



AN UPDATE FROM ARCHBISHOP WILLIAM E. LORI ON EVANGELIZATION-BASED PARISH AND SCHOOL PLANNING



August 21, 2016

Dear Friends in Christ,

In July 2015 I issued my first pastoral letter as Archbishop of Baltimore. In this document, entitled, *A Light Brightly Visible, Guiding the Path to Missionary Discipleship*, I challenged the people of this Archdiocese to join me in stretching ourselves to go deeper in our relationship with Christ, embrace the mission of the Church more fully, and live this mission out in our daily lives. In short, I challenged us to “Be Missionary Disciples.”

In presenting this challenge, I offered the following questions:

- Are we equipped to fulfill the great commission the Lord has given us?
- Do we personally have the qualities of mind, heart, and spirit to take up this task?
- Are our parishes ready to respond to the challenges of the mission in our times?
- What decisions need to be made so that we can marshal the resources the Lord has given us to do the work of the Gospel?
- Are there ways we can pull together as a Catholic community to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel more effectively?
- How can we reach out more dynamically to those who have left and those who are searching?

Our answers to these questions and the response of our parishes, schools, charitable institutions, and of Catholic individuals and families throughout the Archdiocese portend nothing less than the future of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Our responses comprise the foundation of our Archdiocesan-wide strategic planning process. Along with the daily sacrifices of our generous priests and our vigorous prayers for the promotion of priestly vocations, we must also prepare ourselves and others for the work of evangelization for our Church to fully succeed in advancing the mission Christ gave to us.

It has been one year since I issued my pastoral letter and I felt it important to share with you an update on the work that has taken place during that time in response to it, provide an updated timeline for both parish and school planning efforts, and revisit the goals that lie ahead of us. And I want to offer another invitation for your participation and for your prayers as we continue this important work. Among the work done since my pastoral letter are the following, which I share in this document: the results of the Archdiocesan-wide survey; information about the reconfiguration of parishes into what we are calling “pastorates”; a document that will serve as a guideline for the changes to be discussed for each pastorate; and an update on the study of our school system and how we can make more strategic investments in our schools.

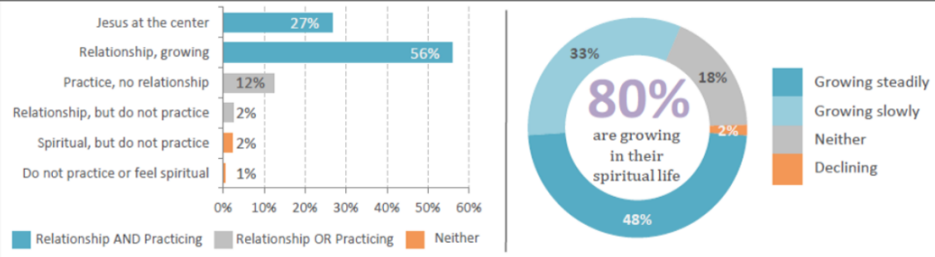
PARISH PLANNING

Following the release of the pastoral letter, I asked that a survey be conducted throughout the Archdiocese to gauge our “mission readiness” as a way of obtaining answers to the aforementioned questions. The survey, provided in English and Spanish, along with a separate youth survey, was offered online and in print. Some 28,000 surveys were completed and in April 2016 each parish received its results. (Archdiocesan and regional level survey results can be found online [here](#). To review your parish survey results, contact your pastor or parish leaders.)

There were a lot of interesting surveys results, but two of the ones that made the biggest impression were how people responded to the question about their personal faith life, and what people felt were the biggest obstacles to sharing their faith with others. The charts below depict the Archdiocesan results to these questions.

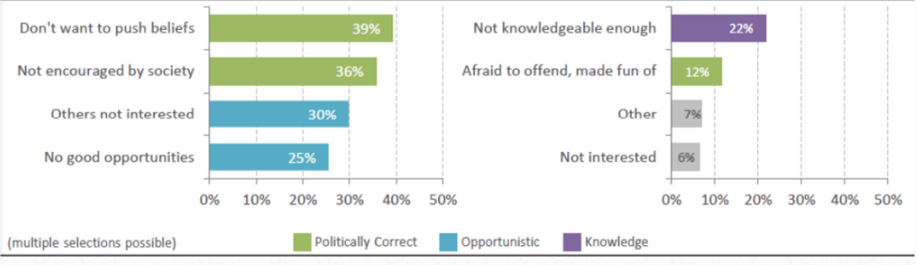
Personal Faith Life

RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS (n=20,563) and SPIRITUAL GROWTH (n=20,671) Q21, Q22



