



Lent 2023  
St. Bridget of Sweden  
Contemplating and Praying with  
Archbishop Hebda's  
Post Synodal Pastoral Letter  
You Will Be My Witnesses

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## Dear Members of St. Bridget of Sweden,

This Lent we are in a unique time in our Church's history. Our Archbishop Hebda has recently written a significant pastoral letter to the faithful of the archdiocese: "You Will Be My Witnesses." This post-synodal letter is to guide us into the future as the Holy Spirit enlivens our Church in proclaiming the Kingdom of God in our midst. It is important for us to familiarize ourselves with this document, to let it sink into our hearts and bones, to let it begin to grow in us, for indeed God is speaking to us and calling us to become, through it, set on fire by the Holy Spirit.

We are inviting you, the members of St. Bridget of Sweden, to take time this Lent to read a segment of the document each day. Then let a few questions about the paragraph(s) ruminate within you. Finally, there is a prayer starter for each setting.

This indeed is a rich letter offering a great deal of food for our souls. It guides and inspires. Most importantly it touches our heart and the heart of the Church. I love how the Archbishop makes a reference to the Second Vatican Council. At that Council the doors of the Church were opened wide and the Spirit was definitely released. Now too, the Holy Spirit is at work in a powerful way, in the present, through "the Upper Room." The "fire of the Holy Spirit" is flaring up and moving about. Let our hearts be open to this great flame. Let the flame of the Holy Spirit create us into powerful "witnesses." I conclude with Pope Francis' words about the Holy Spirit:

"The Holy Spirit is the living presence of God in the Church. He keeps the Church moving forward. More and more, beyond the limits, onwards. The Holy Spirit, with His gifts, guide the Church. You cannot understand the Church of Jesus without this Paraclete...And we Christians must ask the Lord for the grace of docility to the Holy Spirit, who speaks to us in our heart...who is always speaking to us." During these days of Lent may you hear the Holy Spirit speak through Archbishop Hebda's Pastoral Letter!

Theresa Zlotkowski  
Director Faith Formation



## Ash Wednesday – February 22, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“Several years ago, Monsignor Peter Vaghi, a lawyer and beloved pastor in the Archdiocese of Washington, wrote an engaging book entitled, *Meeting God in the Upper Room*. The “Upper Room” in the title refers to the site mentioned in the Gospels of Mark and Luke as the place of the Last Supper, and in the Acts of the Apostles as the site where the Risen Jesus appeared to the disciples and where the Holy Spirit fell upon them at Pentecost. Believed to have been located on a southwest hill of Jerusalem known as Mount Zion, just outside the Old City walls, the site is also often referred to as the “Cenacle.” Pilgrims to the Holy Land frequently visit this site. Monsignor Vaghi insightfully calls the Upper Room “the most important room in all of Christendom” because of the significance of the actions that tradition tells us occurred there...

Monsignor Vaghi goes even further by saying the Upper Room gives us today an “icon of a fruitful Church.” This caught my attention since a fruitful local church was my very reason for calling this Synod...I soon found myself wondering with him if the image of the Upper Room and the mysteries celebrated therein could give us a key to interpreting the Synod Assembly data...”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*How does it strike you that we today could join Jesus as going to “the Upper Room?”

Is this exciting? Scary? Perplexing? Impossible?

\*The washing of the feet, the breaking of the bread, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the experience of the Resurrection all took place in the Upper Room. Which of these events would you have most wanted to experience in person in the Upper Room? How would you have felt personally present to this event? How would this event have touched your heart?

### My Prayer

Dear Jesus,

Help me to open myself to traveling to the Upper Room and there meeting you today. Help me to receive the gift you wish to give to me in the Upper Room today. I open my heart to receive this surprising gift.

## Thursday, February 23, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“Three mysteries in particular – the washing of the feet, the breaking of the bread and the coming of the Holy Spirit – seemed to capture the hopes and dreams of our Synod Members and offer a key to understanding the Synod voting data, giving us a clear vision for implementing the Synod Priorities going forward. As Monsignor Vaghi so beautifully wrote, “In this humble space, [the Upper Room] the most important room in all of Christendom, where Jesus set a remarkable precedent of faith and service, we were given a new understanding of God’s love and the revolutionary power of the Holy Spirit was unleashed.

My dear brothers and sisters. Let us then ascend to the Upper Room to learn how these lessons of faith, service, love and power will guide us in the fulfillment of our Synod dreams.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Which mystery of faith – the washing of the feet, the breaking of the bread or the coming of the Holy Spirit – is most significant to you as you go forward on your journey of faith?

\*Take a moment to reflect upon the significance of this mystery of faith and what it offers you. Thank God for it and ask God to deepen its reality in your life.

\*What is one of your Synod dreams for the Church today?

### My Prayer

Dear Jesus, give me the grace to wash another's feet with compassionate care. Help me to receive your real presence in Eucharist and in the person living in poverty down the road from me. Come Holy Spirit set my heart on fire to spread the good news that faith brings hope.

Friday, February 24, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

"Jesus has descended – from heaven as well as from the table – to serve us. The gesture illustrates the insight of St. Paul, who noted that though Jesus was in the form of God, he "did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance, he humbled himself" (Phil 2:6-8a).

Back in the Upper Room, our Lord's humble act of menial service scandalized Peter, ...None of us deserve the loving care God gives freely and daily, nor do we deserve the gift of God's Incarnation. And yet Jesus sees something of great value in each one of us.

The washing of the feet signifies a deep healing. It is Jesus who washes us clean and makes us new. In taking on human flesh, Jesus took on our sinful, fallen -from -glory human nature in order to heal and purify us."

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Reflect on the statement: Jesus descends to be with me. What does this mean to me? What does this say about who Jesus is? What gift is Jesus trying to bring to me as he descends to come to me?

\*What gift of tender care is Jesus wanting to give to me as He washes my feet?

\*What is "the deep healing" Jesus is trying to bring into my life today? Will I open my heart to receive it?

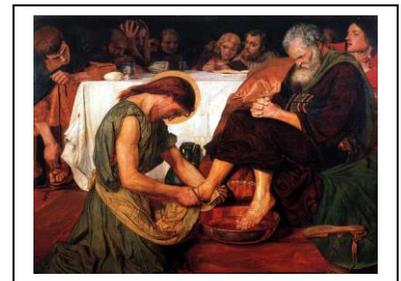
### My Prayer

Jesus, come. Touch the brokenness within my heart. See the pain there. See the cries there for your help. Only you can bring the healing that I need. Today I surrender to your care. Today I surrender to your will for me. Come Lord Jesus come.

