



come see make

A VISION FOR PARISHES

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BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

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HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The *Come and See, Go and Make: A Vision for Parishes* document is accompanied by a collection of worksheets entitled *Pray, Reflect, and Discuss*. These activities are designed to help you reflect, discern, and process the vision prepared for the Diocese of Wollongong. They can be completed individually, as a parish (in small or large groups), and by the parish pastoral council and/or leadership team. Your reflections and responses will be an invaluable resource for your parish in actively implementing renewal in your parish.

The following additional resources have been provided to accompany *Come and See, Go and Make: A Vision for Parishes*:



Pray, Reflect, and Discuss: Worksheet Activities (December 2023)



Go Deeper



The Parish I See: Worksheet Activities (December 2023)



The Principles and Foundations

Please refer to *Pray, Reflect, and Discuss* for suggestions for how you might read this document prayerfully.

Acknowledgment of Country

We begin by acknowledging the Country upon which we call the home of the Diocese of Wollongong. We honour the Traditional Custodians of this land—the Dharawal, Gundungurra and Yuin nations—who have, over millennia, cared for and worked in harmony with our common home. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of just recognition and reconciliation.

As we pray and discern what the future holds for the local Church of the Diocese of Wollongong, may we walk gently and thoughtfully on this Country, extending respect to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters and brothers whose connection with this land, and each other, can teach us so much.

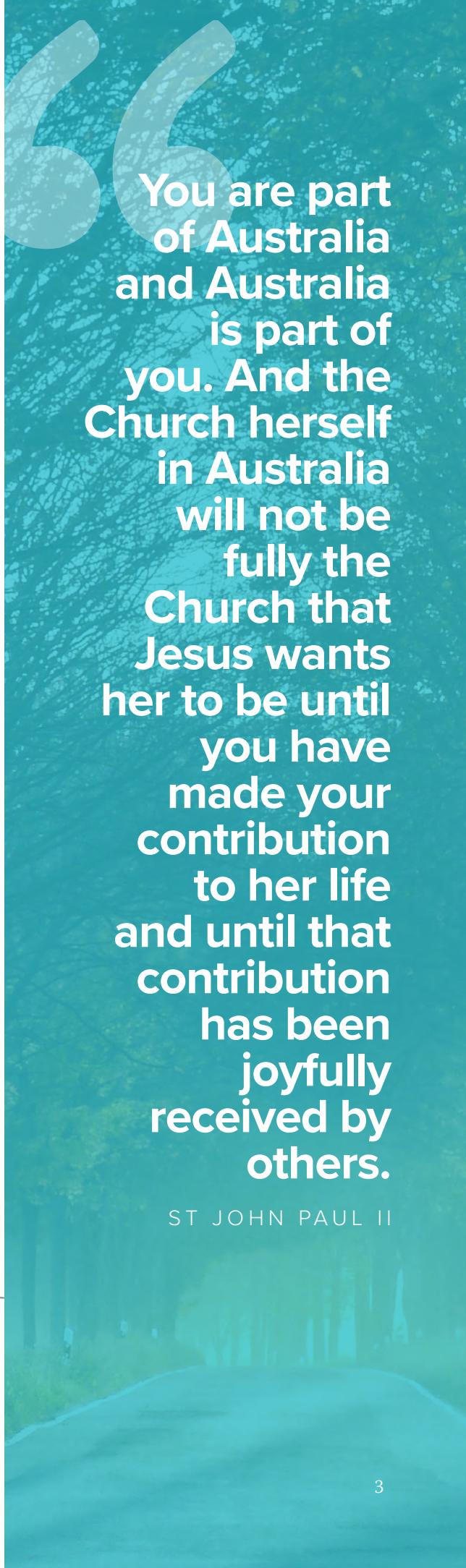
We reiterate what St John Paul II said to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

“You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.”¹

We recommit ourselves to this mission of listening, inclusion, and unity.



1. Prayer

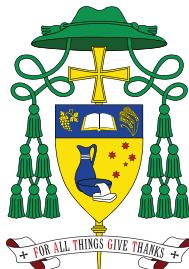


You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.

ST JOHN PAUL II



¹ John Paul II. (1986). *Address of John Paul II to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*. Retrieved from <https://dow.sh/3QhYtoe3>



For all things give thanks.

1 THESS 5:18

Come and See, Go and Make

**TO THE CLERGY, CONSECRATED PERSONS,
AND THE LAY FAITHFUL OF THE
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG**

**on a Vision for Parishes by
Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG**

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

Bearers of Christ's love

1. In the foyer of my office in Wollongong, in big silver letters, are the words: "Bearers of Christ's Love." These words have been with us since the diocesan Pastoral Plan of 2011–2015, but what do they mean? According to that document, to be "Bearers of Christ's Love" we must: "Love in the way that Christ does—with a love that is both consoling and confronting"²

2. It is true to be a bearer of Christ's love means loving as Christ loves, in imitation of him. However, it also means loving with Christ's love. To be able to love with his love requires we encounter him on the journey of our lives and come away transformed, just as the first disciples were. It is only when we encounter the person of Jesus, and allow ourselves to be seen through his eyes of mercy, that we are able to see others with these same eyes.

3. The gaze of Jesus is piercing. It looks past the edifices and facades we erect and sees us exactly as we are. This kind of love is confronting. The merciful, loving gaze of Jesus makes no excuses for sin. It neither ignores nor rationalises, but it does offer a remedy. In his merciful love, Jesus died for our sins, once for all³—this is the meaning of the Cross.

4. If we are to be a people who are "bearers of Christ's love," it stands to reason that we must see through his eyes, love with his heart, and be driven by his mission.



