Jesus' redemption of the world and to pray for all our intentions listed above.

Keeping in mind that the Church obliges us to observe meatless Fridays during the season of Lent, I urge all Catholics to voluntarily make all other Fridays meatless days to observe the “Day of Prayer and Sacrifice” in solidarity with one another for these special intentions.³⁵

I invite each of our families/households to decide among yourselves the particular ways you will observe Fridays as a special time of family prayer together and offer up your own personal sacrifices for these special intentions.

I ask all parishes to have special devotions on Fridays, such as opportunities for Eucharistic adoration for extended periods of time. I urge the public praying of the rosary during this time of Eucharistic adoration for these special intentions.

I respectfully ask all priests, deacons, and religious — those who are committed to praying the Divine Office — to designate their prayers on Fridays for the special intentions.

Finally, I encourage all those whose primary work and ministry is for the Church — members of the parish and diocesan pastoral staff and parish volunteers — to spend time together each Friday praying for these special intentions.

As St. Paul taught his beloved community of faith in Phillipi:
*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*³⁶

CONCLUSION

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, we are truly blessed to belong to the Church. We need the love and support of our families and our parish communities. Through our baptism, we became a member of the Body of Christ; throughout our journey of faith, we do so with the help and support of our fellow pilgrims accompanying us along the way. We need the Church: the church of the home (domestic Church), our parish church, the local church of the diocese and the Church universal. Similarly, our parishes need each other. Given our current circumstances, including the reality of the declining number of priests, and the cultural challenges we face, our baptismal vocation continues to call each of us to live lives of holiness and all of us to live lives of joyful witness as disciples of Christ — members of the Catholic Church. We need to work together with our partner parishes so that each of our parishes can become a more vibrant community of communities, and that all of our parishes joined together with me as the bishop of our diocese, can continue to live our vision to: **“Renew Faith, Build Communion, Inspire Hope”** throughout the nine counties of southwest Michigan.

Our loving God sent His only-begotten Son to redeem the world, to restore the relationship broken by Original Sin, to save us from our own individual sins. Through Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection, He has accomplished that. That is the Good News of our faith. Jesus has also established His Church, and through the abiding guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the leadership of the Holy Father and the College of Bishops, the Catholic Church remains strong and vibrant throughout the world. Here in our local Church, as throughout the whole Church, we are called by Jesus to be the *light for the world* and to be the *salt of the earth*.³⁷

Please join me both in frequent prayer as well as renewed action to live our faith, practice our faith, and give witness to our faith so that, even as we confront the challenges we face, the Light of Christ will shine brightly throughout our entire diocese, enabling us to be strong and vibrant as we live our faith with joy.

The Catholic faith as we experience it here in the Diocese of Kalamazoo, is a precious gift that has been handed down to us from the generations before us, through the witness and ministry of missionaries, priests, religious sisters and brothers, families, our grandparents and parents, and so many saints among us with whom we will one day, we pray, be reunited in Heaven. May we carry this gift of faith forward with renewed conversion and commitment to Christ in, and through, the Church He gave us, so that we can pass on this gift of faith to the generations still to come.

May our diocesan patron, St. Augustine, whose conversion brought him to a deep and passionate love for Jesus and His Church, lead us to that same kind of conversion of mind and heart. And may our dear Blessed Mother, who never said anything but a generous and whole-hearted “yes,” give us the generosity of spirit to say “yes” to her Son and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

God bless you now and always.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Paul J. Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo

Given at Kalamazoo
on the 1st day of November,
the Feast of All Saints Day
in the year of the Lord 2014