Saturday, February 25, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

"In the Middle Eastern context, Jesus's washing of the feet would have communicated a radical hospitality. The focus of the person washing feet has to be purely on the other. We can imitate Jesus only by putting aside the "garments" of our position, or expertise, our self-focus, and even our pride. In attending to the need of the other, we open ourselves to the mystery of the other. In listening, we respectfully receive the other. Jesus teaches us that the simple gift of self opens us to the gift of the other. A communion, a unity, is then created between us through hospitality.



I was edified that the Synod Members appreciated the importance of hospitality..."

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Think of the ways in which you must attend totally to the other as you wash another's feet. For example: As you caress another's feet how must you focus on the other? As you are gentle with another's feet how must

you attend to the surfaces of the other's feet? In being with another we are called to be totally present to another.

\*What does it mean "to receive the other?"

\*What do I think "radical hospitality" means? How did Jesus offer "radical hospitality?"

### My Prayer

Jesus, give me the grace to be really present to the other. Help me to reach beyond my boundaries to care for what really matters in another's life. Help me to gently hold the heart of another. Help me to caress the pain of another.

Sunday, February 26, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

"...Jesus's humble washing of the feet does not depend on whether the other "deserves this service: for Jesus even washed the feet of Judas. The washing of the feet says simply: "It is good that you are." This is always the first movement of love. In putting aside our preferences and in attending to the person before us, we affirm that God has seen it good to love them into being, creating them in His very image and likeness. It is important that we always recognize the dignity of the other: This affirmation of the other is the first service we can offer."

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*How can I stop from standing in judgement of those I am called to serve?

\*What can help me to offer dignity to all, no matter what their background, race, education, status, etc.?

\*Pope Francis is the great affirmer of all people. Name someone who you know is able to be a "great affirmer." What qualities do they display in their lives?

### My Prayer

Dear Jesus,

Give me the grace to affirm people all around me. Let me affirm you in the heart of all people. Let me rejoice that you take up residence in everyone's heart especially in those whom I least expect you to be present.

Monday, February 27, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

"As we open ourselves in service to the mystery of the other, we also begin to see our true selves more clearly. The Second Vatican Council taught that we begin to discover ourselves in the sincere gift of self (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). We find ourselves refreshed when we are striving to bring refreshment to another. We find mutual refreshment in genuine encounter with one another. A communion, a unity is created afresh between us."

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Think about a time when you discovered something about yourself when you reached out to another person. What gift(s) did you discover that you had? Give thanks to God for these gifts.

### My Prayer

Dear Jesus,

You are the great gift giver. The amazing thing is that when we give ourselves away we discover ourselves anew. We begin to see a new person born within ourselves. Thank-you Jesus for the gift of me that comes alive as I freely give. Give me the grace to joyfully share who I am. Help me to delight in my new self.

Tuesday, February 28, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“Throughout our Synod process, I was delighted to witness a more subtle “washing of the feet” reflected in small group conversations that were respectful and affirming. While we did not always agree with one another, we did listen and strive to respect the dignity of the other. We received the other as other. Time and again I have heard the testimony of those who felt an exceptional unity in our Synod events: a unity born in prayer and in small groups that culminated in the beautiful liturgies of the Synod Assembly. It is my hope that this “washing of the feet” experience continues in our parishes.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

- \*What service gifts have I discovered in myself in a small faith groups?
- \*How did I get my feet washed in a small faith group?
- \*How did a small faith group teach me to trust in the Lord?



### My Prayer

Dear Jesus,

People need people. You have given us the gift of community. Help us to always treasure the wonders of your presence that you make known to us in community: kindness, companionship, love, listening, prayer, forgiveness, joy, peace, patience, friendship.

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“St. Teresa of Calcutta worked among the poorest of the poor throughout the world, yet she would say that the greatest hunger of the human person was the ‘terrible hunger for love.’ She even found that this hunger was often most pronounced in the wealthiest nations on earth. “Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody.

I think that is a much greater hunger , a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat. In her visits to the United States she had particular compassion on the many lonely hearts that she encountered here, noting that ‘the hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.’”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

- \*Recall a time in your life when you have hungered for love even more than a hunger for bread. How did God help heal this hunger?
- \*Who do you think are the people who most hunger for love in the world around you?
- \*Why do we have such a high suicide rate among teenagers in our society today?

### My Prayer

Jesus, only you can satisfy the deep longing for love in my heart. Come Lord Jesus. Help me to be an instrument of your love that reaches out to satisfy love in others hearts. Help us as a world to see the hurt around us and to be willing to go beyond ourselves to do something to end the terrible pain of loneliness and violence to self.

Thursday, March 2, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“The first ‘foot-washing’ action I will be asking our parishes to take, through the work of their Synod Evangelization Teams, will be to begin the process of creating or growing a small group ministry that fosters personal relationships, builds community and provides formation to help parishioners grow as joyful

missionary disciples of Christ. I saw this incarnated when I visited St. Pius X Parish in White Bear Lake this summer, where one of the Synod Small Groups formed in 2021 had decided to continue to meet. They named themselves “Agape,” with a commitment to serve – wash the feet – by taking new responsibility for hospitality and welcome within the parish.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*What might be some characteristics of a small faith group “growing as a joyful missionary disciples of Christ” group?

\*What would a “welcome group” in the parish look like?

### My Prayer

Dear Jesus, help me to break out of my comfort zone. Help me to embrace missionary discipleship that involves a commitment to be compassionate as you were compassionate, to be a light as you were a light, to dry a tear as you dried tears, to be a healer as you healed. Give me the grace to be a presence of your resurrection glory especially to those with little hope. Help me to welcome and make others feel comfortable as you did.

### Friday, March 3, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“This radical love is not only needed in the parish church, but also in the domestic church the family. After all the primary small group is the family. No wonder then that Proposition 28 (Parents as primary educators form and inspire parents to understand and fulfill their responsibility as the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith,) was the proposition receiving the highest number of votes.

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*When I think of family as “domestic church” what comes to my mind and heart?”

\*When have I most experience God’s presence in my family?

### My Prayer

Help me Jesus to put you at the center of my family life. Help me to celebrate your presence in each person. Help us as a family to learn to pray together in silence, in joy and in ritual. Help us as a family to learn to reach beyond our boundaries and to serve others with a joyful heart. Help us to know that you are the Light of the world that shines forth from our window to give warmth and hope to travelers along the way.