1. Encounter



2. Bearers of Christ's love

Our mission

5. Throughout the second half of the 20th Century—for the last 65 years—our popes have been calling our attention back to two essential points: who we are, and what we are called to do. This began with the Second Vatican Council, which led us to a deeper understanding of our identity as the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. **Above all else, the Church is missionary, and her action is mission.** For, "[the] pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin."⁴ There can be no ambiguity as to the nature of the mission because it was given to the apostles by our Lord Jesus, handed down faithfully throughout the ages, and it remains unchanged. Before ascending to heaven, his final words were:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."⁵

6. Our mission, therefore, is to evangelise all people. This "constitutes the essential mission of the Church" and "is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity.... She exists to evangelise."⁶ To evangelise is "[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."⁷ **This mission is not distinct from the mission of Christ, but rather a cooperation with the mission of Christ,**⁸ empowered by the Holy Spirit, living in, with, and through, Jesus—whom we have encountered. Indeed, if it is "in [Jesus] that we live and move and have our being"⁹ how can we not be consumed by his mission?



2. Holiness and mission



3. The joy of evangelisation



3. Our mission

² Peter Ingham (2011). *Catholic Diocese of Wollongong Pastoral Plan 2011–2015*, 6

³ 1 Peter 3:18, Romans 6:10, Hebrews 7:27

⁴ *Ad Gentes* 2

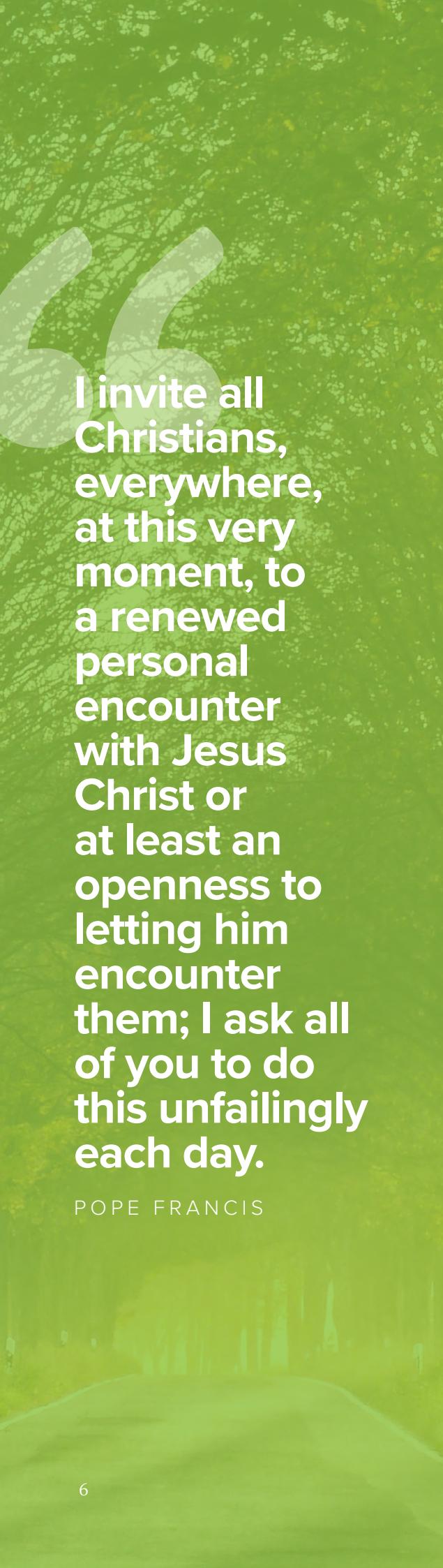
⁵ Matthew 28:19–20 NRSV

⁶ *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 14

⁷ Ibid

⁸ *Redemptoris Missio* 23

⁹ Acts 17:28 NRSV

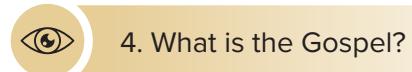


I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day.

POPE FRANCIS

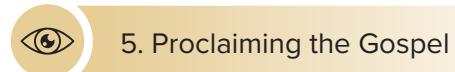
The new evangelisation

7. St Pope John Paul II spoke of the “new evangelisation”, a re-proclamation of the Gospel not just to the world—which does not know or has forgotten Christ—but also to our communities, and to our own people. Pope Francis reminds us that, “[The] Third Millennium brings the urgent challenge of the new evangelisation. True, it is not easy to proclaim the Gospel in a world which claims not to need God. Yet, we are bound by the compelling words of St Paul: ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’ (1 Cor 9:16).”¹⁰



4. What is the Gospel?

8. The words of St Paul are confronting and worth repeating: **woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.** But aren’t our actions alone sufficient to communicate or “preach” the Gospel? It is often claimed that St Francis of Assisi championed the primacy of preaching through action by saying, “Preach the Gospel always, and if you have to, use words,” but there is no historical record of him ever uttering this phrase. On the contrary, history recalls St Francis as a firebrand preacher, willing to look foolish for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was often thought unwell by the citizens of Assisi as he loudly proclaimed what he believed in the town square. We must have faith in the Gospel and “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”.¹¹



5. Proclaiming the Gospel

9. The late Pope Benedict XVI summed up the mind and heart of the Church when he said:

“At the dawn of the third millennium not only are there still many peoples who have not come to know the Good News, but also a great many Christians who need to have the Word of God once more persuasively proclaimed to them, so that they can concretely experience the power of the Gospel. Many of our brothers and sisters are “baptised, but insufficiently evangelised.”¹²

10 John Paul II. (1996). *Seventh International Meeting of the Catholic Fraternity of Covenant Communities and Fellowships*. Retrieved from: <https://dow.sh/3MkCYIC>

11 Romans 10:17 NRSV

12 *Verbum Domini 96*

Baptised, but insufficiently evangelised! It's a confronting thought, but we see this reality in our parishes every time another family receives all the sacraments of initiation and yet still walks away from our communities of faith. It is a heartache for us all.



