

## **What must we do? (Acts 2:37)**

### **A follow-up to the Pentecost Pastoral Letter**

On the Feast of Pentecost this year, I published a pastoral letter presenting the challenge of the New Evangelization. I expect that the question: "What must we do?" surfaces in many peoples' hearts, as it did among those who received the Good News preached by St. Peter on the first Pentecost. This practical question certainly rings in my ears and urgently demands an answer from the disciples of Christ who presently constitute the Church of Halifax and Yarmouth. To take up this challenge both inside and outside the Church requires prayerful attention, realistic thinking and pastoral wisdom so we can begin to own the vision of the New Evangelization and identify the practical steps necessary to make it a reality for our Church here and now.

This New Evangelization must begin and grow in all the parish communities where people daily live their faith and where their life in Christ is supported and fed every Sunday. You are one of those people, and you have received the Pentecost letter. What does it say to you? How do you receive the challenge to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a new way to the people who make up your family, your parish, your neighbourhood? Do you feel drawn to do your part in this apostolic missionary effort?

One of the ways that I, as your bishop, feel drawn to do my part in this apostolic mission is to visit with you in your parish. I will be establishing a calendar for these parish visits, so that I may share with you my hopes and expectations as well as my understanding of where we ought to go as a Church at this time. When I am with you, I hope you will tell me about who you are and what the New Evangelization means for your community of faith. I want to hear what you and your parish are thinking and how you plan to translate "New in ardour, New in methods, New in experience" into concrete pastoral actions in your community over the next three years. It will be my joy to celebrate with you our united dreams and goals as we place them before the Lord.

Today, on August 15th, the Feast of Our Lady's Assumption and our diocesan feast day, I am identifying some of the initial challenges that I see to be addressed in each parish, in each region and throughout the diocese. I intend that our plans and our actions will deal with these areas of pastoral life which require care and attention. They will form the basis for our performance review in three years.

#### **FOR YOUR PARISH**

I am asking every parish to embrace with courage and enthusiasm the challenge of the New Evangelization by developing a parochial plan of action to attend to these key spiritual components of the pastoral letter:

- the rediscovery of God in the present "eclipse",
- the personal encounter with Jesus Christ,
- the process of purification necessary for our church.

I expect you will do this firstly with your parish pastoral council and extend the action throughout your community of faith.

#### **The First Challenge:**

As immediate preparatory work for each parish, I ask you to:

1. Reflect prayerfully on what the New Evangelization means for your parish and begin to imagine creative new responses that will work in your community. The Study Guide is provided to assist individuals and the whole community with this reflection process. (available at [www.catholichalifax.org](http://www.catholichalifax.org) & [www.dioceseyarmouth.org](http://www.dioceseyarmouth.org))
2. Identify as soon as possible the members of the leadership group in your parish. This group will be mandated to fully engage the parish community with the implementation of this apostolic mission.
3. Establish an identifiable goal to be achieved each year for the next three years.

#### **The Second Challenge:**

The New Evangelization will require that every parish in the Archdiocese embark on a journey of purification and spiritual transformation to renew the faith of the community. To begin this journey, I am asking you to change our experience of the sacraments by bringing new life to them. To accomplish this, I propose the following steps:

1. • Express the centrality of the Lord's Day, by always gathering the largest possible assembly of parishioners to celebrate the Eucharist together, preferably on Sunday.  
• Collaborate with neighbouring parishes to provide only the necessary number of anticipated Masses on Saturday.  
• Welcome the renewed Roman Missal and prepare Sunday liturgies which are prayerful and uplifting in their praise of God. Encourage familiarity with the Word of God,

through the practice of *Lectio Divina* in small groups, focussing on the Sunday Mass readings.

2. • Reconnect, in every possible way, the experience of the sacraments with the lived faith-life of the community.  
• Celebrate the sacraments only when the individuals are prepared and ready, not before.  
• Involve as many members of the community as possible in the revitalization of the sacraments by giving witness to their faith as they support each other in the preparation for and celebration of all the sacraments.  
• Engage parishes in developing ways to follow up the reception of the sacraments to insure that the full sacramental life of the Church becomes a way of life for all believers.
3. Implement the new catechetical program, with the participation and involvement of parents and children, priests and catechists, and the committed support of the whole community.
4. • Identify and encourage the living signs of the Gospel of Life in your parish and community.  
• Look around and see what is actually going on and celebrate the daily lived commitment of those who make life more valuable, accepted and precious.  
• Become known for who you are and not for what you are against.  
• Take care of the isolated, the rejected, the poor and the lonely, thus offering an alternative to non-life options.