### Saturday, March 4, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“We are becoming increasingly aware that parenting is an intense form of youth ministry: a mission of corporal and spiritual works of mercy directed toward one’s own children. The family is the place where each of us first encounters love, where the mother’s smile first evangelizes the infant held close and affirms the child’s goodness. The family is the primary place where foot-washing of the youth occurs: clothing the naked; feeding the hungry; giving drink to the thirsty; sheltering the homeless; visiting the sick; instructing the ignorant; counseling the doubtful; admonishing the sinner; bearing wrongs patiently; forgiving offenses; comforting the sorrowful; and praying for the living and the dead. What an expression of foot-washing we find in every Christian home!”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

- \*Reflect on times when you have experienced these works of mercy lived out in concrete ways in family life. What have they looked like in your family? Thank God for these beautiful examples.
- \*Pray that at least three of these examples can be lived out in family life that is dear to your heart in the next year. Ask God to take away the burdens or obstacles that stand in the way of these gifts being lived.

### My Prayer

Dear Jesus, give me the courage to share myself in living these acts of mercy. Take away my fear. Take away my anxiety. Take away my selfishness that stands in the way of me reaching out to bring about a better and more just world – a world where your light breaks apart darkness.

Sunday, March 5, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“As you know, “Forming youth and young adults in and for a Church that is always young” was one of the three Focus Areas of our Synod. It is for this reason that I am happy to announce the creation of a new Office of Youth and Young Adults, which will be separate from the Office of Marriage, Family and Life... It has become increasingly clear through the years that it is difficult, if not impossible, for each individual parish to have robust and sustainable ministries in these areas, which can create frustration at the parish level. My hope is that this Office will help the various youth and young adult ministry groups to “walk together” in the ways of evangelization and thereby create greater regional alignment and parish cooperation in these critical ministry areas. In this way, I hope the Archdiocese can help parents in their task of washing the feet of the young people God entrusted to them.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

- \*Young people alive in their faith display a beautiful, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ? How have I been touched by a young person’s faith life? How has that young person helped me in my own conversion experience?
- \*Young people alive in their faith display belief in a God who is ALIVE and ACTIVE IN THEIR LIFE. God is connected to the day to day events of their life. They are often present to God in the now! What gifts have I experienced God giving me in the last twenty-four hours?

### My Prayer

Dear Jesus, help me to be ALIVE to your presence with me. You walk day to day with me reaching out your hand to me. Thank-you for the day to day miracles in my life and the special unique gifts you surprise me with.

Monday, March 6, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“There is a saying in many cultures that ‘the love is in the food.’ This was never so true as for the bread that was broken in the Upper Room. For the bread *is* Jesus. As Pope Benedict XVI noted, “When Jesus speaks of his body, he is obviously not referring to the body as opposed to the soul or the spirit, but to the whole, flesh-and-blood person. The Pope Emeritus then cited with approval the German theologian Rudolph Pesch; “The disciples could understand that he was saying; this is I myself, the Messiah.”



### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Here we already have Jesus saying that He is really present as the Bread of Life. Jesus is the really present love that is in the food that is our nourishment for our journey in faith. What does this mean for you on your journey of faith?

Jesus is a “loving real presence” - what difference does a “loving real presence” make?

### My Prayer

Jesus, you are real presence who is “love.” What greater presence is there? What greater nourishment is there? I stand in wonder and awe before this gift of your Divine Love.

### Tuesday, March 7, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“When Jesus laid aside his outer garment to wash his disciples’ feet, it signified how Jesus emptied himself in the Incarnation “coming in human likeness” (Phil 2:7). Yet only the breaking of the bread can bring us “to the end” of Jesus’s love (Jn 13:1) in the mystery that is called Paschal. The plunging into the passion, death and Resurrection is anticipated in scripture with the very words of what is called the “Institution Narrative”;

While they were eating Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins”. (Mt26:26-28)

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*In the Institution Narrative Jesus empties himself so that we might have life. When you think of Jesus pouring Himself out completely for you, what feelings are evoked inside of you?

\*What gratefulness wells up inside of you?

\*When you hear the Institution Narrative at Mass what thoughts often go through your mind and heart?

### My Prayer

My Lord and my God. (Sit in silence for a few moments.)

### Wednesday, March 8, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“The “broken” body and the “shed” blood reveal to the disciples in the Upper Room that Jesus will be “obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). At the Last Supper, the Apostles were transported sacramentally to the altar of the cross, that is, to Good Friday...

...His life will be taken from him on the Cross, but here he is already laying it down. He transforms his violent death into a free act of self-giving for others and to others.

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*“His life will be taken from him on the Cross, but here he is already laying it down. He transforms his violent death into a free act of self-giving for others and to others.” At the Last Supper Jesus freely hands his life over in a nonviolent way. This loving act is a powerful gift. Quietly reflect on what it means to you.

## My Prayer

Jesus thank-you for the gift of yourself in Eucharist. Eucharist is the Greek word for thanksgiving.

Thursday, March 9, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19). With these simple words, what occurred one Thursday evening 2,000 years ago was destined to become a perpetual institution. Indeed, the word ‘memory,’ a Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa reminds us, is what ‘connects the Eucharist to the Jewish Passover which, as we know, was also a ‘memorial.’ It is of such critical importance that St. Paul twice repeats this command of Jesus in his account of the institution of the Eucharist He also specifies the content of this remembrance of Jesus: ‘For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord’ (I Cor 11:26). The content is Christ’s death.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*This Living Bread proclaims Christ’s death. What great love mystery this is!

\*As I ponder this mystery what gratitude swells within me?

\*In each Eucharist - What we remember from the past becomes really present here and now in the present. Do I believe this?

## My Prayer

St. Thomas Aquinas’ Prayer: (from the letter)

“O thou our reminder of Christ crucified,  
Living Bread, the life of us for whom he died,  
Lend this life to me then; feed and feast my mind,  
There be thou the sweetness man was meant to find.”

Friday, March 10, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“St. Thomas understood the paradox that the bread reminding us of Christ’s death is nevertheless a *“Living Bread.”* He recognized that Jesus’s act of giving his life in the Upper Room already encompassed the Resurrection.

As Pope Benedict XVI explains:

In his certainty that his prayer would be heard, the Lord gave his body and blood to the disciples during the Last Supper in anticipation of the Resurrection: both Cross and Resurrection are intrinsic to the Eucharist – without them there would be no Eucharist. Yet because Jesus’ gift is essentially rooted in the Resurrection, the celebration of the sacrament had necessarily to be connected with the memorial of the Resurrection. The first encounter with the risen Lord took place on the morning of the first day of the week – the third day after Jesus’ death – that is to say, Sunday morning, The morning of the first day thus naturally became the time for Christian worship – Sunday became the “Lord’s Day.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions



\*What gift does the resurrection of Jesus especially impart to you in your life? What gift does the Cross of Jesus especially impart to you on your journey of faith?