Faith Sharing (Mission Readiness)

GREATEST OBSTACLES TO SHARING FAITH? (n=34,769) Q17



While many feel they have a relationship with Christ and are growing spiritually, 1 out of every 5 people either did not feel like they were growing spiritually or felt their spiritual life was declining. These are the people who are in our midst, who are worshipping with us on Sunday but are not being inspired by the Gospel. How can we help bring them closer to Christ? When nearly 40% of survey respondents are not comfortable sharing faith matters with others for fear of offending them, we are at risk of not connecting with those most in need of this message. We must ask ourselves if we are “mission ready” and, if not, how we can become so.

PARISH MISSION READINESS STATEMENT

I asked each parish to review their survey results, along with data that provides a 10-year profile of the parish, and to reflect on what they might mean in terms of the greatest opportunities and challenges to “mission readiness” and personal and pastoral “missionary conversion.” In other words, how prepared are we to take up the mission to make disciples and to do so in a way that is relevant to our times?

MISSION READINESS

The degree to which someone or a group of people are prepared to take up the mission of the Body of Christ to love God, love and serve each other, and make disciples for Christ. Mission readiness requires the cultivation of one's personal and communal faith life, as well as active engagement in spreading the Gospel message of God's saving love.

MISSIONARY CONVERSION

Suitably channeling the Church's customs, ways of doing things, schedules and structures “for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation.” (Evangelii Gaudium, §27)
In personal “missionary conversion,” we are transformed through Christ to have the courage to share His joy and mystery with those whom we encounter.

The review and reflection process is meant to be an opportunity for parishes to focus their attention on how they are living out the mission of the Church through the following core mission priorities:

LITURGY

*To fully and intentionally engage in **prayer, worship, and sacramental life** that flows from reverential participation in the Eucharist – the source and summit of our faith*

WELCOME

*To practice radical hospitality and **welcome** as Jesus did, seeking out the disenfranchised and vulnerable and creating a sense of **fellowship** and belonging that is grounded in love for each other and humble gratitude to God*

ENCOUNTER

*To continually experience our own conversion and bring others to experience the same through **evangelization**, revealing the truth of the Gospel and witnessing to others how we ourselves have encountered Christ*

ACCOMPANIMENT

*To grow as disciples of Christ and nurture growth in others as we study, share, and live out the teachings of Christ and his Church through **education, faith formation, and discipleship** endeavors*

SENDING

*To bring Christ to the world, practicing discipleship and encouraging each other through friendship and service as we support the work of the Church; provide for the **material and pastoral care of the poor and suffering** and advocate for the discernment of vocations in life, especially **priestly vocations** for those who feel called in this way*

MISSION SUPPORT

*To enact wise **stewardship** of the gifts God has granted us, the legacy entrusted to us by those who have preceded us in the faith, and the hope that lies in future generations of the faithful, so that our resources may be channeled to support the mission of disciple-making first and foremost*

The parish mission readiness statements are an important part of the process that will play a role in configuring pastorates and influence the strategies that are developed in pastorate plans. In formulating these statements, parishes are creating the readiness to plan that will be needed once the pastorates are formed.

In addition to the survey, the Archdiocese's Office of Pastoral Planning of the Archdiocese teamed up with its Department of Evangelization to create a new website, www.bemissionarydisciples.org. The site was launched in fall 2015 and serves as the central point for evangelization-based planning. It provides content and resources, including online mapping, targeted to those who are involved in the detailed work of planning for missionary conversion. A blog series on how to evaluate the survey responses through the lens of evangelization can be found [here](#) as well.

MODEL FOR PASTORATES

PASTORATE

One or more parishes with a single assigned leader (pastor, administrator, or PLD) and leadership team who, together, are responsible for parish life and structure across the pastorate

Currently, all parishes in the Archdiocese are organized in clusters (groupings of parishes geographically close to each other), but the ways in which the clusters are functioning range from close collaboration to loose association.

