The Collect for this weekend – the prayer we say just before the Liturgy of the Word begins – is a beautiful prayer worthy of reflection. We prayed these words just before the readings:

“O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.”

In praying these words, we recognize a couple of things. First, we recognize the important fact that we cannot make ourselves into a dwelling pleasing to God. We must be transformed into a dwelling pleasing to him by his own grace. This is one of the fundamental understandings we must always have as disciples of the Lord. It is his grace above all that makes us pleasing to him.

Second, we know that to become just and true, to be transformed by his grace, we must allow the Lord to abide in our hearts. We know that he takes up his dwelling in our hearts from the moment of our baptism, but we must allow him to truly dwell there, as his home, rather than just as a guest or even worse, as an intruder.

To be a disciple of the Lord, I must have a heart that is open to encounter him and be continually open to the working of his grace as he transforms me into the saint he created me to be. I must be open, as our readings today suggest over and over, to having my heart converted more fully to the Lord, and to come to follow him more closely day by day. The Lord reveals himself to us, and he desires us to be open to having our hearts transformed by him in this revelation.

This is the conversion that we are invited into every day by the Church. Our mission, as has been so clearly articulated in the Gospels and beautifully emphasized in our own archdiocese over these last years, is to “Go Make Disciples.” We are called to help people open their hearts to the transformation that the Lord brings with him when we allow him to abide in our hearts.

There are many ways in which the Church opens the hearts of people to the Lord’s transformation. Here in our diocese, we can give many examples:
• Our Lady of Guadalupe Camp, through the summer camp programming and the many retreats held throughout the year, gives people the time and space to encounter the Lord and allow him to abide with them.

• Our Family Life Office assists married couples in placing God at the center of their relationship, allowing him to guide and transform their marriages.

• Our Vocations Office helps young people to discern where the Lord is calling them to serve him, and works to form priests, ensuring that our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren can encounter the Lord in the sacraments.

• Our Office of Divine Worship provides resources to parishes as they seek to draw people throughout the archdiocese into a deeper encounter with the Lord through the Sacred Liturgy and through prayer.

• Our Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis provides support and resources to many movements in the Church, which draw people into a deeper relationship with the loving God.

These are a few examples of the many ways in which the various ministries in the archdiocese help people throughout central and western Oklahoma to open their hearts to the Lord’s abiding grace to be transformed by it into dwellings pleasing to him.

This weekend, we begin the Annual Catholic Appeal, which funds these ministries. Through your generosity to this appeal, the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City will be able to strengthen our efforts to make disciples of all people and bring them to the Lord who will transform their hearts.

Over the coming week, I invite you to prayerfully consider making a gift for the Annual Catholic Appeal. Your gifts are vital to the faithful advancement of the Church’s mission here in Oklahoma.

If you have already made a gift, thank you! Your generosity is received by the Lord with boundless joy. If you haven’t yet made a gift, I invite you to ask the Lord in prayer this week what he may be asking you to give.

May we open our hearts to the Lord and allow his grace to bring us closer to him in love. May we allow him to draw us into a deeper participation in the Church’s mission to make disciples of all people, especially in our own archdiocese and our own communities.