\*In what moments, of late, have you felt yourself especially connected to Jesus' cross In your life?

\*In what moments, of late, have you especially experienced Jesus' resurrection in your life?

### My Prayer

Jesus, you are both living cross and resurrection. Through your death you bring redemption. Through your resurrection you bring new life and hope. Jesus thank-you for walking in death and new life with me.

### Saturday, March 11, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

"Now we can see how "Do this in memory of me" brings us from the Last Supper to the Sunday morning Eucharist and, thus, from the Upper Room of Jerusalem to the Upper Room of every Catholic parish, including the 185 parishes of this local church. One of my great joys as your shepherd is traveling to the four corners of the Archdiocese Sunday after Sunday to see the many and varied ways those 185 communities, reflecting the vibrant multicultural character of our region, are fulfilling the Lord's command, "Do this in memory of me."..."For the Diocesan Bishop, the prime steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to his care, is the moderator; promoter, and guardian of the whole of liturgical life."

#### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*What feeling arises within me as I think of our Sunday Eucharist joined with all those throughout the Diocese celebrating Sunday Eucharist every Sunday?

\*What thoughts come to my mind and heart as I think of the Archbishop called to be "promoter and guardian of the whole of liturgical life?" What does this entail? How does this date back to the Apostles?

\*What does it mean to say "the Apostles became "stewards of the mysteries" (I Cor. 4: 1) at the Last Supper? "This privilege – a great responsibility – was entrusted to the bishops through apostolic succession."

### My Prayer

Loving God, I pray for our Archbishop Hebda that your grace, strength, peace and courage may always accompany him in the work and ministry he is called to do.

### Sunday, March 12, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

"Prime steward of the mysteries of God" – I count this among my most sacred episcopal titles not only because it touches the "source and summit" of all Christian mysteries, the Eucharist, but also because this is who you – the faithful of the Archdiocese – have asked me to be. In fact Synod Proposition 9 (Education for the Mass: Educate God's people on the beauty, form and meaning of the Mass, with special emphasis on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist) received the third highest number of votes in the Synod Assembly and I have committed to make this our Synod Priority for in Year 2 (July 2024 – June 2025).

#### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*The "Eucharist is the source and summit." Everything in our faith flows into and out of the Eucharist. As I reflect upon the Eucharist as "source and summit" in my personal life, what does this mean? What does it mean to have the Eucharist at the center of my life?

\*How does the Eucharist inspire my day to day living?

## My Prayer

Jesus make strong my faith in you in the Eucharist. As I receive you, let me share you with others. Let me become Eucharist for my brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. You Jesus make me strong that I might be your Word that is given to others as hope, your presence that is shared as strength for broken and oppressed.

Monday, March 13, 2023

## Words from the Pastoral Letter

“Dear brothers and sisters, we cannot meditate on the mystery of the Holy Eucharist without meditating on another great mystery: holy priesthood. The truth is that the simple words – “Do this in memory of me” had the power to institute not just one Sacrament but two! As Monsignor Vaghi reminds us, the Sacrament of Holy Orders was also born in the Upper Room:

There is an inseparable link between the Eucharist and Holy Orders – these two wonderful gifts of the Lord Jesus from the Upper Room. At the altar, the priest reminds us daily of Christ’s ultimate act of love for us on the cross...There could be no greater gift from our Lord Jesus than the privilege and vocation of the priesthood – this service for his holy people.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, the priest prays the words of consecration at every Mass – in the person of Christ – “Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dew fall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As such, without the priest, there can be no Eucharist – this bread of life and cup of eternal salvation. It is at once the priest’s most unique privilege and obligation – the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of our lives as Catholic Christians. The priesthood and the Eucharist are thus truly lasting legacies of the Upper Room.”

## Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*What do I value about the gift of the priesthood?

\*How do I show gratitude for priesthood?

\*What part of the Consecration that the priest prays at each Mass most touches me? Why?

## My Prayer

Dear Jesus,

Bless those whom you have called to the vocation of priest. Give these your servants the gift of peace and prayer, give them the gift of trust in your holy will for them, give them grace to follow you even when it is difficult, be their guide and their strength.

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

## Words from the Pastoral Letter

“I urge my brother priests, in collaboration with your deacons and parishioners, to make your liturgies dignified and beautiful. And as we do so, let us remember a secret ingredient of beautiful liturgies given by Pope Francis – joyful evangelization:

Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving. (Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, 24)

I always feel particularly privileged during the Easter Season to see firsthand in our parishes how joyful evangelization has become beauty in the Liturgy, as the faces of the newly baptized and confirmed adorn the Sunday assembly like new and precious “living stones” (1 Pt 2:5).

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*How am I a minister of JOY in the liturgy?

\*When I pray during Mass do I pray with a sense of joy?

### My Prayer

Dear Jesus, give me a joyful heart that I might sing your praises with extra joy, that my face might speak joy to my brothers and sisters and that my heart might ring with an attitude of joy as I pray during liturgy. Help me to realize that the joy I bring to liturgy is an act of evangelization that I share with others so that they will know that my faith is lively and filled with your true and authentic JOY.

### Wednesday, March 15, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“One of the earliest revelations of the form of the Mass is given to us by the evangelist Luke in his account of the appearance of the risen Jesus to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35)...

The evangelist highlights two pillars of Christian worship; the interpretation of the scriptures (v. 27) and the breaking of the bread (v. 35). These correspond, then as now, to the two pillars of Catholic liturgy: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We have already said much – and will say more – about the Liturgy of the Eucharist. I would like to draw our priests’ attention to the Liturgy of the Word, because one of the goals of Second Vatican Council was to restore its proper dignity in the Mass, where the Council spoke of two tables; the “table of the Lord’s body” and the “table of God’s word.”

Regarding the latter; the Council says, “The treasures of the bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s word.” (Sacrosanctum Concilium 51).

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*In every Liturgy God is really present in God’s word. How open is my heart to receive God’s real presence in his word during Liturgy?

\*Recently, a time when God’s word really spoke to me at Mass was... I heard God say ...

### My Prayer

Open my ears Lord to hear your Word.

Open my heart to Love and treasure your Word.

Open myself to Live your Word.

