

Not long ago a choir of smiling youngsters from La Purisima Parish School gave a rousing concert at a conference I attended. One look at them and you knew that they not only enjoyed entertaining us, they obviously believed in what they were singing. This was especially so during the last song in the program. One of the students sang, "Troubled times we will survive; we will keep our faith alive!" and then the rest of the group joined in the chorus, "Learning our faith, loving our faith, living our faith alleluia!" As they sang about learning the faith the youngsters pointed at their heads; then they clutched their hearts as they sang of loving it, and when they sang about living the faith, they stretched out their hands and arms toward the big wide world.¹ They inspired all of us.

I address my pastoral letter to you, my brothers and sisters of the Church of Orange, begging the Holy Spirit for the grace to inspire all of you to seek a similar heartfelt enthusiasm for our Catholic faith. May these words touch each and every heart. Yes, our local church is vibrant and growing; we have much for which we are grateful and proud. But, in my opinion, these wonderful traits will not be sufficient. Times have changed.

I write to you, feeling a little like how the divinely inspired human author of the Gospel of Mark must have felt. As I read what he wrote, I saw not only the words and actions of Jesus as he describes them; what comes through to me also is *why* he was inspired to write this first gospel. The catalyst was his concern about the easy-going attitude toward the faith held by the community to which he belonged. A generation after Jesus' life, death and resurrection, Mark retold those stirring events with a keen eye toward the persecution he rightly foresaw on the horizon for his beloved community. He asked himself: What did Jesus say and do that could help these disciples keep their trust in God alive? How could he inspire them to be ready to take up their crosses and follow after Jesus, as he had asked? Without a deeper experience of conversion, he knew it

¹ "Faith: Learn It, Love It, Live It!" composed by Roger E. Minkle, Ph.D., Associate Principal, Saint Jeanne de Lestonnac School

was unlikely that they would be strong enough to stand up for their faith. Rather, he feared they would end up like St. Peter who loudly professed his commitment to Jesus only, in the time of trial, to deny him. The Gospel of Mark was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as a call to them (and us) to become more dedicated to our Savior and to be willing to follow his sacrificial example more closely.

Unlike Saint Mark, I do not foresee persecution for us on the horizon, though these are not easy days for the Catholic Church. Our commitment to Jesus is not being tested so much as our commitment to him through a Church that has hurt others. Let us not minimize the complaints of those who experience the church as hurtful or lessen our commitment to seek forgiveness and reconciliation with them. I encourage parishes to continue to reach out with support groups and ministries such as *Coming Home*, as well as the dedicated door-to-door efforts of evangelization teams and apostolic groups. Each and every one of us is responsible to be a minister of compassion and healing to those individuals whom God places in our path, but particularly those who feel hurt or betrayed by the Church. I want especially to highlight the plight of those who were harmed by sexual misconduct in the Church. I beg you to join me in opening your hearts to their suffering and in praying for their healing. I have made and am keeping a commitment to protect the vulnerable among us and have put in place a change of attitude as well as new policies to ensure that everywhere in our diocese they will be protected.

For most of us, though, the problem tends more toward indifference than hurt. Here are some of the indicators that worry me:

- Our religious education programs are packed with youngsters preparing in the second grade to receive their First Communion but the enrollment often drops dramatically in the ensuing years. Why don't they come back?
- In some of our schools less than half of the Catholic students come to Mass on the weekend with their families. Why aren't they there?
- With the other bishops, I confer the sacrament of Confirmation on hundreds every Easter season; most of these are enthusiastic teens who have performed service projects and

been inspired by their experiences on Confirmation retreats. Why does the fervor that led up to Confirmation fade? These good-hearted young men and women move on to other things. Why do so few remain regularly involved in service projects or youth groups?

- Too often the same happens with couples who come to the church to be married; they report that they enjoyed the marriage preparation put on for them by the church and most appreciate the sacramental character of the vows they make to each other before God. After their marriage, why are so few of them regularly involved in the life of their parishes?
- Even among the hundreds of adults whom I elect to the Easter sacraments each Lent—people who display such enthusiasm at that rite to become Catholic—there are too many for whom the Catholic faith wanes over the ensuing years. Why is that so?
- Too, too many of our catechists and teachers have not obtained even basic certification in religious formation. If they do not know it sufficiently themselves, how can they adequately share the faith? And if they do not receive the faith in sufficient clarity and depth, how shall our children grow into strong Catholic adults?
- While Catholics are the largest religious denomination in Orange County, I am told that the second largest are so-called “former Catholics.” I presume that these are good people. Why has the Catholic faith become for them less the priority I believe it needs to be for all of us?