6. Renewal of parishes



4A. The new evangelisation

10. And this is why Pope Francis beckons us:

"I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting 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.' The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realise that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms."¹³

I invite you to pray this prayer with our pope:

"Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace."¹⁴



11. Pope Francis is inviting us to a personal encounter with Jesus, an echo of Pope Benedict XVI's call to a personal encounter and personal relationship.¹⁵ This may seem contrary to our understanding of the Church as the body of Christ, and may even summon thoughts of an individualistic faith that concentrates on "me" and "I" rather than on "us" and "we". However, just as the Church is the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, each of the baptised bears this same image—made like the risen Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. **The relationship between the individual and the body is cyclic: the individual encounter and relationship with Jesus builds the body and then the body builds the individual.** Both are fundamentally necessary and do not compete with one another.

12. In order to be a "bearer of Christ's love", we must realise that this is something we are for the world, something we can give. But it is also something that we—all of us: lay and ordained—must receive. **It is an encounter not with an idea, a mission, an obligation or duty, or a way of life, but with a real person, the person of Jesus,**¹⁶ who pursues us daily and desires that we be drawn deeper into relationship with him and his bride, the body of Christ, the Church. This love we receive fills us up and, like an overflowing cup,¹⁷ becomes the source of our love for others.

13. Our parishes must first and foremost, as Pope Francis says, become mission field hospitals where all people can be led to and find a place of encounter with the person of Jesus.¹⁸ This encounter is for all people—lifelong Catholics, those estranged from the Church or faith, and even the unchurched. It is an encounter with Jesus in the Word, sacraments, and prayer, but also a human encounter with Jesus through our community—in the ways we share our lives, share our faith, serve one another, and reach out beyond the boundaries of our parish buildings.



7. The mission of the Church



4B. The new evangelisation

13 *Evangelii Gaudium* 3

14 *Ibid*

15 Benedict XVI. (2011). *Address to the Bishops of the Philippines on their Ad Limina Visit*. Retrieved from <https://dow.sh/3u1X3GM>

16 *Deus Caritas Est* 1

17 *Psalm 23:5*

18 Francis. (2019). *General Audience*: Wednesday, 28 August 2019. Retrieved from <https://dow.sh/3tW4uiO>

The Spirit is moving

14. The desire to see renewal in our people and communities is not unique to me or our diocese. My recent experience as a member of both the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) and the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) has confirmed that **not only is this the path God is calling us to follow, but this is the path many dioceses are walking as well.** The Spirit is moving! This is no more clearly evident than in the priorities that the ACBC and FCBCO have raised.

15. In 2021, the ACBC released an annual report which articulated three priorities: formation, becoming more missionary, and collegiality. Earlier this year, the FCBCO spoke of a number of priorities, which included formation for mission, and a more synodal Church. I would like to suggest that there are some themes coming through for us to consider.

16. Firstly, the connection we see between *formation*, *becoming more missionary*, and *formation for mission*. These speak to us of a formation, not just of our minds, but also our hearts that moves us out the doors of our churches and into our communities to reach the poor and the lost; that feeds the hungry both physically and spiritually; that gives what we have materially when we can, whilst also sharing what we have in Christ; that, with St Peter, is willing to say, "I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!"¹⁹ **This is a formation for mission that makes one confident to make Jesus known and loved and stokes a fire burning in our hearts²⁰ that, as Pope Francis tells us, causes our feet to move!**²¹

17. Secondly, *collegiality* and *synodality*. This is working together and calling all people to use their gifts and talents for the sake of the mission of the Church, because we are each vital members of the living body of Christ, the Church.²² We must not allow synodality to be defined primarily as having the right to speak at yet another consultation, but more correctly, as having the freedom to live our baptismal call, working with one another, for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As the International Theological Commission stated:

"[Synodality] refers to the involvement and participation of the whole People of God in the life and mission of the Church."²³

18. We must work together! Not just across ministries within a parish, but together as parishes, across deaneries, and when appropriate, in a diocesan way at times, so that we can tailor our efforts to be most effective.



8. Synodality



5. The Spirit is moving

Our current situation

19. We recently received the latest National Church Life Survey (2022) results and updated diocesan Mass count statistics. It is a sobering realisation that, on average across our parishes, Mass attendance is down by 29% (12,750, from approximately 18,000 in 2016). At first glance, it would be easy to say, "This is simply the result of the pandemic." However, a broader examination across time reveals that this trend has persisted for several decades (*see the below table*). This isn't a situation unique to the Diocese of Wollongong or even the Church in Australia more broadly. The decline in the Church is present across the Western world.

DIOCESAN MASS COUNT
(2006 – 2022)



20. I am encouraged that we are seeing some return to Mass, but does it change our mission? The baptised population of the Diocese of Wollongong is approximately 16 times larger than those who are currently actively participating in our communities. Even if practise were to return to 15,000, a modest estimate, that would still mean there are 13 times more people who are disconnected or estranged. In simple numbers, 15,000 practising Catholics from the 195,000 baptised but disconnected people.

19 Acts 3:6, NRSV

20 cf. Luke 24:32

21 Francis. (2023). *Message of his Holiness Pope Francis for World Mission Day 2023*. Retrieved from <https://dow.sh/45YZrvg>

22 Ephesians 1:22–23

23 International Theological Commission. (2018). *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*. Retrieved from <https://dow.sh/3Smz8MA>

We must ask ourselves, “Is the Great Commission of Jesus to go and make disciples of non-practising Catholics?” We know this is not the case. Was it to seek out those who had walked away? No. The Great Commission was to proclaim the Good News to all nations, all people, in all places, at all times. As the most recent document from the ACBC summarises: “All the Church, to preach all the Gospel, to all the world, all the time.”²⁴ Therefore, we have a mandate to share the Gospel, not just with 195,000 people, but with more than 800,000 people within our diocesan boundary.



