

#IAmCatholic: Archdiocesan movement helps people share faith experiences

The Archdiocese of Baltimore during Easter Week launched a new website to help people share their experience of the Catholic faith.

The site notes that Catholics provide a lot of care and compassion for others as an outward expression of their faith in Jesus Christ. Those who contribute their personal stories for the site at iamcatholic.archbalt.org are also encouraged to use the hashtag #IAmCatholic when sharing about their faith and actions on social media.

To help people share their lively and active Catholic faith, the new site focuses on the theme, "Compassion. Community. Commitment."

"It is in this community of faith and fellowship that we serve the needs of countless who require comfort, food and clothing, shelter, job opportunities and essential services - or just a gesture of Christlike kindness and compassion," the site says.

"The best thing about the new platform, #IAmCatholic, is that it gives people a chance to share and to see all the incredible things Catholics do for others every day, especially the poorest and most marginalized among us," said John Romanowsky, executive director of the Department of Evangelization for the archdiocese. "These are the things that never make the evening news."

In a time when pollsters report the continuing "rise of the nones" - those who say they are not affiliated with any religion - and when some people are questioning their connection to the church because of scandals involving child sexual abuse, the site hopes to show the enduring impact that individual Catholics have on their neighborhoods and communities.

Romanowsky said it is sometimes hard for people to share their faith with others, because they are worried about how friends or coworkers might react. However,

from his experience, “As soon as they see how their own faith story can encourage, inspire and even change the lives of others, they start to seize every chance they get” to share.

He said the archdiocese hopes that #IamCatholic “will be an endless source of encouragement for Catholics. Each story about faith, forgiveness, compassion, conversion and service – each of them witnesses to Christ’s saving presence in the church.”

He added that with so many good reasons to be Catholic, he hopes people share their varied experiences. “It has never been more important for us to rediscover the power of our own personal witness.

“I hope that people will take this opportunity to share their stories about how Jesus has transformed their lives,” Romanowsky said. “If they take this risk, many others will be, quite literally, eternally grateful.”

The site will have sections for events and volunteer opportunities for those who wish to get more deeply involved in ministries that serve others. It will also have connections to news and feature stories that highlight how people are actively living out their faith in Jesus Christ.

A social media stream will track usage of the #IamCatholic hashtag.