Jesus You are the Living Word of God. I trust in You. Give me courage to Live your Word.

### Thursday, March 16, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“The recent publication of the synthesis of the consultation for the upcoming Global Synod on Synodality at the Vatican has revealed that the people of God across continents and cultures are hungering for “deeper

homilies, centered on the Gospel” and relevant to daily life. We who are privileged to preach need to ask ourselves, “Do I preach like Jesus?” That is to say, when I have explained all that is in the law, the prophets and the Gospels, do my people ask themselves, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us” (Lk 24:32)? This is an increasingly important question for all bishops, priests and deacons, and I urge all of us to invest more time into our homily preparation so that a hungry people may have “richer fare” and burning hearts.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

- \*Do I listen intently to homilies as they are proclaimed?
- \*Do I try to take a message from the homily home with me and later take it to prayer?
- \*Do I let the Pastor know when I have been touched by a good homily?
- \*Recently, a word of God that touched me deeply in a homily was... I have tried to live this word by...

### My Prayer

Dear Jesus, be with Father as he weekly prepares his homilies. Give him time to ponder and pray the Scriptures. Deepen his love for your word. Help me to develop a listening heart so that I may ponder what he says and encourage him in this holy and artful work of breaking open your word and you who are the Word of Life.

Friday, March 17, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“I would simply like to draw your attention to a singular power of the Holy Eucharist as I have experienced it in my own life: the power to “give” ourselves to others in spite of our own suffering. We should not be surprised by such a grace in the Eucharist, for this very power is found in Jesus himself. In fact, it is most clearly revealed in his own celebration of that Eucharist in the Upper Room. Notwithstanding the intrigue, betrayal and abandonment of his impending passion, Jesus was still “giving” of himself; “This is my body, which will be given for you.” (Lk 22:19).

This strength is also given to us as we participate in the Holy Eucharist. I can continue to give myself up for others – sometimes in spite of terribly difficult situations – by the power of the one whose body has been “given up” for me. In this way, I become Eucharist for others. And I would dare say that the more frequently we participate in the Mass, the more powerfully we will see this Eucharistic life emerge.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

- \*Sometimes we are invited to join our pain with Jesus’ pain in handing ourselves over in Eucharist. Is there a time when you felt your pain connected with Jesus’ pain in giving yourself over to God?
- \*Is there a time when your pain took on greater meaning because of your connection to Eucharist?

### My Prayer

Jesus, sometimes my disappointments, my abandonment, my depression I bring to you in Eucharist and hand it over to you. Take Lord and receive it. I offer it to you as gift. Transform it so that it might be made into a gift that might bring life to others. Here I am Lord, I come just as I am. I offer you my heart. Change me. Jesus I trust in you in Eucharist.

Saturday, March 18, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

A poem written by a woman who despite a great deal of suffering continually came to Eucharist and experienced the miracle of Jesus really present and the beauty of priesthood:

“You held the face of Christ today  
A gift I will never forget  
To be so touched in this special way  
An awesome and humbling effect

Rejoice, he shows you once again  
God is love in bread forever  
The Mass of Sacrifice shall always remain  
My most precious daily endeavor.

The face I saw this morning  
On the Host so pure and white  
Impressed on my mind as a warning  
Never to leave his sight.

Praise the sight beheld today  
Praised be Jesus Christ  
Praise your hands blessed to pray  
Praised be Jesus Christ.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

- \*Father holds the face of Christ in each Eucharist.  
I hold the face of Christ as I receive Christ in Eucharist.  
This is gift.  
As I ponder this gift, what is my response to Christ?
- \*What strikes me in this poem?
- \*What gives my heart inspiration in this poem?

### My Prayer

Jesus as I touch your face in bread that is shared,  
Let my heart widen in bringing your love and presence to the world around me.  
As you nourish me through your real presence,  
Let me nourish the world so that your light might shine bright in a darkened world, so that your peace might be felt blessing a world too often violent and your warm love might touch lonely hearts with grace and friendship.

Sunday, March 19, 2023

### Words from the Synod Letter

“Praise the sight beheld today  
Praised be Jesus Christ  
Praise your hands blessed to pray  
Praised be Jesus Christ.”

(from the poem written by woman who wished to share how Christ was present to her in Eucharist in difficult times)



My sisters and brothers this is what we celebrate in the Holy Mass: “God is love in bread forever!” I invite more of our faithful to make the Holy Eucharist your “most precious daily endeavor” as it was for the author of the above poem. I invite our priests for their part, to make the Holy Eucharist generously available, knowing that “the Eucharistic Action, over which the priest presides, is the very heart of the congregation,” and that in so doing, he has the privilege of enabling the people “to offer God the Father the Divine Victim in the Sacrifice of the Mass and to join to it the offering of their own lives.” (Presbyterorum Ordinis 5)

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Am I able to praise Jesus in the Eucharist?

\*How could I make Eucharist “a daily endeavor?”

\*In each Eucharist we offer ourselves to God. How does this make me feel? Does this give me consolation?

### My Prayer

Jesus I praise you who becomes present to me in Eucharist.

I adore you and worship you who comes to dwell in this tiny piece of bread.

I praise you who comes to receive my simple offering of myself – so often broken and scarred,

Yet you want me. You want my hurt, my pain and my goodness, my talents, my gifts, my hopes and my dreams. At each Mass I lay these upon your altar for you to receive. Take Lord, take all that I am.

I dare pray, transform me, change me.

### Monday, March 20, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

Pentecost! According to a very ancient tradition, the Spirit-baptism of the Church on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover; occurred in the same room where Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and broke the bread. Let us then dwell a while longer in this holiest of holy places to see what lessons the Holy Spirit can teach us about our Synod hopes.

You may recall that key Synod events happened on Pentecost. The 2019 Pentecost Vigil Mass and prayer service was the first public event of the Synod process, and the 2021 Pentecost Vigil Mass and prayer service included the promulgation of the Synod decree. The Synod process culminated with the Synod Assembly held over the 2022 Pentecost weekend. My dear friends, this was no coincidence. I was entrusting the entire Synod process to the fire of the Holy Spirit. Why? I have long felt that there is something too often missing today in our beloved Church. That something – if I had to find a single word – is *witness*.

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Archbishop Hebda longs for the Holy Spirit to be central to the Synod experience. What do you think this means?

\*Who is the Holy Spirit to you? What is one word that describes His work in your life?

\*The Archbishop notes that he thinks that often “witness” is missing in the Church today. What does “witness” mean to you?