A primary goal of our planning process is to configure parishes in a way that leads to more vibrant, sustainable, and evangelizing faith communities. This will require a more concerted effort to bring parishes together to share in this mission and to share resources.

Without a doubt, the success of any effort to bring people together around a common mission depends in large part on unified leadership. During the planning process, parishes will be asked to consider how they can be mission-focused in a context of change – changing habits of the faithful, changing numbers of priests, changing demographic patterns, changing financial and physical plant situations. This level of complexity makes it imperative that we establish which parishes will be planning together and that those parishes come together to do that work under the leadership of a unified team. I am calling each of these configurations a “pastorate” - one or more parishes with a single assigned leader (pastor, administrator, or pastoral life director) and their leadership team who, together, are responsible for parish life and structure in the parish(es) that comprise the pastorate. I believe that having the planning work be guided by a single leader and team, rather than several different pastors each with their own team, will be the most effective and efficient approach.

Since Pastoral Letter Issued...

FALL 2015 – WINTER 2016

- *www.BeMissionaryDisciples.org launches as main platform for evangelization-based planning tools and resources.*
- *Phase I begins as parishes promote reading of Archbishop Lori's pastoral letter and participation in the parish survey.*

SPRING 2016

- *Parishes receive survey results along with guidance for reflection on them and preparation of a Parish Mission Readiness Statement.*
- *Weekly blog series begins, providing additional guidance for reflecting on survey results through the lens of evangelization.*
- *Office of Pastoral Planning attends region meetings across the Archdiocese to provide more guidance on the reflection process and answer questions.*
- *Archbishop Lori hosts five meetings with priests across the Archdiocese to continue the conversation on his vision for evangelization-based planning and get feedback on how it is unfolding.*

SUMMER 2016

- *Guiding Change Document is developed to describe why planning needs to occur, the desired outcomes of the process, and the limitations within which it should take place.*
- *Work group composed of pastors and Archdiocesan staff is convened by the Archbishop to develop the first draft of a model for parishes.*
- *A Guidebook is developed that lays out the planning process that will follow the creation of the parishes configurations (Phase II).*
- *Archbishop Lori issues an update on the progress made in the year since *A Light Brightly Visible* was released.*
- *Parishes continue to work on Parish Mission Readiness Statements.*

Next Steps...

FALL 2016

- *Parish Mission Readiness Statements are sent to the Office of Pastoral Planning by September 30.*
- *Pastorate model continues to be refined through a series of consultation meetings.*

WINTER 2016-17

- *Pastorate model is finalized and approved by Archbishop.*
- *Phase II pastorate planning begins.*

Although this concept may seem foreign to some, it is indeed already operative in the Archdiocese insofar as 36 of our 142 parishes already share their pastor with at least one other parish. As a result, the Archdiocese currently has the equivalent of 120 pastorates. Given the trends at work in the Archdiocese, this number is likely to shrink in the next five years to less than 90, as fewer priests and smaller parishes necessitate more shared pastor arrangements. As your Archbishop, I have the responsibility to plan for the future of the Archdiocese through the structure of parishes and schools, as well as the assignment and development of pastoral resources. The formation of pastorates will help us do that collectively and intentionally. I am calling on us all to be open to the good fruit that a proactive, evangelization-based approach to planning can yield, though it will mean “casting into the deep” and heading down a path that is unfamiliar to us.

As we stand at the head of this path, I want to be sure that we take the time to understand these things:

- **Every parish will be part of a pastorate.**
- **Pastorates will consist of either a single parish or a group of parishes.**
- **Each pastorate will have a single pastoral leader and leadership team.**
- **Pastorate planning will require us to think differently about how we live out the core mission priorities and, in many cases, will necessitate change.**

In June 2016, I convened a working group of pastors and archdiocesan staff to draft a model of the pastorate arrangements over the course of a three-day work session. This model will serve as the basis for consultation with the Presbyteral Council, and will be revised in subsequent meetings with pastors and pastoral life directors, lay parish leaders, and religious order superiors this fall. To draft an informed and reasonable first model of pastorates, the work group immersed itself in parish data and other information, including:

- The number of Masses, sacraments, and pastoral workload at each parish;
- Mass attendance and the capacity utilization of churches;
- The generalized financial status, condition of facilities, and size/complexity of parishes;
- Demographic data and trends; and
- Preliminary recommendations of the School Facilities Master Plan.