Despite the efforts of so many of us, the faith and dedication of too many Catholics does not seem to have reached the “critical mass” needed to sustain their Catholic faith and keep up its practice over the course of their lives...

Despite the efforts of so many—efforts that have been generous, sacrificing and committed and for which I am grateful—the faith and dedication of too many Catholics does not seem to have reached the “critical mass” needed to sustain their Catholic faith and keep up its practice over the course of their lives; and I fear many more of us may follow in their steps.

Although few of us would willingly betray our Lord, too many of us unintentionally let Jesus become less and less of a priority in our daily lives.

God will renew our faith if we ask him; I invite you to make your own commitment as well. Several years ago many of you in leadership were involved in an effort to list how we as a diocese might improve the way we form ourselves in our Catholic faith. Let me thank all of you who participated and the team from Reid and Associates who facilitated the effort. Many of the recommendations contained in the final report, “Many Members All One Body,” have been or are in the process of being implemented. I hope some of these changes will address the questions I have just raised. And I invite all our ministries of formation—at the diocese, in our parishes and schools and among our religious communities—to take up these issues, aiming at improvement and spiritual renewal. But such strategic and institutional improvements will have little effect without a commitment by each and every Catholic to better know, love and live out his or her faith. It is not enough to simply be knowledgeable or enthusiastic or dedicated to the faith; we need to be all three.

Such a faith is also the best thing we can offer to our families, our neighbors, our co-workers and our society. “The most valuable gift that the Church can offer to the bewildered and restless world of our time,” Pope John Paul said, “is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith.”²

I know it is not easy. Our lives can become so full or so busy or so demanding that we begin to lose sight of God’s love and mercy and our attraction to all that is holy. The pressures of making a living and juggling the many competing demands on our time and attention, the effort to care for our families and do well in our society can push prayer, service to others and regular participation in the sacramental life of the church more and more to the margins of our awareness. Additionally, our comfort and comparative affluence can yield to complacency and the increasingly secularity of our times can become a slippery slope that weakens our commitment to Christ. We can

² John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae: On Catechesis in Our Time*, no. 61.

end up wondering where God went when it was we who drifted.

I. MAKE IT A PERSONAL COMMITMENT

One of the strengths of Catholics in America is our interest and willingness to make our faith personal. We do not attend Church out of mere habit or the desire to look respectable in the eyes of others. We do not wish to be only an example for others to admire. We do what we do because we believe in it and we judge the authenticity of another's Catholic faith by the level of his or her personal involvement. This expression of our American independence is fundamental to our Catholic self-understanding.

And so I ask each and every Catholic in Orange County to examine your conscience and take a look at your style of life:

- *Have you drifted from your spiritual moorings? Is the attraction to what is holy as strong as the desires for success and recognition and a good time? If our Lord is not at the center of your life, what's the first step you can take to return him to that sacred place?*
- *When was the last time you studied your Catholic faith? You can't build your adult life on a foundation of childish faith.*
- *Perhaps you find it hard to love your faith when you yourself have questions and complaints about the faith that you never get around to addressing. How can you face them?*
- *Do you take time to share your faith with others, especially with your family and close friends? Do you even know how to share it without sounding pious or self-righteous, in other words, in a way that people would actually find attractive?*
- *Do others keep asking you questions about your faith that you can't answer? You might need to know your faith better for their sakes.*
- *What is the improvement that you think your own Catholic faith needs right now? What's your next step?*

- *Would you like your faith to be deeper or better informed or richer? Or does it need to be healed or to grow more mature or to be purified of alien elements? Do you want to feel it more deeply or to live it more faithfully? Do you wish it would capture your imagination or steady your uncertain steps or help you decide what to do with the rest of your life? Might it help you be more transparent or honest or caring, more confident or humble or more dedicated to the needs of others? At this moment, could it help you to speak more boldly or to be a better listener? Do you need it to hold you back from distraction and temptation or to hurl you forward in word and action?*
- *What might you ask of your faith here and now that you have not in the past?*