6A. Our current situation

21. As we joyfully approach the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Wollongong, we must see our beautiful cities, suburbs and communities with sober eyes, with good and clear judgement. This is not the world of 1952 when our diocese was established. **There can no longer be a presumption of the Christian identity of society—as painful as it is to admit, we are living in a post-Christian world.** This is a strange reality in which we see echoes of our Christian values, but little understanding or knowledge of the Judeo-Christian roots that gave rise to them. With no moral absolutes and no guiding principles beyond vague catchphrases such as “giving someone a fair go”, we have entered a new kind of darkness in which people clamour to create their own meaning and purpose. Self-definition and blind freedom are the highest goods for many, but this has not come without a cost. 43% of Australians aged 16–85 have reported experiencing mental health issues in their lifetime.²⁵ For people in Australia aged 15–44, the leading cause of death is suicide. For everyone aged 1–64, suicide is always in the top five causes of death. Despite all our progress, have we left life and hope behind?²⁶

22. In the late 1970s, at the height of the fear and tension of the Cold War, a local news station in the United States aired a short segment where they asked young children about their future career aspirations. They asked the simple question: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” What heart-warming responses did the children give? A police officer? An astronaut? Perhaps a mother or father? One little boy replied with all sincerity, “Alive”.

The greatest fear was that nuclear war could destroy the world at any time, all by the simple push of a button. **Today, it would not be an exaggeration to say that often the greatest threat to a young person's existence is staring back at them in the mirror.** From the moment they wake up they are bombarded with everything that is wrong in the world. They are literally being challenged on social media to fight with one another, suffocate themselves to the point of passing out, and shockingly, sometimes even to end their own lives, all for the sake of “views” on a post or video. **We have an epidemic of hopelessness and despair in our country, and yet, as Christians, we have the Good News! We have hope in the person of Jesus!** People are struggling; drowning, and just like the Titanic, the lifeboats are empty.²⁷

23. Pope Francis reminds us that:

“The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are *set free* from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness.”²⁸

It is the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, that is our remedy for sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. This Good News, the Kerygma, is:

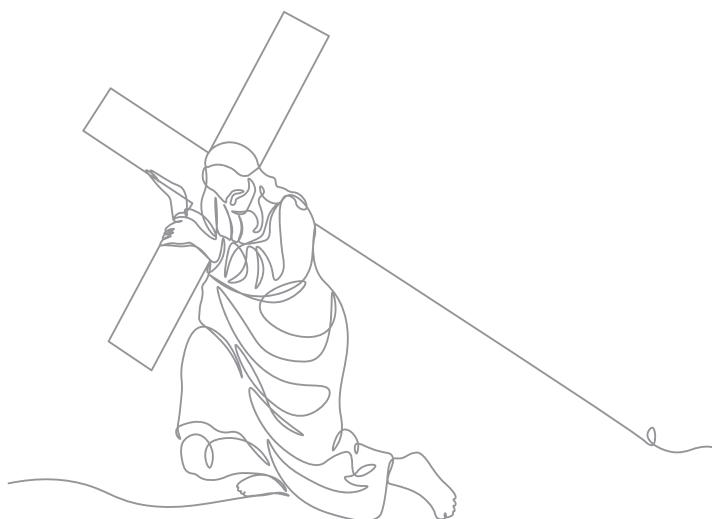
“Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.”²⁹



9. What is the Kerygma?



6B. Our current situation



24 Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. (2023). *Evangelisation: Encounter, Disciples, Mission*, Australian Catholic Bishops. Retrieved from <https://dow.sh/40jMHy6>

25 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2022). Mental Health: Prevalence and Impact, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Retrieved from <https://dow.sh/3MoFBTq>

26 Ibid. (2022). Deaths in Australia. Retrieved from <https://dow.sh/40ieAXg>

27 cf Mallon. (2014). *Divine Renovation: From a Maintenance to a Missional Parish*. Word Among Us Press: Frederick, Maryland 18

28 *Evangelii Gaudium* 27

29 Ibid. 164

24. When we face the reality of the world as it is, and listen for cries of the lost and hurting, how can we remain silent?³⁰ Such cries call for us to respond. If we are to become more missional, as Jesus beckons us to be, it will require a shift of focus within our communities. No longer can it be the work of the few, but must be the focus of all. After all, this mission is not a ministry among other ministries, but must be the reason for everything we do and the litmus test for where we choose to pour our energy.

25. As I have journeyed with parishes over the years, there can be pain associated with change. Change is scary, confronting, and sometimes deeply inconvenient. As a parish priest myself, I have experienced a strong response to—both for and against—shifts in parish life. I know that if people are disinterested, they will not respond at all, and so I always try to make space to hear what the community is thinking and feeling.

26. In considering what I am asking of you in the vision I am presenting, I implore all of you to picture those who are lost and hurting when deciding how you will respond. **Let us allow what breaks the heart of Jesus—the many who do not yet know that they are loved unconditionally by God—to break our hearts, too.** Let this be the fire within us. Let it animate us and move us out to the borders of our small parish communities and reach out into the deep. Whatever faces us there, whatever storms, we know that Jesus is with us. Then we will be the lighthouses that God created us to be and “bearers of Christ’s love”.



6C. Our current situation

A path forward

27. What does this look like? What could it look like? What will it take? What is the capacity of our parish community? Are you receptive to change? Am I? These are the questions we need to ask ourselves and discuss together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

28. For the last 10 years, Pope Francis has spoken with an increasing urgency that the time to act is now. In preparing this vision for parishes, I am conscious of the privilege and serious responsibility that I have been given to lead this process by virtue of my ordination as an apostle of Christ. It is a solemn duty for me to pray, discern, and cast a vision for our communities that is big enough to inspire, real enough that we can all grab hold of it, missional so that it will lead to growth, and Christ-centred so that it will last. Such a vision would not be a plan in the traditional sense, but rather a “conversion”—a turning around and transformation. It is a conversion of focus, heart, and identity. This is as much about who Jesus is calling us to be as what it is that he asks of us. We must become missionary disciples whose actions speak louder than words, but who will still speak the words of the Gospel, not just hoping they are heard or understood through our actions.

