



A Call to *Hope,* A Call to *Act*

*A Pastoral Letter from Bishop Peter A. Libasci
to the people of the Diocese of Manchester*

January 16, 2019





“The heart of the initiative is to strengthen our commitment to lifelong faith formation in all our parishes, schools and home schools.”

Bishop Peter A. Libasci

Photo: Matthew Lomanno
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Matthew Lomanno

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we transition from our year of prayer and preparation for implementing *Restore • Renew • Proclaim the Hope that is Christ*, now is a good time to reflect on where we have been and how we have been changed and transformed.

Our diocese has been in conversation and discussion for the past 13 years about lifelong faith formation and renewing sacramental preparation, including restoring the order of the sacraments of initiation. These discussions have included priests and parish leaders. During this past year, we have shared the fruits of those discussions with the parishes. I see a need for faith formation not confined to the formation of children but includes all life stages and ages. It is now time for us to give life to these discussions.



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catholicnh.org/lifelong

NEW WAYS OF SEEING AND DOING

There have been many blessings during the past year as well as many challenges. We are all entering the transition years with hope and excitement as well as some concerns. It will require new ways of seeing and doing what has been happening for many years in faith formation.

The heart of the initiative is to strengthen our commitment to lifelong faith formation in all our parishes, schools and home schools. We have things in place that will help make this a reality, but we realize there are still areas in which we need to improve. Pope Francis encourages us to accompany each other, reach out to those beyond our parish communities and recommit ourselves to living as missionary disciples. This is new for all of us. This process will take time, but will bear much fruit if we believe and trust that with God all things are possible. (Lk 1:37)

Some may want to remain in prayer and preparation mode, longing for more clarity, more certainty. However, just as Peter, James and John could

“The journey of faith is lifelong.”

Bishop Peter A. Libasci

not remain on the mountaintop with Jesus, we, too, must come down from the mountain and be about the ministry of forming missionary disciples and evangelization. We continue to pray and prepare, but now is the time for action.

THE FAMILY & PARISH COMMUNITY

We are now experiencing a new pattern for celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation. As youth of all ages receive the graces of the sacrament, it will be important to continue to listen to their needs, questions, desires, hopes and challenges. Families will find support and encouragement in their parish communities to foster ongoing faith development within the home. All members of the parish community share the responsibility for handing on the faith by their presence and living as disciples of Jesus Christ. Listening to each other and joyfully sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ (*Evangelii Gaudium #1*) strengthens parish communities and builds up the Kingdom of God in our midst.

A LIFELONG JOURNEY TOGETHER

The journey of faith is lifelong. Like life itself, this journey is not always clearly defined or predictable. Accompanying each other is, therefore, very important. Like the disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24: 13-35), walking with each other provides an opportunity to care for one another, to see others in a new light and to grow in our understanding of people and situations.

As we listen and walk with each other, we deepen our relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwelling within us. As we journey we face many de-

isions about how we live in relationship with others and the direction of our lives. The Holy Spirit guides our discernment and gives us the gifts we need. We are open to these gifts when we gather to celebrate the sacraments, pray and share faith and practice the works of mercy.

ENRICHING EVANGELIZATION

Being rooted in a lifelong journey of faith within the local, diocesan and universal Church enriches our evangelization ministry; i.e., sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Sustained by God’s grace and supported by the faith community, our words and deeds witness to the foundation of our faith, namely “that in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God’s grace and mercy.” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi #27*) In light of this, our witness to and sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ is central to the life and mission of the Church. Pope Benedict XVI put it this way, “The Church exists to evangelize.” (Homily, Oct. 7, 2012)



Photo: Becky Schmidt



TIME TO ACT

In conclusion, it is now time for us to act: to strengthen lifelong faith formation in our parishes, Catholic Schools and home schools and renew sacrament preparation in order that as the Church in New Hampshire we *Restore · Renew · Proclaim the Hope that is Christ* today and into the future.

To strengthen lifelong faith formation, the diocese will provide:

- Pastors and parish staff with resources to guide lifelong faith formation
- Catechetical leaders with continuing formation and training
- Families with ways to make your homes a little church and strengthen your Catholic faith in daily living
- Young adults and youth with regional and diocesan-wide events
- Early childhood catechetical resources and training
- Caregivers for elderly parents resources to support and help them fulfill their responsibilities and tasks

To renew sacrament preparation, the diocese will ensure that:

- Sacrament preparation guidelines are revised to reflect present day life situations
- Marriage preparation is receiving renewed emphasis diocesan wide and locally
- RCIA Teams receive ongoing formation and training
- Liturgical Ministers receive ongoing formation and training
- Baptism preparation is redeveloped and reflects lifelong faith formation

A SHARED MISSION

This initiative will flourish and bear good fruit through a more intentional acceptance of our baptismal call to live in union with the Trinity and with each other and to care for the most vulnerable. With the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit, our relationships and everyday life events naturally form and transform us as a church and equip us to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with joy.

It is obvious that our world is in need of and longing for the hope that is Christ. Bringing this hope to so many people is a shared responsibility that will only be fruitful if everyone is involved and committed. As disciples of Jesus Christ and the Church in New Hampshire, let us claim our shared mission and help people see and experience that Jesus is pertinent, that the sacraments are perpetual and that Christian life and death are the perfection of God's plan.

+ Robt. Lucci