### My Prayer

Jesus, you have called us, through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, to be your witnesses throughout the world. Teach us how to boldly witness to your presence. Help us to make your presence known and loved in our world.



Tuesday, March 21, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“Indeed, if the early Church was a growing Church, it was because it was also a witnessing Church. Conversely, if the Church today is in decline, it is largely because it lacks witnesses. In her groundbreaking *Forming Intentional Disciples*, Catholic author Sherry Weddell cited a jarring statistic from a sweeping 2005 study on religious practice in the United States entitled *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners*.

When asked whether “spreading the faith” was a high priority, 75% of conservative Protestant congregations and 57% of African American congregations responded yes, whereas only 6% of Catholic parishes did so. When asked whether they sponsored evangelization activities in their parishes, that number fell to 3%.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Why do you believe Catholics place such a low priority on sharing the Catholic faith or “evangelization activities”?

\*What does sharing the Catholic faith really mean to you? How should we go about doing this?

\*Do I feel the call to evangelize?

### My Prayer

Loving God,

Give us wisdom to know how to share our faith with kindness, gentleness and love as Jesus would do. Give us insight to see your vision of what this really looks like. Help us to stand strong in our convictions so that we can make a difference in our world.

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

Confirmation is the principal sacrament of witness because it “perpetuates the grace of Pentecost.” And as Jesus reveals about Pentecost: “...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Indeed, the power to witness to the risen life of Jesus is the true power of the Church. It is, as Pope Francis reminds us, how Christianity spread throughout the world – how a small band of fishermen and humble women and men converted one of the greatest empires in history without raising the sword. That is true power.

Have we lost this power today? If so, it may be because we have first lost the fire. Jesus clearly tells us that we will receive power to witness to him “when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” and that Spirit came in “tongues as of fire” (Acts 2:3). Indeed, it is the fire of the Spirit that has the potential to become a blaze, according to Jesus’s own words: “I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!” (LK 12:49)

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Archbishop Hebda wonders if we have lost “the fire” of the Holy Spirit today? What do you believe the “fire of the Holy Spirit” looks like in the Church today?

\*In your heart list ways in which you hope to “witness to the risen life of Jesus” in your day to day living.

### My Prayer

Jesus, come set my heart “on fire” with your Holy Spirit. Let my heart be a fire of kindness, a fire of love, a fire of prayer that brings the hope and power of the Holy Spirit to the world around me.

### Thursday, March 23, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“See the contrast between the Church of the Acts of the Apostles and the Church of today, where the number of adults who are leaving the Church in the United States is more than six times greater than the number of those entering. Only a culture of witness can turn the tide of decline that we are seeing in many areas of the Church today. But this bold witness is not a power that we can give ourselves. It can only be received when the Holy Spirit comes to us.

Perhaps nobody understood this better than St. John XXIII. He saw the mystery of Pentecost as holding the key to the renewal of the Church in the modern world, as is revealed in the well-known prayer with which he convoked the Second Vatican Council:

‘Renew your wonders in our time, as though in a new Pentecost...’

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*What happen inside of you when you hear that “the number of adults who are leaving the Church in the United States is more than six times greater than the number of those entering?”

\*What simple gift can you give to the Church to make a difference before this daunting statistic? Do not let it turn you to hopelessness!

\*What is the hope that Pope St. John XXIII offered the Church?

### My Prayer

Thank-you Holy Spirit for the many resurrections that have happened in our Church throughout the ages. Many times in our history we thought we were falling into ruin but then something happened to help us rise from the ashes. Thank-you Holy Spirit for showing us the power of resurrection faith in our church and in our personal lives. Holy Spirit you give us new life and new beginnings!

### Friday, March 24, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“Again and again, Pope Francis has urged us not to forget that the Second Vatican Council was itself a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Recently, on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council’s beginning, our Holy Father exhorted all of us to “rediscover the Council’s passion and renew our own passion for the Council.” I echo those sentiments: renew our passion for the Council!”

How does the Council relate to our Synod? As the Holy Father explained, “The Council helps us imitate God’s approach, which the prophet Ezekiel has described to us today; ‘Seek the lost sheep and lead back to the fold the stray, bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.’ (Ezek 34:16).

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*How did I experience the Holy Spirit in changes in the Church that happened with the Second Vatican Council?

\*What changes in the Church do I consider a gift to me?

\*Evangelization is about seeking those who are hurting or lost. How can I begin to take up this work by the power of the Holy Spirit working in me?

### My Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, come. Sometimes I feel so exhausted. It is hard to think that my faith continually calls me to go out of myself to pick up the wounded and lost. It seems hard. I can't do it on my own. I need your fire Holy Spirit. Come fire of the Spirit, come. Come, fire of love, come. Come wonder of wonders, come. Come creator of new life, come. Come Spirit of God, come. Come initiator of healing, come. Come animator of my Spirit, come. Come giver of gifts, come. Come Holy Spirit, fire of goodness, come.

### Saturday, March 25, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

St. Paul VI himself courageously put his own conviction into practice by convoking a Synod in 1974 to address the question of evangelization in the modern world (III Ordinary General Assembly), which gave rise to the landmark Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, in which he clearly places evangelization at the heart of the Church:

Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the church, her deepest identity, She exists to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection....

Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit..."

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*St. Paul VI says that Evangelization "is at the heart of the Church" and it is never possible without the Holy Spirit. What do you think this means for us today in our parish community?

\*What does saying, Evangelization is "a vocation of the Church" mean for us in our parish community?

Take time to pray about these thoughts.

### My Prayer

Loving God,

May witnessing to your presence be an action dear to my heart, an action that leads others to drink of your springs of living waters, an action that brings others to find life in your heart. Give me the grace to have holy boldness to go beyond myself, holy tenderness and kindness to care for another's soul, holy gentleness to reverence your presence in another enough that I would want them to experience your Holy Spirit alive and active in their midst inviting them to experience the wonders and glories of the spiritual life.

### Sunday, March 26, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

"St. John Paul II is clear that the "Be not afraid!" of the new evangelization is for *all* the baptized: The commitment of the laity to the work of evangelization is changing ecclesial life...Above all, there is a new awareness that *missionary activity is a matter for all* Christians, for all dioceses and parishes, Church

institutions and associations.” The Holy Father was drawing on the teaching firmly established at the Second Vatican Council in the Decree on the Laity and by his predecessor, St. Paul VI.

Perhaps nowhere does the “all” of missionary commitment ring out more clearly than in the writings of Pope Francis:

“In virtue of their baptism, *all* the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (Mt:19). *All* the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization...”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*“All” of us – pastors, religious, and laity are called to the work of evangelization. We are all called “missionary disciples.” When I hear that I am a “missionary disciple” what thoughts come to my mind and heart?