Pope Francis makes this clear by saying:

“I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. ‘Mere administration’ can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be permanently in a state of mission.”³¹



30 Jeremiah 20:9

31 *Evangelii Gaudium* 25

29. No longer can we have the different facets of our communities divided into competing activities, ministries or groups, each vying for the attention and support of the parish as a whole. This is not about dissolving their individual identities and purposes, but understanding that, together, they must serve the ultimate missional goal of the Church—to respond to the Great Commission to go and make disciples. Just as a car cannot go in two directions at once, a parish with a divided vision cannot help but tear itself apart. More than one vision will result in division.



7A. A path forward

30. Therefore, it stands to reason that in order to be a people of a singular vision, we will need a time of singular focus, of “making the main thing, the main thing”. This may mean being willing to say “no” to some good activities, ministries, and groups—at least for a season. Doing so can be difficult and painful, but it is our “no” that often makes our “yes” possible. I hope and pray that, as parish communities, we can support one another and, in particular, the parish pastoral councils and leadership teams in discerning such decisions—they are not made lightly, nor are they easy. We might ask ourselves, “How does this activity, ministry, or group within the life of the parish serve the Great Commission to go and make disciples?” The answer will help us understand whether it is of primary, secondary, or tertiary importance.

31. Some may argue that mission and “making disciples” is for a particular type of Catholic, and not others, but we must never forget that, “*Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’, but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples’...* Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelisation.”³² When I ask myself “to what extent have I encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus?”, the measure will always be what that love causes me to do. Does it sit comfortably within my own life or, does it cause me to reach out to others for the sake of the One I love?



7B. A path forward

I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a *pastoral and missionary conversion* which cannot leave things as they presently are. ‘Mere administration’ can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be permanently in a state of mission.

POPE FRANCIS

³² Ibid 120

The Diocese of Wollongong

32. The vision of the Church, and therefore our diocese, is that **everyone will encounter the love and mercy of the Father through Jesus Christ, be accompanied by a community of believers, and be equipped to share that encounter with others in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

33. For the sake of this vision, I believe we need a communion of vibrant parish, school, social services, welfare and religious communities working together for this mission—to go and make disciples. We need all of us working together for the mission of Christ because we are one body,³³ each member fulfilling its purpose to the glory of God.

34. The parish plays a central role in this vision. If we are to become missionary disciples, as Pope Francis calls us to be, we must be pointing to the source and summit, the Eucharist, made present in our communities—our parishes. After all, Jesus is “before all things, and in him all things hold together”³⁴ He must be the unity of our parishes, schools, social services, welfare organisations and religious communities. He is not just an example for our works; he is the centre of all our works, no more so than the parish itself.



8. The Diocese of Wollongong

A vision of the future

35. It has been said that passion produces vision. In response to a perceived need or problem, one’s heart is awakened and passion arises. This passion asks, “How can we solve this problem? How can we address this need? Where might we go and who could we be?” The answer to these questions is a “vision”—a “picture of the future which produces passion”³⁵ a word picture of what could or should be. Therefore, we see passion produces vision, and in turn, vision produces passion. Like many things of faith, this is a continual and ongoing process.

36. Those that give us such visions are known as visionaries. **For us, as a people of faith, our visionary is God himself. God has painted a picture of what the world ought to be.** God has given us a vision of how to be true missionary disciples of Jesus, drawn together into the Body of Christ.

37. How then can I articulate a vision for parishes? Is it another vision? A “new” vision? No! The picture I paint for you is not a new destination, but a new remembering. **By God’s grace, may we remember what we are called to be for the world!** May we remember the Good News and the Great Commission of Jesus to go to the ends of the earth, or at least the boundaries of our diocese. This remembering has produced a passion in me that I feel compelled to share with you.

38. Therefore, **I pray this picture of the future produces passion in you, igniting your heart aflame with the possibility of what our communities could be. With this passion, I pray that each community faithfully discerns how God is asking it to implement this vision. Moreover, I pray that God gives each community the grace it needs to courageously respond.**



9. A vision of the future

33 1 Corinthians 12:12–27

34 Colossians 1:17 NRSV

35 Hybels. (2002). *Courageous Leadership*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, Michigan



39. In the parish I see ...

I see life breaking forth³⁶ ... I see an active parish, marked by the joy of the Gospel³⁷ ...

I see inter-generational families together, worshipping and praying³⁸ ...

I see vibrant eucharistic celebrations where God is worshipped with reverence and awe, and people are inspired.³⁹ There, I see pastors speaking the truth in love to all who will listen ...⁴⁰

I see a parish where there is a culture of invitation and welcome ...⁴¹

I see disciples sent forth to proclaim a crucified and risen Christ ...⁴²

I see a parish where the sick, hungry, hurting, and lost are given preference ...⁴³

I see a parish so deeply connected to those hurting in the community that their pain is our pain ...⁴⁴

I see a parish that is an epicentre of hope for all who draw near to it, a lighthouse amidst the storms of life ...⁴⁵

I see the community supporting one another in small faith-sharing groups ...⁴⁶

I see a place where there is no in-crowd or out-crowd, but rather, there are the people of God, serving one another,⁴⁷ and using the gifts that God has given them for the upbuilding of the community ...⁴⁸

I see a parish where saints are made ...⁴⁹

I see a parish where all people can hear the voice of God calling them, and they actively respond to their baptismal call, their vocation⁵⁰— to the ordained life, consecrated religious, married, or single life ...

Yes, in the parish I see, the clergy are not over-burdened, because they have good men and women around them, supporting them in their leadership, and exercising appropriate leadership themselves ...⁵¹

The person of Jesus and his invitation to “come and see” and then to “go and make” is at the heart of the parish I see, and in that parish, good things grow and our buildings can scarcely contain us.