II. EXPLICIT FAITH

As our brother and sister evangelical Christians rightly assert, each person who seeks to follow Jesus must choose him as his or her personal Lord and Savior. What is characteristic of our Catholic tradition is that we live this commitment explicitly within the Christian community. Our faith is personal but it is not private. *Together* we meditate, pray and discern the inspirations on the Holy Spirit among us; *as one body of Christ* we gather around the Lord's table and receive the sacraments; confidently and with commitment, we work *together* to carry out the commands of our Savior, particularly the care of the poor and vulnerable. Though I try to integrate what I receive and make it my own, my faith is never just *my* faith; it is my share in *our* faith.

We, Catholics, do not naturally keep to ourselves; we get involved in the society in which we live. As Catholics in America, we are well known for our impressive contributions to politics, literature, medicine, business and the arts. It is one of our ways of evangelizing. Within the cultures of our birth we have customarily lived our faith. We have also counted on society to support those values and activities that develop character, creativity and justice within the community.

We now live in a society quite different from what we had when most of us grew up, regardless of the culture that nurtured us. Those of us of a certain age became Catholic by a kind of osmosis. Like the air we breathed, our faith seemed to have always been there. We discovered it in and through the culture in which we were immersed: by the way our families celebrated holidays, by the religious images that hung around our necks and the statues

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Pope John Paul II

that adorned our bedroom bureaus and our dashboards. We lived with the consistent religious example of those we saw in our families and among our friends. Our imaginations were inspired by the lives of the saints; our weary souls were soothed by the smell of incense as we entered the darkened church; and, yes, our desires and actions were often challenged by the high moral expectations of the church. Our Catholic faith seemed all around us; something so customary and comfortable as to be taken for granted.

Times have changed and there is much that is worrying about our current American society. Channel surf your television and you'll see people passionate to win the million dollar prize on the game show, or to be the beautiful woman selected by the handsome stranger on the “reality” show. Surf the internet and your search engines will display information and images about every conceivable thing and not all on view is worthy of your viewing. Among the many inspiring and entertaining movies playing at the local multiplex, you find those that glorify violence or cater to one's prurient interests.

In this environment we have now come to think of ourselves more and more often as individuals rather than members of a community, a people who are committed to a common good. We hear ourselves referred to as consumers, not citizens, since the prevailing engine of our society is considered to be our economy, not the sharing of our lives and those lasting values that cannot be bought or sold.

My goal here is not to deplore our culture or to bemoan the evils of society but to simply point out how we Catholics have to be more realistic about how our increasingly secular and changing civilization can and does have harmful effects on our Catholic character and convictions. For years, parents and educators have complained about these effects on our youngsters but they affect each and every one of us. To remain true, our Catholic-Christian faith today must become more counter-cultural. We Catholics must never forget that our essential decisions must be more informed by the teachings of Jesus than the cold pragmatism of a consumer economy or our personal whims.

To remain true, our Catholic-Christian faith today must become more counter-cultural.

I love going out to the movies or for a tasty dinner; I enjoy the good life here in Orange County every bit as much as anyone else. But are we being seduced by it? Is it becoming more important than our life in Christ? Bombarded by enough advertising, we start to convince ourselves that we “need” the fastest computer, the flashiest car, or some other trendy new product on the market. We are just as likely as our neighbors to spend our time hoping for a promotion, a more affluent style of life and the other rewards of worldly success. But if we want to be known more as dedicated, committed Catholics than as successful American consumers, our formation in our Catholic faith will have to have enough muscle to keep us from succumbing to all those intemperate desires that can keep us from becoming the saints Jesus has invited us to become. It will focus us more on the lives of others, especially those in need, and less on ourselves and the satisfaction of our desires.

III. LET IT BE A SHARED EFFORT

Through *Renew*, *Disciples in Mission*, *Cursillo*, *Marriage Encounter* and other Catholic movements, many of you discovered that it is often easier to find the answers to these questions by sharing yourself in a small group. May I invite all such groups—not to mention committees, boards, prayer groups and parish gatherings—to take some time in the coming

months to reflect together on what will most help us all to live our faith at the depth needed in the times in which we live?

