

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

-Matthew 28: 19-20

(Diocese of Orange, Mission Statement)

The nature of the Christian life is to be on “mission”, which is certainly to be found in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and especially in the writings of Saints Pope Paul VI and John Paul II. Now more than ever, as those entrusted with the mysteries of God, and with positions of responsibility in the life, teaching and worship of the Church, we must be clear about this Mission of the Church, giving witness to Jesus among us, living His Gospel message of love, humility and charity, and inviting “all nations” to become disciples of Him. Pope Francis has also emphasized in *Evangelii Gaudium* “I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to let him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”. It is for the sake of this mission, then, that we have undertaken this effort with Project Fidelium and the Strategy Task Force. In every era the Church must consider the particular ways this mission must be pursued.



I am grateful to the literally hundreds of individuals and groups that have contributed to these considerations in these past two years of Project Fidelium and the Strategy Task Force. These contributions can be seen as an expression of the “Connections” articulated in our Pastoral Plan which states: “Without Connection! there is no Catholic faith community, no way to remember Jesus, to pass on His story and offer the mercy, forgiveness and love that is the full message of God” - Diocese of Orange Pastoral Plan. Passing on the story of Jesus is at the heart of our mission, which he entrusts to us daily. In recent months, I have listened very carefully and weighed the thoughtful recommendations that have been developed in this process. This process has identified the priorities that will focus our efforts and our resources for the coming years. Therefore, I am directing the Bishop’s Office, the Pastoral Center, our clergy, parishes, schools and lay leadership of the Diocese to focus their efforts on the following:

Evangelization and Faith Formation of our children, youth, young adults, adults and seniors to make Jesus known or known better and to foster a lifelong journey of discipleship. Each parish will provide or be provided with the necessary resources to be effective in this effort. **Governance and Leadership** with clarity, accountabilities and clear communication. **Clergy Formation** that strengthens and enables our priests and deacons, in their ministry in service to those entrusted to them by the Lord, to minister, preach the Gospel message, celebrate the Eucharist and provide the faithful with an enriching sacramental life while remaining faithful to their vocations. **Stewardship and Finance** accountabilities that are focused on the new priorities of the Diocese aligned with our Mission. This is not just another program but is about clear priorities. **Catholic School Education** for families seeking spiritual and academic formation of their children and youth in an environment that is Christ centered and focused on forming the whole person.

This means that we will need to make other decisions and changes in how we use our human and fiscal resources, and this will require thoughtful discernment, to be sure. But such decisions must always be made in the light of Faith and the Lord who calls us forth each day. Having been sent as the Shepherd of our local Church I know that I do not make these decisions in isolation but together with all of you as we travel the road to eternity together in our journeys of life and faith. In order to live to the greatest extent at this providential time where the Lord has placed us together, I implore all of the Faithful of Christ, consecrated religious, priests, deacons and lay faithful, especially all of those involved in the apostolic movements in our local Church, to bring to new life, within our local faith communities, an ardent zeal as experienced at Pentecost, to grow in faith, knowledge and holiness, and a deep contagious love of God. Let us pray to be “set on fire” in a world that is so much in need, especially to those who are poor and marginalized and calling out to find the love of God around them.

Ultimately the goal of all which is set forth in these pages and which will be lived out in the months and years to come can be found in the last canon of the Code of Canon Law, to which as a canonist and a pastor I continually refer to: Canon 1752: “And the salvation of souls, which must be always be the supreme law in the Church, is to be kept before one’s eyes”.

Thank all of you for your involvement in the months of this planning process, and for your ministry, leadership and care for the Lord’s people, whom in His providential care He sends our way and entrusts to us.

Most Reverend Kevin W. Vann, J.C.D., D.D.
Bishop of Orange in California