That’s the parish I see!



In the parish I see



10. In the parish I see

36 cf. John 10:10b

37 *Evangelii Gaudium* 1

38 cf. Exodus 10:9

39 *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7, 8, 10

40 cf. Ephesians 4:15

41 *Evangelii Gaudium* 114

42 cf. 1 Corinthians 2:1–5

43 cf. Matthew 25:40

44 cf. Galatians 6:2, *Evangelii Gaudium* 198

45 cf. Matthew 5:14–16

46 cf. Hebrews 10:24–25

47 cf. 1 Peter 4:10

48 cf. 1 Corinthians 14:12

49 Francis. (2023). *On Confidence in the Merciful Love of God* 17. Retrieved from <https://dow.sh/3Qtjnhk>

50 “A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people.”—Pope Francis, January 16, 2014

51 Libreria Editrice Vaticana. (1997). *On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the* 53Q28

Come and see, go and make

40. In light of this vision of the parish, I want to suggest to you that the way forward isn't simply a program or plan. It's not going to be KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), benchmarks, or matrices that will be decisive in making change. They are some of the tools we can employ to help us on our journey towards seeing our parishes become all they could be to the glory of God and for the sake of the world—these tools are vital, but they aren't central.

41. Our cornerstone is the Lord, himself, upon which all else must be constructed. It is on this firm foundation that we are built together into a dwelling place of the presence of God.⁵² It is with sure footing that we can then say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening."⁵³ We do this in humility, knowing that, "Unless the Lord builds the house, the labourers labour in vain".⁵⁴

42. In listening to the words of Scripture and the teaching of the Church, it is my belief that God is calling us to a radical simplicity in our approach. That is, to respond to the invitation of Jesus to "come and see", and to embrace his final command to "go and make" disciples.

COME AND SEE

43. We begin our exploration by joining Jesus in his encounter with those who would become his first disciples:

The next day as John stood there again with two of his disciples, Jesus went past, and John looked towards him and said, "Look, there is the lamb of God." And the two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, "What do you want?" They answered, "Rabbi"—which means Teacher—"where do you live?" He replied, "**Come and see**"; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour. One of these two who became followers of Jesus after hearing what John had said was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother and say to him, "We have found the Messiah"—which means the Christ.⁵⁵



11A. Come and see

⁵² cf. Ephesians 2:19–22

⁵³ 1 Samuel 3:9

⁵⁴ Psalm 27:1

⁵⁵ John 1:35–41, NJB, emphasis added

⁵⁶ St Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 1,1.5

⁵⁷ cf. Ruth 1:16

⁵⁸ *Lumen Gentium* 11

44. This reading from John's Gospel speaks to the thirst and longing in every human heart. This is the root of the restlessness we encounter in ourselves and see in the world—we want the peace found only in the unconditional love of God,⁵⁶ even if we do not yet know it. In the passage, two men—Andrew and John (author of this Gospel)—begin following someone they do not know, trusting only in the word of John the Baptist, in the hope that the one they follow is the solution to all that is broken in the world: the Messiah. **Jesus asks them, "What are you looking for?" and they come to realise wherever this man Jesus is, that's where we want to be; where he goes, we will go.**⁵⁷ This meeting with Jesus led them to follow and remain with him, indeed for the rest of their lives. He invited, they followed, and then they stayed—this is encounter and discipleship.

45. Therefore, we can understand that to "come and see" means to personally encounter Jesus and remain with him—to become disciples. We encounter Jesus in the Word and sacraments, but also in prayer and community. We encounter him through retreats, good sacramental preparation, and other formation. We encounter him through sharing our faith and life with one another. This is where conversion and transformation occurs. This is where missionary disciples are born. All of us are in constant need of this kind of encounter.



11B. Come and see

46. Beyond the source and summit of our Christian life—the Eucharist⁵⁸—some examples of how we might facilitate intentional encounter for the faithful and provide opportunities for new encounter for those disconnected from, or not yet connected with, our communities include:

- Kerygmatic opportunities like the *Alpha* course where the basic Gospel message is communicated and people can build relationships with the community, pray together, and respond to what they have heard.
- Communal prayer with the stated desire of encountering and staying with Jesus. These opportunities might include such things as praying with, and for, one another, uniting in praise of God through song, the reading of sacred Scripture, exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and the availability of the Sacrament of Confession. These may be one-off opportunities, or a series of days or nights, like a parish mission or retreat.

- Small faith-sharing groups that enable us to encounter Jesus in the ordinariness of our lives. Distinct from purely social events that bring us together to foster community, faith-sharing groups give us a context to share our faith lives with one another. In such groups, people have the opportunity to form Christ-centred relationships, share the action of God in their lives with one another, be challenged to go deeper in their faith, and draw encouragement from the testimony of their sisters and brothers.



11C. Come and see

GO AND MAKE

47. The fruit of Andrew and John's encounter with Jesus is the desire to share with others what they, themselves, have experienced. Just as John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, Andrew and John also invited others to encounter the One whom they had discovered. **We cannot separate “encounter with Jesus” from the impulse to share that encounter with others.**

48. Moving to the conclusion of Jesus' earthly ministry, after his resurrection, Jesus came to speak with his apostles before ascending into heaven:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations**, baptising 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. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”⁵⁹



12A. Go and make

49. We begin with “go therefore”. In light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we are sent forth. When the disciples met Jesus and chose to remain with him, they discovered he was already moving, he was not static, nor was he content with the status quo. His earthly mission would culminate in his death and resurrection, and so the Scriptures repeatedly remind us that he was always moving towards Jerusalem—the place of Calvary.⁶⁰ **The first impulse of a missionary is to move.**

50. We then read the phrase “make disciples”. These words may conjure negative thoughts of coercion or a forceful evangelisation that respects neither the nature of love, nor the genuine free will of a person. On the contrary, the word “make” in biblical Greek describes the process of “becoming”—from beginning to end, just as a potter might “make” a vase or a bowl. It reflects the capacity of the clay to “become”, and the sensitivity and skill of the potter to see the potential of the raw material.