Jesus warns us, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” (Mt. 26:41.) How many of us have ended an inspiring retreat or parish mission with the determination to draw closer to Christ only to find that this new enthusiasm cools all too quickly? One reason is that our flesh loves the present comforts; it doesn’t want anything but equilibrium. It’s like a beloved dog that is quite content to lie at your feet on the floor and sleep. On the other hand, the graces that God offers us are given to change us. They are like a personal trainer you might meet at the gym encouraging more and more improvement and effort. “No Pain, no gain,” says grace, and this, despite our best intentions, we often vigorously resist. Change is difficult. If it were not so, wouldn’t we all be skinnier and healthier and have more money stashed away in our savings accounts? Without a more steadfast faith, all of us may find we will not have what we need when we are tested by illness, tragedy, sin, violence or abuse.

At this point, you may be wondering, “How far must I go to deepen my knowledge and practice my Catholic faith sufficiently? What is expected of me?” This is precisely what each of us must answer for himself or herself. Yet, as each of us tries to figure what God might want of us in our various circumstances of life, here are a few things to look for and pray for. If you read the gospels, you’ll notice that Jesus formed his first disciples in just these qualities.

IV. FINDING CHRIST AT WORK IN OURSELVES

St. Paul tells the Corinthians: “Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in faith. Test yourselves.” But then he adds, “Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?” (2 Cor. 13:4.) Our faith can only become what it is meant to be when we realize how magnificently Christ is *in us*.

A faith that remains a matter of duty, of fulfilling certain requirements or expectations, of begrudging obedience to what one has been told or acting out of a sense of obligation, does not work, not over the long haul. Instead of trying to

meet someone else's standard, Jesus invites each of us to come and follow him. What do you think enabled Blessed Mother Teresa to get up each morning? The presence of Christ's love and mercy in her heart. What sustained martyrs like St. Justin and St. Boniface in their trials? This same enduring certainty

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that Christ was with them. Blessed Junipero Serra, with his wounded leg, walked to Mission San Juan Capistrano and up and down the California coast because he too had been touched by the Lord. The testimony of all the saints is that our faith becomes our own when

we experience the Lord at work, not only in the Church or in others, but also *in ourselves*, when we find within our very selves the voice of a companion, a strong guiding voice that is not our own, a friend who tells us the truth that will set us free. With this, nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. "Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?" asks St. Paul. "No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us" (Cf. Rom. 8:35-37.)

Let me be clear: it is not how strong *we feel* in the faith; after all, Jesus told us that those who felt poor in spirit were the blessed ones, and so were the mourning and the meek, the hungry and the persecuted. We often find ourselves just like the father in the Gospel who says to Jesus, "Lord, I do believe. Help my unbelief" (Mk. 9:24.) Whether in blessing or difficulty, it is our ability to hold fast to our faith in the *Christ who dwells within us*. Our faith is real when we let Christ take hold of us and when we trust him even at times of doubt and worry.

V. COMMITTED TO A FAITH THAT GROWS AS WE DO

Living faith is the mighty mustard seed that grows into an even mightier tree (Cf. Mt. 17:20.) It changes as we do. The faith that we experienced as a child, lovely as it was, will not serve us as an adult. What we believed in the twelfth grade

cannot be enough for the trials of parenthood or the tragedies that confront a surgeon or teacher or peace officer or someone suddenly out of work. Many of us discover in middle age that the certain stars that guided our youth are insufficient to light the next stage of our life; we feel as if we have to start over. Among those who suspect that death will soon come calling, many often face new doubts and questions in their last days. The Catholic writer, Flannery O'Connor, knew this struggle in her own life but said, "I can only see it, in myself anyway, as the process by which faith is deepened. . . . A God you understood would be less than yourself."³ In the end, faith is exactly what is beyond the bounds of what we know, a presence beyond the known and seen, a voice that can surprise us and draw us beyond our self-interest, even beyond what we thought was possible.

Faith consists in reacting before God as Mary did, "I don't understand it, Lord, but let it be done to me according to your will."