- ¹ Previously published pastoral letters:
“What I Have Heard and Seen,” 2010;
“We Dare to Say,” 2012
- ² 2 Cor. 4:1
- ³ John 16:33
- ⁴ Hebrews 12:2
- ⁵ Psalm 139:14
- ⁶ Genesis 1:27
- ⁷ Genesis 2:24
- ⁸ Genesis 2:23
- ⁹ Galatians 4:4
- ¹⁰ John 3:16
- ¹¹ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 9
- ¹² Matthew 13:45-46
- ¹³ Pope Francis, *Homily*,
January 30, 2014
- ¹⁴ *ibid*
- ¹⁵ Mark 16:15
- ¹⁶ Matthew 20:28
- ¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,
2179
- ¹⁸ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 28
- ¹⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 46
- ²⁰ Code of Canon 1136
- ²¹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*: 296, 298, 303
- ²² Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 11
- ²³ John 13:15
- ²⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:2-4
- ²⁵ James 2:26
- ²⁶ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 22
- ²⁷ [Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 28]
- ²⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:28
- ²⁹ Code of Canon Law, Canon 537
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, Canon 536, #2
- ³¹ Parish Vitality Resource,
See Appendix D
- ³² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 25
- ³³ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 183
- ³⁴ World Meeting of Families,
Sept. 22-27, 2015, Philadelphia,
www.worldmeeting2015.org
- ³⁵ Code of Canon Law, Canon 1251
- ³⁶ Philippians 4:6-7
- ³⁷ Matthew 5:13-14

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APPENDIX A

PARISH PARTNERSHIPS BY DEANERY

CENTRAL

- St. Augustine, Kalamazoo + St. Monica, Kalamazoo
- St. Joseph, Kalamazoo + St. Thomas More, Kalamazoo
- St. Mary, Kalamazoo + St. Ambrose, Parchment
- St. Ann, Gull Lake -- Partner pending
- St. Catherine, Portage + St. John Bosco, Mattawan+ St. Margaret Mary, Marcellus
- St. Mary, Paw Paw + St. Jude, Gobles + Holy Family, Decatur

EASTERN

- St. Philip, Battle Creek + St. Joseph, Battle Creek + St. Jerome, Battle Creek + Our Lady of Great Oak, Lacey + St. Ambrose, Delton
- St. Rose, Hastings + St. Cyril, Nashville
- St. Mary, Marshall + St. John, Albion

LAKESHORE

- St. Peter, Douglas + San Felipe, Pearl
- St. Basil, South Haven + Sacred Heart, Bangor
- St. Joseph, Watervliet + Immaculate Conception, Hartford
- St. Joseph, St. Joseph + Ss. John & Bernard, Benton Harbor
- Our Lady Queen of Peace, Bridgman -- Partner pending
- St. Mary, Three Oaks + St. Agnes, Sawyer + St. Mary of the Lake, New Buffalo

SOUTHEAST

- Immaculate Conception, Three Rivers + St. Clare, Centreville + St. Barbara, Colon
- Holy Angels, Sturgis + St. Joseph, White Pigeon
- St. Charles, Coldwater + Our Lady of Fatima, Union City + St. Marys Assumption, Bronson
- St. Martin, Vicksburg + St. Edward, Mendon

SOUTHWEST

- St. Mary, Niles + St. Gabriel, Berrien Springs + St. Mark, Niles + St. Anthony, Buchanan
- St. Ann, Cassopolis + Our Lady of the Lake, Edwardsburg + Holy Maternity
- of Mary, Dowagiac + Sacred Heart of Mary, Silver Creek

NORTHERN

- St. Mary Visitation, New Salem + St. Stanislaus, Dorr + St. Therese, Wayland + Ss. Cyril & Methodius, Gun Lake
- Blessed Sacrament, Allegan + St. Margaret, Otsego + Sacred Heart, Watson

APPENDIX B

Note: Select Canons on the role of Pastors of Parishes. Please note that the addition of the numbers 1 – 18 were added to highlight the multiple responsibilities they are not art part of the original Canons in the Code of Canon Law.

CODE OF CANON LAW ON THE PARISH OBLIGATIONS OF THE PASTOR

Canon 528, 1: “The pastor is obliged to: 1) see to it that the Word of God in its entirety is announced to those living in the parish; 2) for this reason he is to see to it that the lay Christian faithful are instructed in the truths of the faith, 3) especially through the homily which is to be given on Sundays and holy days of obligation and 4) through the catechetical formation which he is to give; 5) he is to foster works by which the spirit of the Gospel, including issues involving social justice, is promoted; 6) he is to take special care for the Catholic education of children and of young adults; 7) he is to make every effort with the aid of the Christian faithful to bring the Gospel message also to those who have ceased practicing their religion or who do not profess the true faith.”

