

**Blessing of Graduates of Lay Ecclesial Ministry Institute (LEMI)**

June 21, 2018/St. Aloysius Gonzaga      Beacon Club      Mt.5:13-16

What a joyful and special moment!

This is the culmination of hours/days/weeks/months/years of study, reflection, *sacrifice*, formation, prayer, *sacrifice*, hard work, growth, deepening of your relationship with Christ, love for His Church, *sacrifice*, readiness to be a servant/leader, a lay ecclesial minister, a missionary disciple.

27 Saturdays – 3 Retreats – -countless books read, papers written, presentations shared, and projects planned and executed

And what do you get? This beautiful certificate!!! 😊

Of course, you have already received so much more than a certificate – an excellent education/formation – greater knowledge resulting in a level of professional competence and ministerial readiness to serve the people of God, and to advance the Kingdom of God.

Today's brief Gospel passage is from the Sermon on the Mount....the foundational instruction that Jesus gave to His disciples.

It's what we need to know, not just in our heads, but in our hearts and our very beings.....not just to understand or know the Beatitudes but to live them, breathe them, foster them and share them.

When Jesus said that we, His disciples, are to be the “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world”, that wasn’t just for the group of 12 whom He eventually would choose to be His closest Apostles – nor are those words reserved for those who have gone through the Lay Ecclesial Ministry Institute! No, ALL who follow Jesus – those who identify as Christians – those who are truly His disciples – those who are baptized into His Body – ALL those are “salt of the earth” and “light of the world”.

Just as Pope Francis said in “Gaudete et Exsultate” that the Beatitudes are to be seen as a “Christian’s ID card”, so too is His command that we be “salt” for the world – that’s our identity; that’s what we do – give flavor and zest to the rest of the world. Imagine a world without the Church! Imagine a world without Christians! It’s unimaginable!!! What makes the difference? It’s Christian Love/Sacrifice/Generosity/Compassion/Mercy. That’s the “Salt”.

And being the Light of the World is our mission – our purpose – our challenge. Light is Christ; Light brings Hope; Light dispels darkness/sin/fear; Light helps people to walk in the ways of the Kingdom.

We very much look forward to your greater participation in the life of the Church here in the Diocese of Kalamazoo, through your collaboration with the priests and deacons of your parish/Collaborative.

Our priest shortage is one reason why we look forward to your participation. But, even if we had more priests than we knew what to do with, we would want/need your

involvement. You have been prepared to do what only you can do as lay women and men in advancing the Kingdom, and in bearing witness to the Gospel in our day and time.

There is a powerful need to teach, preach, share, and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the level of active participation in the life of the Church decreases, as more people are “fallen away”, and as a shockingly high percentage of people in our Diocese – our neighbors and co-workers – are classified as NONE.

We need a new Pentecost. We need a re-awakening to the power of the Holy Spirit! We need to find ways to teach the Gospel in a new way in these new circumstances. That’s what the New Evangelization is. It’s not preaching a new Jesus; it’s preaching about Jesus in a new and more effective way in light of these secularistic and individualistic times in which we are living.

We need you to work together with us in new and creative ways to be faithful to who we are as followers of Jesus.

So, dear graduates: while all those baptized are called to be Salt and Light; you who are baptized, confirmed and now “certificated” – you are commissioned to go forth and live your baptismal vocation to live lives of holiness and advance Jesus’ Kingdom of justice, love and peace, and to do all that you can to encourage others to join you “along the way”.

God bless you!