Archbishop Oscar Romero

VI. LOVING OUR FAITH

A wise man once warned, "Do not ask someone who loves you why they love you. If they say they love you because you are beautiful, will they still love you when your looks fade? If they love you for your wit and charm, what will happen when your mind loses its edge? If they love you because of your talents or skills, will they fall out of love for you when you lose your timing or your muse or your highly developed motor skills? No, you are only really loved by those who, when asked why they love you, answer, 'I cannot say.'" In the end, we'll only pour out our whole selves for what we love, not what we merely admire. That's why Pope John Paul II said to the youth gathered in Toronto a few years ago, "If you love Jesus, love his Church. At difficult moments in the Church's life, the pursuit of holiness becomes even more urgent."

Some like the church's rich tradition, her theological prowess and artistic achievements. Others like the church for

³ Flannery O'Connor, *The Habit of Being* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979.) p. 353-354.

the example of her saints, mystics, prophets and martyrs. Many are attracted to the church because they found the help and support they needed from a caring priest, religious or parishioner; it was their refuge in difficult times, the beacon that showed them the way. Not a few remember with affection the church that gave them character and backbone as they were growing up. Others admire the church for what she is to become at the end of time, that new and shining Jerusalem above. All of these (and many others) are quite admirable but real love for the church exists beyond these attributes and endures even when the church does not meet our expectations or hopes.

The church is also a church of sinners, the church ever in need of reform. Faithful love remains alive even during our times of disappointment, disenchantment and frustration with the church. The pain of disillusionment with the church is, in fact, all the more poignant and difficult because of our high expectations. "Faith consists in reacting before God as Mary did," the late Archbishop Oscar Romero once explained, "I don't understand it, Lord, but let it be done to me according to your will."

VII. LIVING A FAITH THAT IS READY & WILLING TO SACRIFICE

Someone recently told me about a critical care nurse at Saint Joseph Hospital who also decided to be a catechist in her parish. She wanted so much to serve well as a catechist that she would rush from an exhausting twelve-hour shift at the hospital, even skipping dinner, in order to attend her catechist certification classes. Of course, none of us would have blamed her if she had excused herself for being too tired, for preferring to get home and put her feet up. But she wanted to become as excellent a catechist as she was a nurse. It was such a priority in her life that if you were to point out the sacrifice to her, she would be surprised. She'd admit that it has been hard at times but it was what she really wanted to do. Living faith cannot be lived only when it is convenient or enjoyable; it exacts a price; it resists easy admission. And yet the sacrifice does not seem to be such a sacrifice. Our love for God makes it something we want to give. A faith freely embraced grows into a faith that lovingly sacrifices.

VIII. DISCOVERING AN OVERFLOWING FAITH

How do we know if we have such a faith? “About the only way we know whether we believe or not,” explains Flannery O’Connor, “is by what we do. . . .” Saint Paul boasts to the Corinthians about the church in Macedonia, which he says, “in a severe test of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their profound poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part” (2 Cor. 8:2.) A living and enduring faith can touch others. It gives to others without counting the cost. As Saint Paul says, it overflows.

Those living the so-called good life always seem to be short of time, worried about reaching their next goal, guarding against unnecessary entanglements. The better life of faith produces those who know what’s really important and take the time for it. They make room for the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Such disciples make friends easily, even the shy ones, and are pleased when they have the chance to help others. They have faith that overflows.

IX. GRATEFUL FOR THE GIFT OF FAITH

The surest sign of all, though, is gratitude. The center of our Catholic life is the Eucharist, the body and blood of Jesus given to us to nurture our faith but also given as a means of worshipping the Father out of *gratitude* for the gift of his Son. A faithful disciple is one who knows that what really endures, what can make a lasting difference and can sustain us in our darkest hours is this faith that God gives us as a gift. And what could be more automatic and spontaneous than to be grateful for such a saving gift?

X. A FINAL INVITATION

First, let me thank you for taking time to read this letter. Thank you as well for taking up my invitation to reflect on your own level of participation in our Catholic faith. You can count on my prayers as you seek to renew and deepen your faith, beliefs and practices, as I hope you are committed to do. I’d be interested in hearing what you have decided to do and how it is going. Tell me what you have taken as the next chosen step in your formation in the faith. And, remember, your diocese and your parish is ready to help you; by visiting our

diocesan website or picking up your weekly bulletin, you may find the resources you need. If not, just ask. If you'd like to read more about faith formation, take a peak at the bibliography at the end of this letter. With God's blessing, we can all draw closer to Christ through learning, loving and living our Catholic faith.