51. Our Lord's choice of words here is important, because **each of us is confronted by the question, “Am I yet the disciple I am called to be?”** In choosing to follow Christ, we become disciples. How we choose to follow will decide what kind of disciple we will be. And so, in the midst of our mission to all the nations, it is a mission that is also occurring in our own hearts. This side of heaven, we are all in the process of becoming, being shaped, moulded and conformed to the image of Christ.⁶¹



10. Make disciples—propose or impose?



59 Matthew 28:16–18, NRSVCE, emphasis added

60 cf. Luke 9:51, 13:22, 17:11, 18:31–33

61 cf. Romans 8:29

52. We can see that to “go and make” is to surrender to the missionary impulse that encounter with Jesus provides, and move beyond the walls of our own lives! In a world that offers us comfort, Jesus calls us to step out of the boat and trust in him. In encountering Jesus, we invite people—ourselves included—on the discipleship path. In addition to reception of the sacraments, reading of Scripture, and personal prayer, we walk this path of discipleship through formation, catechesis, and pursuing virtue and holiness. We live our call to be bearers of Christ’s love in our parish communities and beyond through ministry and mission. We find our place and calling in the Body of Christ by discovering our gifts and talents, that we might contribute to Christ’s mission and the upbuilding of our communities.

53. Finally, as disciples, we are called to exercise and develop the leadership gifts God has given us, each in our own sphere of influence. This is an important contribution that the laity makes to the life of a synodal parish, conscious of the call to support the leadership of the parish priest or administrator in his role as pastor of the community.



11. Holiness and effectiveness



12B. Go and make

54. Beyond the eucharistic celebration—where we can encounter Jesus, are formed as disciples through the Word, and are sent forth joyfully—some examples of how we might facilitate discipleship in our parishes include:

- Engaging with diocesan, regional, and local opportunities for formation, particularly formation for mission, and catechesis through Bible study programs like *The Great Adventure Bible Timeline*, basic teachings of our faith with programs like Bishop Robert Barron’s *Catholicism* series, or human development programs like *Theology of the Body*.
- Intentionally developing the leadership gifts of all the faithful, particularly the parish pastoral council and leadership teams, through leadership formation and coaching. This would entail adopting an empowering leadership model where “leaders make leaders” rather than amassing authority, autonomy, and responsibility to themselves. A tool such as *Clifton’s Strengths* is valuable in this process.

- Assessing our current ministry areas and missionary options, and discerning the needs of our local community, both inside and outside the walls of our church buildings. This must be done in light of the mission of Jesus, to go and make disciples. If we are to take this vision for parishes seriously, it will often mean saying “no” to things we have always done in order to say “yes” to the few things that are at the heart of the mission of the Church.



12C. Go and make

Principles and foundations

55. Rather than adopting a prescriptive approach which would not honour the unique identity of each community, we should instead embrace certain principles and foundations for parish renewal and transformation. These become like the materials with which each community constructs the house that best “fits” their people and history. The core must remain unchanged—Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone. We must be faithful to the mission of Jesus—to go make disciples of all nations. If you are faithful to Christ, our Catholic Faith, and the principles and foundations with which I am providing you, then I am confident to entrust the house that you build to the prayerful discernment of your pastor, the leadership of the parish, and to you: all the Catholic faithful.

56. **The parishes of this diocese make up a rich tapestry of Catholic expression, and we would be less if every house of the Lord was just another white box, in a sea of carbon copies.** I provide you with these principles and foundations so that you might be freed by them, rather than be bound up in endless lists of actions or “to dos”.



13A. Principles and foundations



THE PRINCIPLES OF COME AND SEE, GO AND MAKE

57. The following are the principles of being a “come and see, go and make” community. This list has been curated from a number of trusted books and sources in the area of parish renewal. In the accompanying material, you will find a list of books that I recommend reading for those interested in furthering their understanding. As we walk this journey together, resources will be provided to parishes to explore these principles and discern how they might be implemented in your community.

- Prioritising the Sunday Mass
- The 3 Hs:
 - Hospitality
 - Hymns
 - Homilies
- Community:
 - Meaningful community
 - Small-group communities
- Discipleship:
 - Clear expectations
 - Strength-based ministry
- Experience of the Holy Spirit
- Becoming invitational



1. The principles



13B. Principles and foundations

THE FOUNDATIONS OF COME AND SEE, GO AND MAKE

58. Where the principles describe what we value as a community, the foundations are the vital substructure needed for the principles to be lived out in the parish community. If we aren’t convinced of these foundations, the principles not only lack context, they lack focus and direction. These foundations are:

- The primacy of evangelisation
- Empowering leadership
- Moving in the power of the Holy Spirit

Evangelisation is our mission, empowering leadership is our method, and the power of the Holy Spirit is our fuel. They are each like the legs of a stool, equally important and giving stability to the others.

59. The following are two examples of how the foundations may interact with one another:

Scenario 1—we might be convinced of the need for evangelisation and working in the power of the Holy Spirit, but we have an unhealthy understanding of leadership. Perhaps there is a small subset of people who regularly volunteer, each taking on more and more responsibility. In this environment, the missional efforts will lead to burnout and exhaustion. The missing foundation renders the existing foundations temporary and unstable.

Scenario 2—we may have good leadership structures in place, we are devoted to prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, but we are most concerned with our own community rather than the mission of the Church. Very quickly we will become insular, isolated, and irrelevant to the broader community. We will become a club for insiders rather than a light to the nations.

