

MISSIONARY DISCIPLES:



DIOCESE OF SAN JOSE EVANGELIZATION
WORD, WORSHIP, WITNESS

The Next Chapter of Evangelization in the Diocese of San Jose

1. Fifty years after the close of the Second Vatican Council, the Diocese of San Jose is in its thirty-fourth year as a local Church working to implement the teachings of the Council. Its 54 parishes and missions, 27 elementary schools, 6 high schools, Catholic Charities, chaplaincies, institutes and organizations have been founded and sustained by strong collaborative efforts between lay leadership, religious, deacons, priests and bishops. Thirteen years removed from the initial promulgation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan, we are still working to “inspire the people of this Valley to live the values taught by Jesus Christ, inspiring them to integrity and action.” As in the days of the Second Vatican Council, so now today the words of Saint John XXIII ring true: “We are called to serve humankind as such, and not merely Catholics; to defend above all and everywhere, the rights of the human person and not merely those of the Catholic Church.” This missionary zeal and outward thrust has been echoed by the life, teaching and words of every post-Conciliar pope, especially Blessed Pope Paul VI (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*), Saint John Paul II (*Redemptoris Missio*) and Benedict XVI (*Porta Fidei*). In our own day, Pope Francis exhorts us to daily encounters with Jesus Christ that, filled with the joy of the Gospel, we as missionary disciples might “embark upon a new chapter of evangelization” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 1). In the new chapter of evangelization for the Diocese of San Jose, as “architects of our future” we rely on the “help of the Holy Spirit” (*Pastoral Plan*, 6). As in the first Pentecost, we pray that the Holy Spirit impel us to go forth from ourselves and turn us into “heralds of God’s wondrous deeds, capable of speaking to each person in his or her language” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 259).

Jesus in the Periphery: “Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you” (Matthew 21:31)

2. Pope Francis writes: “Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20). The vitality and vibrancy of our local church depends on the extent that we are committed to the ‘periphery’ of our localities. These include but are not limited to: the poor, immigrant, homeless, incarcerated, elderly, homebound, mentally ill, unborn, trafficked and others left on the fringes of society here in Santa

Clara County. Commitment to reaching all in the peripheries will make us a “Church in which there is a priority of persons over things and of truth over expediency, and a Church where there is a priority of love over all else” (*Pastoral Plan*, 7). Commitment to reaching all in the peripheries is the Spirit-led work in the face of the rising tide of a “disposable” culture where “human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 53). In his address to the General Congregation of the Cardinals, the then Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio commented:

We must get out of ourselves and go toward the periphery. We must avoid the spiritual disease of the Church that can become self-absorbed: when this happens, the Church itself becomes sick. Between a Church that goes into the street and gets into an accident and a Church that is sick with self-referentiality, I have no doubts in preferring the first.

Jesus in the Poor: God’s heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself “became poor” (2 Cor 8:9)

3. Pope Francis writes: “Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully part of society” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 187). Silicon Valley is home to some of the wealthiest people in the world. However, the same valley is home to hundreds of thousands of households forced to choose between paying the rent, buying food, or paying for health care. The “key criterion of authenticity” of St Paul and all Christians is that we “not forget the poor” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 195). Stewardship of time, talent and treasure especially for the poor should be integral to all Catholic institutions in the County of Santa Clara. As a local “Church which is poor and for the poor” we will let ourselves be evangelized by those who “in their difficulties know the suffering Christ” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 198). As a “Church without frontiers, a Church which considers herself mother to all” we must not fear a “loss of local identity” but rather encourage a “generous openness” to our immigrant populations which will “prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 210).

Jesus in the Word: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15)

4. The Church does not have the mission, God’s mission has the Church (cf. Fr Anthony Gittens, CSSp address to Diocese of San Jose, March 27, 2014). From its inception, the primary proclamation of the Church (or kerygma) has been: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 164). This proclamation is the content of every ministry of the Church as she goes to the peripheries. “There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 110).
5. Evangelization depends on the proclamation by all those who have encountered Jesus Christ. The proclamation is spoken both by words and by a life transformed by grace. Evangelization in our diocese depends critically on all the lay faithful, leaders, ministers, catechists, administrators, religious, deacons, priests and bishops having daily renewed encounters with Jesus Christ (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 3). “We are not asked to be flawless, but to keep growing and wanting to grow

as we advance along the path of the Gospel; our arms must never grow slack. What is essential is that the preacher be certain that God loves him, that Jesus Christ has saved him and that his love always has the last word” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 151). The dictum “Nemo dat quod non habet” (One cannot give what one does not have) is particularly true.

6. Evangelization is the discipleship of equals. The Diocese of San Jose has prided itself in lay leadership and the Diocesan Pastoral Plan calls for the further cultivation of lay leadership. The most critical piece of evangelization, the proclamation of the kerygma, is the responsibility of all those who have experienced the love of God, both lay and clergy, staff and volunteers, ministers and parishioners. This does not require much training or time. “Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries,’ but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples’” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 120).

Jesus the Evangelizer: “Jesus drew near and walked with them” (Luke 24:15)

7. Evangelization requires authentic dialogue. “Evangelization demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 165).
8. Propose the truth, don’t impose it. The proclamation of the Gospel “has to express God’s saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 165). “Rather than experts in dire predictions, our judges bent on rooting out every threat and deviation, we should appear as joyful messengers of challenging proposals, guardians of the goodness and beauty which shine forth in a life of fidelity to the Gospel” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 168).
9. Evangelization requires personal accompaniment. Jesus spent three years with the Twelve forming them along the way. “The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this ‘art of accompaniment’...the pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 169). Personal accompaniment includes periods of trust, curiosity, openness, and seeking as people go through the various stages of growth: non-believer, seeker, disciple, apostle (cf. Sherry Weddell presentation to the Diocese of San Jose, November 21, 2013).
10. Listening is critical in forming disciples. “Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 171). We cannot evangelize those we do not love. Given that young adults are the largest missing demographic in the Church today, it would be worthwhile to have studies to understand how young adults come to faith. We must be “shepherd with the smell of sheep” (Pope Francis, *Christ Day Homily*, March 28, 2013).
11. Evangelization requires the accounting for cultural expressions of faith. Over 200 languages are spoken in the County of Santa Clara. The Diocese of San Jose is rich in cultural expressions of faith

many of which revolve around major feast days. “Expressions of popular piety have much to teach us; for those who are capable of reading them, they are a *locus theologicus*, which demands our attention, especially at a time when we are looking to the new evangelization” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 126). When cultural expressions of faith are rooted in the Gospel, they are not a threat but rather promote unity. “The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, transforms our hearts and enables us to enter into the perfect communion of the blessed Trinity, where all things find their unity” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 117).

12. Evangelization requires pastoral creativity. Innovation is part of the fabric of the Silicon Valley. The parish can be the center of hearing the word of God, growing in the Christian life, dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration, and mission outreach (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 28).

A New Pentecost: “All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with Mary the mother of Jesus” (Acts 1:14)

13. Just as in the first Pentecost, we pray for a new Pentecost today here in the Diocese of San Jose that the Gospel might be preached to all people. Pope Francis concludes his exhortation with the invocation of the Holy Spirit which is required for all work of evangelization:

How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervor, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction! Yet I realize that no words of encouragement will be enough unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts...I implore [the Holy Spirit] to come and renew the Church, to stir and impel her to go forth boldly to evangelize all peoples (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 261).