\*Spend moments praying about:

I hear the Lord say to me, “Be not afraid.” Ponder the Lord speaking those words into your heart.

### My Prayer

Lord Jesus,

A disciple is an intimate follower of yours. It is one who sits at your feet and listens to your words. It is one who ponders deeply what you say. A disciple goes forth on mission. Only with your grace alive in me can I be a missionary disciple. Only as I encounter your great love is all of this possible. So I open my heart to receive. I then hear your call to “Go.”

### Monday, March 27, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“This universal call of witness might arouse fear in our hearts until we recall that the will of God will never lead us where the grace of God cannot keep us. If it is indeed possible to not be afraid in the face of the Church’s call to mission, it is only because the “all” of the Church’s call is met by the “all” of God’s grace: “To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit” (I Cor. 12:7). What made Vatican II so potent in its ability to prepare us to evangelize the modern world is that it put these words of our patron, St. Paul, at the forefront of the Church’s consciousness through teachings like the one below from Lumen Gentium:

“It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, ‘allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills’ (I Cor 12:11)).

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*The Lord does not want us to fear using our gifts. How does fear stand in the way of me using my gifts to build up the Church? Spend time today bringing your fears and anxieties to the Lord who is always there to receive them.

\*What word does the Lord give to me as He takes my fears and worries today?

\*Ask God to plant in your mind an image of hope as you look to the future today.

### My Prayer

Loving and gracious God,

You are the God of courage and strength. You come to me and say, “Do not be afraid, my beloved one.” You whisper this statement deep into my heart. You have created me to do a special act of service for you. In the

call you give to me dear God is the grace – the love and strength – to respond to the call. I place my trust in you O merciful God.

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“If there is fear of the word “evangelization” in many parts of the world today – and maybe even in our own hearts – it may be because we have a very narrow image of evangelization. Perhaps we have the misconception that the *universal call of witness* requires us all to knock on doors and preach on street corners. Some of us may be called and gifted to do this, but not all. St. Paul explains, “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.” (I Cor. 12:4-6).

How good to know that we do not each need to have all the gifts. How good to know that we belong to a body with many members, who can supply in works of evangelization what we are lacking. Moreover, how encouraging it is that our unique giftedness has been foreseen by God for a time such as this (Est 4:14) and is “perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church.” (*Lumen Gentium 12*)!

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*How will I discern the gifts I have to offer the Church?

\*How will I take time to honestly ask the Lord what he is asking of me? (Know that this may only be revealed over a long period of time. What is important is that you remain open. Often it is only in hind sight that we are aware of the gift we have to offer.)

\*The Lord wants a docile heart – a loving, open heart. Pray for such a heart.

### My Prayer

Lord, widen my image of what it means to evangelize. Help me to understand the “call to witness”s as a call that has many dimensions. Let my heart open to these dimensions and possibilities. Give me understanding and wisdom and creativity in the face of these possibilities. Help me to see things I have not seen before. Help me to hear things I have not heard before. Help me to be willing to go places I have not gone before. Help me to see evangelizing as a new adventure in doing your will.

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“However, as you may recall from the Synod Focus Areas, the hope of the Synod is not only making missionary disciples but also making missionary parishes. In fact, these two hopes go hand-in-hand. To this end I encourage our pastors and their lay leaders to ask themselves this question: Is our parish like the Upper Room? Or have we divided what God has joined? That is, are our people ascending the Upper Room of the parish each week only for the breaking of the bread and not for the outpouring of the Spirit? At stake is whether or not the fire of Pentecost will empower us to “go forth” from the Upper Room of our parishes.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Do we experience both the beauty of Eucharist in our parish and a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our parish?

\*How can we make room for both of these events in our parish?

\*How will we open to an “out pouring of the Holy Spirit” in our midst? What should we do? Personally? Collectively?

### My Prayer

“Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love!” Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful to overflow with enthusiasm for God’s witness of love and peace in our midst. Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful to overflow with acts of service for the poor and outcast. Come Holy Spirit help us to create a Spirit of belonging. Come Holy Spirit, with your healing power so that we might know how to welcome each other. Come Holy Spirit let us be that gift that receives each other with dignity and reverence for your presence in each other. Come Holy Spirit.

### Thursday, March 30, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“I have experienced that many of our bilingual parishes are shining examples of communities that “go forth,” often on behalf of our immigrant sisters and brothers from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America who often find themselves on the peripheries of society. Should we be surprised, for example, to find that the fire of Pentecost is burning brightly in many of our Latino communities? Indeed, many Spanish speaking Catholics report having a profound faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. I believe that this is one of the main reasons for the tremendous potential for missionary discipleship that I have witnessed among them. May they inspire us all to “go forth” in the months and years ahead!

#### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

- \*How have I witnessed the fire of the Holy Spirit in a bilingual or immigrant parish with members on the peripheries of society?
- \*How have I witnessed a Latino or African, or Asian or other European Catholic having a deep faith in the power of the Holy Spirit?
- \*What witness and what hope do I carry away from these individuals?

### My Prayer

Loving God, you reveal yourself, in our brothers and sisters who struggle throughout the world. Your presence is so vivid in their brokenness, woundedness or grief. It is through them that we touch you in profound ways. Help us to open our hearts to learn how present you are in men and women, teens and children who daily carry sometimes very heavy burdens. Yet in the midst of such crosses, they smile with your smile and invite us to totally depend on you. Renew our hearts and help us to learn from these our most beloved brothers and sisters.

### Friday, March 31, 2023

#### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Pope Francis addressed the members of the Renewal:  
“Fifty years of Catholic Charismatic Renewal: a current of grace of the Spirit! And why a current of grace? Because it has neither a founder; nor statutes, nor organs of governance. Clearly in this current multiple expressions have been born that are certainly human works inspired by the Spirit, with various charisms, and all in the service of the Church. But this current cannot be dammed, nor can the Holy Spirit be enclosed in a cage!...This current of grace is for all the Church, not just for some, and no one among us is the “master” and all the others servants. No. We are all servants of this current of grace.”  
Can we dream of sharing the outpouring of the Spirit with “everyone in the Church” if the outpouring of the Spirit is not an ordinary part of parish life? If the current of grace is for the whole Church, then it needs to be

an ordinary part of parish life since the parish is the ordinary experience of Church for the vast majority of Catholics.”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*What does it mean for me when it is said that the Holy Spirit cannot be enclosed in “a cage?”