Some people have the mistaken notion that all a bishop has to do is to tell people what to do and they obey. I am not sure this ever was the case but it is surely not the case now and, even if it were, it would not be my preference. Rather, I am inviting you to willingly work with me in renewing the Catholic faith in Orange County. I cannot reach out to those who want to deepen their faith without your support and willing collaboration. We will all need to work together—every priest, deacon, religious, teacher, catechist, minister, volunteer, parent and person in the pew—to become the wise, loving and giving Catholics that our Lord has called each of us to be. Please join me.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Todd B. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

Bishop of Orange

FOR FURTHER READING:

From the **U. S. Catholic Bishops:**

“Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us. *A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States.*”

“United States Catholic Catechism.”

“Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions. *Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops.*”

“In Support of Catechetical Ministry: *A Statement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.*”

“To Teach as Jesus Did: *A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education.*” The U.S. bishops outline the themes of message, community, and service in this timeless statement.

“Putting Children and Families First: *A Challenge for Our Church, Nation, and World.*” Presents the moral and religious dimensions of caring for children.

“Go and Make Disciples: *A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States.*” (Tenth Anniversary Edition)

“Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response: *A Pastoral Letter on Stewardship*” (Tenth Anniversary Edition)

From the Vatican:

“General Director for Catechesis.” (GDC) Includes a general definition of catechesis and its goals and essential elements.

“The Catechism of the Catholic Church.”

“Compendium: Catechism of the Catholic Church.” Offers a synthesis, in concise form, all the essential and fundamental elements of the Church’s faith. It is a shortened form of “The Catechism of the Catholic Church.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For Parishioners:

1. How has my experience of God changed over the years? What has caused these changes? Have I come to a different image of God (or way of understanding God) over my lifetime?
2. If I take a few minutes to identify the top ten priorities in my life, where on my list are matters of faith, church or my relationship with God?
3. Do I have questions, hurts, or complaints about my faith that continue to get in the way of my growth and church involvement? What would it take for me to deal with, forgive, heal and get beyond them?
4. In the first section of the Pastoral Letter, the Bishop sets forth seven indicators of the current indifference among the adult population. Do any surprise me? Do I identify with one in particular?
5. When was the last time I studied my Catholic faith? What would enable my faith to grow right now? What am I willing to do in the next month to renew and deepen my faith, beliefs, and practices? The next six months? The next year?
6. How can I begin to focus everything through the lens of life-long learning? How can I work with my parish Pastoral Staff to help make the faith formation of adults like me a priority?

For Pastoral Councils, Committee, Ministry Leaders & Organizations:

1. How is my personal love for Christ demonstrated in my family, participation in Sunday liturgy, my moral decisions, my spirituality and prayer life?
2. As an active parishioner, how do I share and pass on my enthusiasm for Christ and the Church to other parish volunteers? In what ways do I model the importance of life-long learning?
3. In today's culture it takes a conscious effort to live the Gospel. How can we challenge the ministries and organi-

zations we are part of to better know and live by Gospel values?

4. Our culture encourages us to make sacrifices for our children, education, health, economic gain, and enjoyment. What sacrifices do I personally need to make to include life-long faith formation one of my priorities?
5. Do I personally believe the church must focus more on adults in its educational ministry? How can our ministry or organization support the emphasis on life-long formation about what we believe as Catholics?

For Pastoral Staffs

1. Have I ever drifted from my spiritual moorings? Is the attraction to prayer and service as strong as my desire to be recognized in my profession as successful? How can I model the importance of prayer, liturgy and service to those with whom I minister?
2. What are some ways I can and do continue to develop my relationship with Jesus? How does my relationship with Jesus Christ affect the way I welcome and interact with people, especially parishioners?
3. How do I model the priority and importance of life-long learning?
4. How can I share my faith with others without sounding pious or self-righteous? Are there ways I hide behind my knowledge and education when discussing faith with others?
5. How can we as a staff help make adult faith formation a priority at our parish? How can we begin to focus everything we do through the lens of life-long faith formation?
6. How does the Bishop's Pastoral Letter call me, as a person and minister, to change? How does it call us as a staff to change?
7. What will it take to make adult faith formation a priority at our parish? What are some specific ways we can help to do that? How can we begin to focus everything we do through the lens of life-long learning?