In October, the recommended pastorates will be made public, with region-level consultation to take place throughout the Archdiocese November 9-11.

PASTORATE PLANNING

The formation of the pastorates is just the beginning of a process that will take some time and a lot of creative and collaborative effort, as each pastorate works to put together a 3-Year Pastorate Plan to guide its future. A [Guiding Change Document](#) has been created to establish the boundaries within which the planning work is to unfold. Guidance on how to go about setting pastorate goals will be detailed in the Planning Process Guidebook, which will be issued later in the year.

SCHOOL PLANNING



Meanwhile, in 2015 we also embarked on a vision for a 21st century Catholic school system in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Looking to build on the goals realized by the 2010 Report of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Catholic Schools, which sought to stabilize enrollment in our Catholic school system, we announced a new vision and master planning effort for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese. In doing so, we established this lofty, but obtainable goal: regardless of location, we want all of our schools to be recognized as much for their responsible leadership, affordability and innovation as they are for their rigorous faith formation and academic excellence. Thus, we sought a plan to identify areas of strategic investment to help us achieve our vision.

This process, which is nearing completion, has been led by experienced professionals with expertise in planning and data analysis, with a strong grasp of the technical aspects of facilities planning, working closely with parish and school leaders to gather and analyze data in key areas, such as demographics, site capacity, facility conditions, and enrollment management. The process has involved extensive input from many constituencies and stakeholders and included parents, educators, and pastors.

The firms we engaged to form a consultation team to help us with this effort were charged with studying the current condition and capacity of 22 of our schools, with an eye on demographics (current and future), facility condition, and educational effectiveness. For the research phase of the study, researchers met with leaders of all 22 schools and toured each facility to gather information regarding Catholic identity, *Facility condition, *Educational facility effectiveness, and *Site capacity.

69 schools currently operating within the Archdiocese of Baltimore (Parish & Independent)

10 years old youngest school surveyed*

95 years old oldest school surveyed*

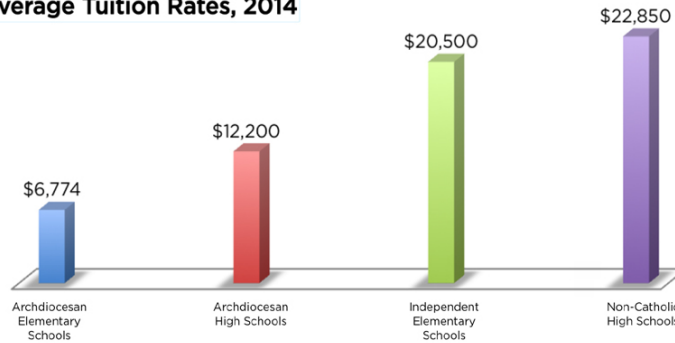
61 years average age of a school building in the Archdiocese of Baltimore*

99% High School Graduation Rate

98% Students Attending College

*of the 22 schools studied

Average Tuition Rates, 2014



At its peak, there were more than 100 parish and independent schools. Today, there are 69 such schools, including those under the new Archdiocesan Collaborative School hybrid model of governance.

In visiting each school, researchers observed the physical condition of each of the properties to identify the critical needs to bring each building into a good state of repair. The school-by-school review also assessed the quality of space for learning, using a tool called EFEI (Educational Facility Effectiveness Instrument). The EFEI aligns teaching and learning goals with the physical characteristics needed to support those goals, based on national best practices, and unique local needs. The EFEI identifies the critical needs to create high quality learning environments that support the education vision and goals of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. The consultation team also evaluated each school's current enrollment and capacity and projected demographics.

In the spring of 2016, representatives of the Archdiocese, along with members of the consultation team, reconvened the pastors, principals, and school board representatives of each of the 22 schools to review the findings for each school. I am currently reviewing these same findings and expect to make decisions this fall about the number of schools needed to meet current and projected demand, as well as opportunities for financial investment to improve our school facilities that will allow our schools to remain competitive.

I am grateful for the tremendous work, collaboration, and sharing that has taken place over the past year as we seek to achieve our goal of creating missionary disciples – among ourselves and others – in service to the Lord and His Church. I pray these steps will bring us closer to each other, closer to the Lord, and closer to true missionary conversion!

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend William E. Lori

Archbishop of Baltimore