

HORIZON

"From the rising of the sun to its setting let the name of the Lord be praised" Psalm 113:3

Issue #52 May 2011

Diocese of Ogdensburg

www.dioogdensburg.org

Office of Evangelization

www.dioogdensburg.org/evangelization

Sister Mary Eamon Lyng, SSJ, Director

Phone: 315-393-2920

Fax: 1-866-314-7296

E-mail: elyng@dioogdensburg.org



Evangelization: Mission of the Church

Church: A Family of Faith

Happy Easter! The message of the Easter season continues to echo throughout the daily and Sunday Scripture readings. The beautiful Easter message and mission to the disciples is the same one for us today in the Church: A Family of Faith: "Do not be afraid. Go and tell, proclaim the Good News! Go, and make disciples! Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! I promise to be with you until the end of time" (Matthew 28: 10-20).

The Risen Lord made known His Resurrection to a chosen few, "the brothers", so that they would become witnesses to others. It was this apostolic preaching and teaching that has been handed down to us! The grace of our Baptism is gift! From the graces of our Baptism is the call and mission to continue to evangelize the world. There is work to be done to bring the Gospel message to those whose faith is to be strengthened; to those who have been catechized into the faith, but have left it for some reason; and to those who have never heard of Jesus Christ. Just as Mary Magdalene embraced the merciful and forgiving love of the Crucified and Risen Lord and became "the Apostle to the Apostles", so too, do we take up the same work to go forth to spread the Gospel.

Church Community in Action—

In a recent article "*The hidden exodus: Catholics becoming Protestants*" Rev. Thomas Reese SJ, wrote that a huge number of people have left the Catholic Church. According to the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life stated that "one out of every 10 Americans is an ex-Catholic". The report also indicated that "if they were a separate denomination, they would be the third-largest denomination in the United States, after Catholics and Baptists". Why the large exodus from our Family of Faith?

In our last workshop: *What Does It Mean to Be An Evangelizing Parish*, it was noted that of one of the parishes had about 1/5 of its registered members attending Sunday Mass on a regular basis. Where are the other 4/5ths? How can we become a more welcoming faith community to the 4/5ths who are not in the pew? How welcoming are the greeters to the new members of the parish, visitors, and regular members of the parish?

Many Catholics who become Protestants say they leave the Church because their "spiritual needs were not being met". According to the Pew Report, 2/3rds of Catholics who become Protestants do so before they reach the age of 24. How can we feed our people, especially our young adults, that will help them understand more clearly that our Catholic faith is a gift, a mystery, a way of life that is Christ-centered.

Our Catholic faith is a way of **knowing and encountering Jesus Christ**, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist which is the source and summit of our Catholic faith. The Eucharist is the center of the life of the Church. How can we witness our faith as a Eucharistic community? How can we be more attentive to the new changes in the Roman Missal that might draw some to return to the Church? The Catholic faith is also **knowing about Jesus Christ** through His teachings found in the *Catholic Catechism of the Catholic Church* and through Scripture study.

How is your parish a vibrant parish? What lessons can be learned from the losses of your parish family? What are one or two ways your parish can deal with some of the above statements and questions?

In the next few weeks, your parish family will be celebrating First Communion and Confirmation. How will you continue to reach out to these families to continue to feel welcome in the parish? How can they become a catalyst for other younger families to come and celebrate as a family of faith?

O Mary, Star of Evangelization, enlighten us with the radiance of your Son, walk with us in faith, strengthen us in hope, and unite us in love as we strive to become disciples in mission. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.





Pope Benedict XVI recently reiterated how important it is for the parish to be a “family of families”. How well his statement resonates with Bishop Terry LaValley’s theme: *Church, A Family of Faith*. The Holy Father said that the parish should be the place “where couples come together with their children to share their joys and also their difficulties.” He added that the parish was to foster “the family’s ability to live a profound encounter with Christ through listening to his Word, prayer, the sacramental life and the exercise of charity.”

“In this way,” the Pontiff affirmed, “they will be helped to put into practice a solid spirituality that fosters in all its members a determined aspiration to sanctity, without fear of showing the beauty of the high ideals and ethical and moral demands of life in Christ.” “To promote this, it is necessary to enhance the formation of all those who, in one way or another, are dedicated to the evangelization of families,” he added.

“Likewise,” the Holy Father continued, “it is important to trace paths of collaboration with all men and women of good will to continue to intensely protect human life, marriage and the family.” “With his grace, Christ stimulates us to work diligently and enthusiastically to support each of the members of families in the discovery of the plan of love that God has for the human person.” “Hence,” he said, “no effort will be useless in working so that every family, founded on the indissoluble union between a man and a woman, will carry out its mission.”

This mission, the Pope explained, is “to be a living cell of society, a seedbed of virtues, a school of constructive and peaceful coexistence, an instrument of concord and a privileged realm in which human life will be received and protected, in a joyful and responsible way, from its beginning to its natural end.”

It is the role of the whole parish community to support family life. From this parish family, families may go forth to become a stronger “domestic church” within their homes so that their children will learn and encounter Christ through prayer, love, and good example.

Tips for Evangelization

1. **Continue to welcome and invite** those who have come into **full communion of the Church**, **children** who have received their **First Holy Communion**, and the **young adults** who have received the **sacrament of Confirmation** and their **families** to:
 - a. Bring up the Presentation Gifts to the altar at Sunday Mass
 - b. Sing in the choir
 - c. Lector at Mass
 - d. Be an Eucharistic minister
 - e. Be an Usher
 - f. Be a Greeter
 - g. Join a small community faith-sharing group
 - h. Serve on one of the parish committees
 - i. Help organize a summer parish picnic
2. **How does your parish bulletin evangelize?**
 - a. Look at the **cover**—what does the image say about your parish? Is your mission statement clearly stated? Are times of Masses and contact information visible?
 - b. **Inside** the bulletin—what important information or news will “jump off” the page? What size font? Is it readable for “older eyes”? Or are there too many fonts? Boxes? What information does it offer that will involve parish families?
 - c. **Who Receives the Bulletin?** Seekers on your parish website, nursing homes, home-bound, college students, military away from home, hospital patients, new residents in the neighborhood?

RESOURCES

Roman Missal Resources

www.usccb.org/romanmissal and www.pastoral.diogdensburg.org. These two websites are excellent for resources for the new changes in your parishes.

www.renewintl.org is offering webinars on **Lifting Up Our Hearts**. Check out their resources.

www.ascensionpress.com has a new program called **A Biblical Walk through the Mass**. Check out their website for the program and resources.

www.catholicupdate.com has a small booklet called Catholic Update *guide to The Mass* (\$5.99).