Canon 528,2: “The pastor is to see to it: 8) that the Most Holy Eucharist is the center of the parish assembly of the faithful; 9) he is to work to see to it that the Christian faithful are nourished through a devout celebration of the sacraments and 10) especially that they frequently approach the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and the sacrament of Penance; 11) he is likewise to endeavor that they are brought to the practice of family prayer, 12) as well as to a knowing and active participation in the sacred liturgy, which the pastor must supervise in his parish under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, being vigilant lest any abuses creep in.”

Canon 529,1: In order to fulfill his office in earnest, the pastor should 13) strive to come to know the faithful who have been entrusted to his care; therefore, he is 14) to visit families, sharing the cares, worries and especially the griefs of the faithful, strengthening them in the Lord, and correcting them prudently if they are wanting in certain areas; 15) with a generous love, he is to help the sick, particularly those close to death, refreshing them solicitously with the sacraments and commending their souls to God; 16) he is to make a special effort to seek out the poor, the afflicted, the lonely, those exiled from their own land, and similarly those weighed down with special difficulties; 17) he is also to labor diligently so that spouses and parents are supported in fulfilling their proper duties, and 18) he is to foster growth in the Christian life within the family.”

APPENDIX C

Note: Our Catholic faith has traditionally emphasized the importance of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy as responsibilities every baptized Catholic is called to fulfill. They are rooted in Jesus’ teaching found in the Gospel, in particular the Gospel of St. Matthew 25: 31-46.

THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead

THE SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

- Admonish the sinner
- Instruct the ignorant
- Counsel the doubtful
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Forgive all injuries
- Pray for the living and the dead

SEVEN THEMES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

- Life and dignity of the human person
- Call to family, community and participation
- Rights and responsibilities
- Option for the poor and vulnerable
- The dignity of work and the rights of workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God’s creation

Source: “Sharing Catholic Social Teaching,”
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999.

APPENDIX D

INDICATORS OF PARISH VITALITY

Following is an excerpt from a more extensive Parish Vitality Inventory Resource sheet. For the complete document please visit: www.dioceseofkalamazoo.org/parishvitality

I. The Parish as a Community

- How would you describe the parish's effort to welcome all people into the life and ministry of the parish?
- How would you describe the parish's efforts in evangelization?
- How would you describe the parish's ability to recognize the diversity of talents and needs of its people?
- How would you describe the parish as a distinctive community?

II. The Parish as a Worshipping and Praying Community

- How would you describe the parish's celebration of Sunday Eucharist?
- How would you describe other worship practices and opportunities to pray throughout the liturgical year?
- How would you describe parish participation in and provision of the Sacraments?

III. The Parish as a Serving Community

- How would you describe the degree to which the parish reaches out to its own members who are in need?
- How well does the parish participate in service to the community beyond the parish?
- How would you describe the extent of parish involvement in service to the larger world and/or in more global issues?

IV. The Parish as an Educating Community

- How would you describe the parish's efforts to pass on and strengthen the faith of its youth?
- How would you describe the parish's educational attempts to meet the variety of educational needs of different parishioners,
- Catechetical Program
- Support of Catholic Schools
- RCIA

V. The Parish as an Administering Community

- How well does the parish incorporate principles of good stewardship in managing its resources?
- How well does the parish share leadership and responsibility with parishioners?
- How would you describe the parish's efforts to cooperate interdependently with other parishes and the diocese?

Let us pray

Loving God of life,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
deepen, strengthen and enliven
our relationship of faith in You,
the Rock of our salvation.

May we, the “*living stones*” (1 Peter 2:5)
of the household of faith,
continue to be built up into a strong,
spiritual structure,
able to withstand the many
challenges to our faith
and willing to give courageous
and joyful witness
to our hope in, and love for, You.

For we are one with You,
Father, in the Church,
and one with all humanity in the world,
through Jesus, the Way,
the Truth and the Life,
in the unity of the life-giving Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.

Amen

• respect for all human life

• end of violence and terrorism

• strong loving families

• religious freedom

• courageous witnesses to our faith



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