

March 2019

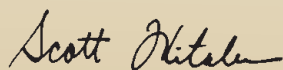
Dear Friends,

It is an exciting time for the Diocese of Austin now that *Encountering Christ* has passed the halfway point. When we launched the Pilot Phase last January, after months of preparation, our \$85 million goal seemed like a distant vision. But because of the generosity of so many faithful in our diocese, that vision is now becoming a reality.

As the two remaining waves of parishes participate in our campaign, we ask you to continue praying for our success. As you have read these past months in this newsletter, *Encountering Christ* is not only having a profound effect on the mission and ministries of our diocese, it is affecting our parishes as well. As I travel throughout the diocese, I see firsthand the projects and changes made possible through the campaign. They are truly astounding because of you!

Please join us in celebrating this achievement. Thank you for helping make it happen.

Sincerely,



Scott Whitaker
Director of Stewardship
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Halfway to goal!

Encountering Christ has raised more than half of its \$85 million goal — thanks to more than 6,700 generous gifts.

"I am grateful to all who have supported our campaign," said Bishop Joe Vásquez. "Through their enthusiasm and faithfulness, they are reinvigorating the mission of our diocese and strengthening our parishes and ministries for generations to come."

Encountering Christ is bringing parishes of the diocese together as one church, one body of Christ, with one mission.

Our diocese has seen many changes since it was founded in 1947, and the number of Catholics has grown by 25 percent in the last 12 years. Bishop Vásquez began *Encountering Christ* to meet the goals outlined in *Encounter that Leads to*



*Campaign Executive Committee members
from St. Austin Parish in Austin.*

Transformation, the diocesan Pastoral Plan. The goals include supporting our clergy, embracing discipleship through encounters with Christ, forming future disciples in the faith and strengthening our parishes.

Thirty percent of the funds raised — an estimated \$22.5 million — will remain in parishes, which are participating during a series of waves. The Pilot Phase and Wave 1 parishes participated during 2018 and reached their collective goals. Wave 2 launched in

January, and Wave 3 will begin this summer. Five parishes have chosen to run "independent" campaigns to raise an increased amount of funds for significant parish projects.

Encountering Christ is bringing parishes of the diocese together as one church, one body of Christ, with one mission, according to Father James Misko, vicar general. "When one member of that body is rejoicing, then we all rejoice," he said. "When one part of that body is sad, then we carry that sadness with us. When one part of that body needs something, then it becomes our need as well."

The campaign's spiritual benefits outweigh the many practical resources it will provide, Father Misko said. "Yes, we need to do the improvements and projects that will be made possible with the money we raise, but the unity realized within our own communities as well as the wider diocese through this campaign is much more powerful than even the things we will build."

Encountering Christ to bolster network for young adult groups



Our diocese is blessed to have grassroots groups of young adults who gather together in fellowship, outside of the parish setting, to grow in their faith.

The post-college years are often a critical period in a person's faith, but a lack of resources has limited the Young Adult Ministry office from contributing in a meaningful way to these independent groups. Parishes and organizations currently focusing on ministering to this demographic often duplicate their efforts and outreach, according to Alison Tate, director of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry.

Alison said \$2 million from *Encountering Christ* will be directed toward a reference network of young adult ministry programs and parish ministers. "The network is a place for parishes to receive experience and resources to apply in their own settings," she said.

The diocese has a large number of Catholics in their 20s and 30s, and expanding efforts to reach them and providing resources directly to parishes will fill a critical gap in ministry for young adults between youth ministry and family life.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE | Zach Zgabay

Visiting the Vatican and ornate Catholic churches during a trip to Europe last summer made Zach Zgabay realize what he was missing at home.

"It knocked me upside the head that I need to do better, not just go to church and be a bump on a log but learn more about the faith," he said.

While he had never lost his faith, Zach felt he "fell off the radar" for a while — as many young adults tend to do in their 20s and 30s. "You get busy and life kind of loses its way a little bit," he said.

Since that vacation, Zach has attended Mass every Sunday at St. Joseph Parish in Dime Box, where he and his wife, Natalie, are members. He participated in the sacrament of Reconciliation after a long absence.

He actively participated in the Knights of Columbus, attending meetings regularly and moving to the Third Degree from the First, where he had been for 10 years.

And in the fall, when he noticed a blurb in the parish bulletin for *Encountering Christ*, he volunteered. At 37, he found himself the youngest member of the campaign committee at St. Joseph, which is using its share of *Encountering Christ* funds to refurbish and replace the church's original pews.

"When I went to that first meeting, it reinvigorated for me a sense of charity, to help out," he said. "Because some of this money does go back to your local parish but also it's for the Catholic family as a whole, the Diocese of Austin. That's why I'm contributing to it."



Zach and Natalie Zgabay