60. The key to implementing the principles and foundations is taking it one step at a time. This is a gradual process over months and years, and involves prayerful discernment. After all, we are not simply changing our practices or policies. **Our goal is to allow God to transform our hearts and minds, and redirect the activities, priorities, and culture of our communities.**



2. The foundations



13C. Principles and foundations

The power of the Spirit

We do not undertake this task of renewal alone. The same Spirit who hovered over the deep at the dawn of creation,⁶² dwells in each believer, in every baptised person—the Spirit of the risen Christ dwells in you.⁶³

By the grace of God, it is the Spirit who breathes life into our efforts, humble as they may be, and brings them to completion. It is the Spirit who will guide our steps and help us discern our path.

Therefore, let us call on the Spirit daily and surrender to the will of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—to whom we give all glory, honour and praise.⁶⁴

⁶² Genesis 1:2

⁶³ Romans 8:9

⁶⁴ 1 Chronicles 29:11, Jude 1:24–25

Overwhelmed by hope

61. Given the breadth and depth of this “remembering” or “vision”, I am overwhelmed by all that must be done in order for it to come into being. Surely this task is too big for us! Surely it is beyond our grasp! With every diocesan plan, have we not tried everything we could possibly try?

62. I know over the years we’ve had varying degrees of success in renewing and revitalising our communities. I am aware that some of you may be disheartened, disillusioned, frustrated or exhausted. At various points in my journey, I have experienced these feelings, too. I know what it’s like to have the enthusiasm and desire for things to be better than they are, only to have some respond with negativity or say, “It’s too hard.” I know that, for many, there is a tiredness and scepticism to any suggestion that we might try something at all—some might even say, “Why bother?” I have wrestled with these feelings, too, as I’ve tried many things over the more than 30 years of living the ordained ministry. I have tried things because I thought they were a good idea. I have tried things because I have seen them working in other parishes or communities. I have tried things because, “Better to try something than do nothing.”

63. Whilst I can never fully grasp where you are coming from or the journey you’ve walked—because you’ve walked your journey and I’ve walked mine—I want you to know that I honour every effort you have made to live your faith and serve in your community. Despite everything you’ve experienced, you’re still with us on the journey. I want you to know I see your commitment, your sacrifice, the energy you give, your faithfulness to Christ and the Church—I see it, and I’m grateful to you, and I’m grateful to God for you.



14A. Overwhelmed by hope

64. Early in Luke’s Gospel account, we hear Jesus call out to some fishermen: “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”⁶⁵ When Jesus encountered them, they had worked through the night unsuccessfully, catching nothing, and were tired. Perhaps they had done everything right, and there were simply no fish to catch that night, or in their frustration, their technique had become

⁶⁵ Luke 5:4 NRSV

⁶⁶ Luke 5:5 NRSV

⁶⁷ Luke 10:40–42 NRSVCE

⁶⁸ cf. Philippians 4:19

⁶⁹ cf. Philippians 1:6

coarse and rough, ensuring that the fish would flee from their nets. We don’t know the reason they were unsuccessful, but we do know their response to Jesus. Simon replies to him, “Yet, if you say so, I will let down the nets.”⁶⁶ Jesus passes no judgement on what has come before, and Simon, making no excuses, is simply obedient. The fishermen respond to the call of Jesus, trusting in him, and the catch is almost enough to sink their boats.

65. We can be consumed by many good things in this life, but in our parishes, and indeed our Church, one thing matters before all else—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must be awake and aware of the challenges of the world, and be willing to meet people where they are—in their hopelessness and supposed self-sufficiency, and say, “This is the Good News! You are loved! You were created by Love, for love! It’s possible to know and encounter the person of Jesus, and enter into a relationship with him and his Church. There is hope!”

66. This is what we have to offer the world, our greatest treasure. In some ways, it is all we have to offer the world. The world already has charities and NGOs, it has schools and hospitals, and all these good works. And they are good works, and it should be a joy that we continue to be able to serve the world in these ways, **but it’s all for nothing if it’s not for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

67. I am reminded of Jesus’ encounter with Martha and her sister, Mary. Martha busies herself with many good things and becomes frustrated that Mary chooses to sit with the Lord. Martha turns to Jesus and pleads, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” Jesus’ reply to her is simple: “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”⁶⁷

68. It is time for us to be a “one thing” people. If we first sit at the feet of Jesus, allowing him to love us, and loving him in return, the rest will follow.

69. Yes, I am overwhelmed by the task ahead, but if this is truly God’s vision for our communities, we know through faith that he will give us all we need—in our people and resources.⁶⁸ What God begins, he sees through to conclusion,⁶⁹ and in this,



our part is faithfulness, not success.⁷⁰ So then, **let us be overwhelmed not by fear but by hope!** By God's grace, may our hearts burn with passion! Let us push out from the shore once more and cast our nets, trusting in the faithfulness and goodness of God to provide.

70. Be assured that you and your communities are in my prayers. May the Lord bless you, and may our Blessed Mother Mary, the first disciple, intercede for us as we learn the disciple's way together.



14B. Overwhelmed by hope

Promulgated on this solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

+Brian Mascord

Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

26 November 2023



70 St Teresa of Kolkata

Where to from here?

Over the course of the coming months, the Office of Renewal and Evangelisation (ORE) will periodically release resources in a variety of media that will assist you in assessing, renewing, and planning for the journey we are all embarking on. These resources will be accompanied by opportunities for encounter-based or formation experiences that will give life to the concepts and principles of renewal at this vision's heart. The ORE team will also be available for a variety of diocesan, regional and parish-based opportunities for encounter and formation.

The first set of resources is scheduled to be released in January 2024 which will include a calendar of proposed events.



15. Where to from here?

Let us be overwhelmed not by fear but by hope! By God's grace, may our hearts burn with passion! Let us push out from the shore once more and cast our nets, trusting in the faithfulness and goodness of God to provide.

BISHOP BRIAN MASCORD