#### **IN YOUR REGION**

The New Evangelization will take shape and form in our individual parish communities, to the extent that the diocesan pastoral priorities are received, adapted and implemented in that parish. However, no parish grows well in isolation from, or in competition with, its neighbours. The newness which I hope for and seek will become more evident when neighbouring parishes of a pastoral region, actively collaborate together giving concrete expression to our unity and catholicity.

This is a major reason why I have established and appointed Regional Episcopal Vicars. I am counting on their experience and leadership in the regions and I expect them to facilitate regional collaboration. This will be enabled by the establishment in each region of the new Regional Council for Pastoral Life and New Evangelization. The Council will provide regional direction and support, advising the Episcopal Vicar. It will facilitate the implementation of the region's plans by working with the local pastors, deacons and lay leaders to promote the diocesan priorities of the New Evangelization.

### **The First Challenge:**

The immediate preparatory work is to form the Regional Council from those persons in the area who have the talent, the time and the interest to work together on common regional projects, with a particular focus on the transmission of the faith to persons of all ages.

### **The Second Challenge:**

I am asking each region to take the following steps:

1. Promote adult faith formation programs across the region.
2. Introduce, implement and support the common diocesan catechetical program in each parish of the region.
3. Identify and form the lay catechists and parish leaders needed for this ministry of teaching.
4. Develop a suitable regional approach to sacramental preparation and celebration as well as continuing participation in the life of the community of faith.
5. Mobilize those interested in the Gospel of Life project so its content and spirit may be received and understood as a message and an experience of the power of the Resurrection; an opportunity to begin again because of the grace of forgiveness and an expression of Christ's desire to share with us his abundant life.

### **BY THE DIOCESE**

In my responsibility for the whole diocesan church, "I am not able to carry all this people alone..." (Num. 11.4-15) so I count on those who work with me and form the diocesan leadership; they are the Episcopal Vicars, the priests and deacons, lay pastoral workers and the staff of the Pastoral Centre. It will be our responsibility and commitment to guide and support the overall development and realization of the New Evangelization. Diocesan initiatives will have to be taken to enable the new spirit to take root and grow in the best possible ways as we face the following challenges.

### **The First Challenge:**

Review and re-align human and material resources in both Halifax and Yarmouth to be at the service of the mission of our church:

- Integrate the pastoral personnel into one corps as soon as possible.
- Bring financial and administrative services in line with the new mission.

*To launch our work in the New Evangelization, I am proposing regional gatherings to take place simultaneously in all regions of our church on the morning of Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, when pastors, deacons, parish representatives and pastoral workers will be invited to come together locally with their Regional Episcopal Vicar to pray and discern the outline of the region's plan for the New Evangelization. A more detailed program for this day will be made available in the coming weeks.*

*In closing, on this Feast of the Assumption of Mary, I am calling on her to pray for us. Mary is the mother of our Church and she will be our support, strength and companion as we take up the ministry which her Son entrusted to us in this Church of Halifax and Yarmouth. I wish you all a good summer as I look forward to the fall and the new challenges which await us. May God bless you.*



†Anthony Mancini  
Archbishop of Halifax and  
Apostolic Administrator of Yarmouth

- Establish a Human Resource Department to prepare, present and implement common guidelines and policies to foster a more harmonious collaboration among clergy, pastoral workers and parish communities, and ensure the continuing implementation of the Archdiocesan Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Protocol.

### **The Second Challenge**

Establish the Diocesan Office of Pastoral Life and New Evangelization with its advisory council, overseen by the Vicar-General. It will be the responsibility of those who make up this office, to animate, support and encourage the effective implementation of the New Evangelization. Particular attention will be directed to the central challenge, the transmission of the faith to persons of all ages. This office, therefore will:

1. Promote adult faith formation programs and opportunities.
2. Establish a common catechetical program throughout the diocese.
3. Provide suitable formation for parents and all parishioners.
4. Offer training sessions for catechists, parish leaders, priests and deacons.
5. Sponsor youth ministry and outreach programs; hold up a common vision of evangelization for the programs which already exist; seek out new ways and methods for reaching out to the young people.
6. Establish a taskforce to identify, gather together, form and challenge believers in their late twenties to early forties to become the next generation of lay leadership of the Church in Halifax and Yarmouth.
7. Provide the encouragement and the opportunities necessary to identify, recruit and present from each parish and/or region at least one suitable candidate for the ordained priesthood, each year for the next three years.

### **The Third Challenge:**

Discover new ways to celebrate the faith and gifts of all engaged in the world and its transformation:

1. Engage Catholic professionals and laity from various walks of life in dialogue and reflection on their faith and its connection with their daily experience of work, family and social context.
2. Invite and welcome persons from diverse cultures and religious backgrounds to an exchange of views and to dialogue for the promotion of good will and respect for each other.

Feast of the Assumption of Mary, August 15, 2011