\*Can I let myself experience the great “grace of the Holy Spirit flowing around me?”

The Holy Spirit is truly all around us. God does not withhold the Spirit from us. When we look at the beauty of creation, the Holy Spirit is present! When we look at God’s life in a young person who is discovering his/her gifts God’s life is present! When we look at grandparents who have loved each other for forty or fifty years the Holy Spirit’s presence is flowing in abundance. When we are still and quiet seeking the presence of God, the Holy Spirit’s presence is flowing.

How have I experienced the Holy Spirit flowing during the past week?

### My Prayer

Open my eyes to see you Holy Spirit. Open my heart to feel your blessing. Open my ears to hear you Holy Spirit. Open my mind to think great thoughts about you Holy Spirit. Open me Holy Spirit to be in your great abounding presence. Open me to be healed by you Holy Spirit. Open me Holy Spirit to touch your great presence in my midst! Holy Spirit I profess that you are everywhere present!

Saturday, April 1, 2023

First Saturday

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“I would like to share a few words of encouragement in particular to our pastors and to their collaborators on parish staffs: let the fire of the Spirit transform the ordinary pastoral work of your parishes! You do not have to do this alone. Your parish Synod Evangelization Team will certainly be with you. Moreover, through the Office of Synod Evangelization and its valued partners...”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Can I take a few moments to pray for our parish staff?

\*Can I pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their lives?

\*What ways will I offer support to them today?

### My Prayer

Come Holy Spirit touch all those who work in our parish offices. Let the power of your grace invade their lives. Help them to do their ministry always connected to your love and grace. Help me to reach out with kindness and support to these your servant leaders.

Sunday, April 2, 2023

Palm Sunday

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

“...If the fire of the Spirit were to become an ordinary part of the life of each parish, what would be the effect? I think Pope Francis paints a vivid picture for us:

‘The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”... In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a

community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach.'

"A center of constant missionary outreach"...what an inspiring and ambitious vision for our Catholic parishes! Would we be lamenting the decline of our beloved Church if every Catholic parish in this Archdiocese adopted this vision? Some would say this is too bold, I would say this is precisely what our Synod has been all about!

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*How would you describe the parish? What do you like about it? How do you experience the Holy Spirit at work within it?

\*What new life in the Spirit would you like to see in the Parish?

\*Are there ways in which the Holy Spirit is present in surprising ways in the parish?

### My Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, fill our parish with the surprises of your presence! Come Holy Spirit renew our parish and fill us with new life budding forth in new directions and in new corners! Come Holy Spirit fill your people with new abilities to witness your presence. Let our parish be a beacon for the community as it struggles to find a way in the midst of violence, loss of strong values, despair, racial inequality, poverty, discrimination and fear.

Monday, April 3, 2023

Monday of Holy Week

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

"After reflection, prayer and discernment considering the Synod Assembly voting results, I am hereby establishing one Synod Priority at the parish level each year: The Synod Priorities by year are:

Year 1 (July 2023 – June 2024): Small Groups (Adopting Proposition 19)

Year 2 (July 2024 – June 2025): The Mass (Adopting Propositions 9 and 10)

Year 3 (July 2025 – June 2026): Parents as Primary Educators (Adopting Proposition 28)

Each Synod Priority will be advanced through three goals corresponding to the mysteries of Footwashing, Eucharist, and Pentecost, so that our parishes become true icons of the Upper Room and share in its fruitfulness.

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*When I look at the above structure how do I see God at work in it?

\*What excites me about some of these priorities?

\*What is my prayer for each of them?

### My Prayer

Loving God, as I look at these priorities I see them as bare bones. They need to take flesh. They need to come alive. They need to be filled with the creative movement of your Holy Spirit. Help us to come up with dynamic processes that will promote growth around these themes and that will invite all members of our parishes to experience the Holy Spirit in dynamic ways through them. Come Holy Spirit set these themes on fire!

Tuesday, April 4, 2023

Tuesday of Holy Week

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

"If you are being asked to embrace new ministries or new challenges, do not be afraid. The Lord is never outdone in generosity.

Only God knows the great surprises he has in store for us as we continue to walk together, pray together, listen together, discern together, and now respond together to the commission that Jesus first gave to his Apostles: “You will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8)! Through the intercession of Our Lady of the Cenacle, and full of the hope that resides in her Immaculate Heart, let us call upon the Holy Spirit to lead us forth...”

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*Archbishop Hebda admits that God is a God of surprises and has surprises in store for us. What do you think some of those surprises might be? What surprises of God have you experienced so far as you have prayed during this Synod process this Lent?

\*What are characteristics we must nurture in ourselves if we are to be people open to the surprise of the Holy Spirit?

\*We are “witnesses” with one another! What excites you about this journey?

\*What do we learn from Mary, our Blessed Mother about how to be witnesses of faith?

### My Prayer

Mary, our dear Mother, you understand journeys! You understand “the call” by God to walk a journey. You understand the great patience needed. You understand the courage to keep going even when things look dark and dreary. You understand how to be a light in the midst of darkness. You understand how to keep walking with the poor and the sad and the lonely and the despairing. Mary our dear mother, you understand that we must never give up. You understand that we must sit with you and the disciples in the Upper Room and wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pray that we might have the grace to do as you would do. Mary, our dear Mother, pray for us.

### Wednesday, April 5, 2023

### Wednesday of Holy Week

### Words from the Pastoral Letter

Archbishop Hebda ends his letter with the Prayer of St. John XXIII used at the calling of the Second Vatican Council and he invites us to make it our own as we go forth.

#### Holy Spirit

Renew your wonders in our time, as though in a new Pentecost,

And grant that this Archdiocese,

United in prayer around Mary, the Mother of Jesus,

And guided by St. Peter,

May spread the Kingdom of the divine Savior,

A Kingdom of truth, of justice, of love, and of peace.

Amen.

Saint Paul, our great missionary patron, pray for us!

### Prayerfully Reflect on the Questions

\*What words in this prayer stand out for me? Why do I like these words?

How can I pray with these special words that speak to my heart?

How do these prayerful words give me hope?

### My Prayer

Loving God,

May these holy words anoint my soul with healing peace, gracious wonder, tender mercy and embracing love.

Holy Spirit wrap me up in your loving and infinite kindness that I might spread God’s Kingdom everywhere I

journey. My heart rests in you as I now await the great celebration of the Paschal Mystery, the Sacred Triduum. May this Easter Season be a time for this Pastoral Letter to take root and bear fruit in the hearts of the faithful in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.





