

Jubilee 2003

Diocesan Pastoral Plan



Promulgated by
The Most Reverend George J. Lucas
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

October 26, 2003

Our Vision

During this Diocesan Jubilee Year, we look back in grateful appreciation for 150 years of faithful witness to the Gospel here in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. The women and men who built this local Church were true pioneers of faith. Their courage, generosity, and steadfast commitment to Jesus Christ and to our Catholic way of life set a high standard for everything we do today in our parishes, schools, and institutions. We rightly celebrate the magnificent legacy that we have received from our grandparents and parents in the faith.

As faithful stewards of the precious gifts we have received during these 150 years, we are now called to look forward and plan for the future. Along with communities of Catholics throughout the world, we received this invitation to look forward in faith from Pope John Paul II three years ago at the beginning of the celebration of the Great Jubilee of Christianity. As the universal Church enters its third millennium, and as our diocesan Church celebrates its 150th anniversary, we have the opportunity to accept, once again, the Lord's commission to become his faithful disciples and to go out to bring his saving Gospel to all people.

The beginning of a new chapter in the history of our diocese provides us with a grace-filled opportunity to rethink who we are as disciples of Jesus Christ and to examine prayerfully how we respond to the Lord's call to ongoing spiritual renewal. For each of us this call to conversion means looking carefully at how we understand and live the Gospel everyday. For our diocese—our parishes, schools, institutions, agencies—the call to renewal means taking an honest look at our mission and goals.

As we look to the future of our diocese, we are challenged to ask some hard questions. Are we responding to the Lord's call wholeheartedly and effectively? Are we doing our best to build up the Body of Christ, to preach the Gospel, to celebrate the sacraments, and to minister to the needs of all God's people? Are we doing enough to teach adults, youth, and children our Catholic way of life? Have we made an effort to fulfill the Church's vision "to foster full, conscious and active participation" in our worship as well as in the Church's ministry? Are we doing enough to honor the Lord's Day? What more can we do to strengthen marriage and family life? Have we done enough to advocate for life and to protect those who are most vulnerable in our society? Are we working for peace, charity, and justice for all? Do our institutions and structures effectively address today's needs and challenges? Are we expending a disproportionate share of our precious human and financial resources to maintain the status quo?

These questions and others invite us to look ahead to the needs of future generations. Planning for the future cannot be "just another program." The call to renew ourselves as a community of faith invites every member of this diocesan Church—bishop, priests, deacons, religious, laity—to pray and to participate in a conversation about the real needs and challenges of our time. With God's help, we will recognize this Diocesan Jubilee Year as a unique opportunity to examine our mission and goals and to respond in faith to the Lord's invitation to carry on his saving work here in the 28 counties of Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

On June 28, 2003, as many as 15,000 people gathered in Springfield to mark our Diocesan Jubilee 2003. Their joy and their reverence at the Eucharistic liturgy expressed a deep desire for communion with Jesus Christ and with one another. That celebration anticipated the day when, by God's

grace, all of us will be gathered at the heavenly liturgy which never ends. In the meantime, we are asked to live, work, and pray in the present age, relying on the Holy Spirit. We are not afraid. We have confidence that we are given all we need to further the saving work of Jesus with joy and hope.

Our Mission

We, the sons and daughters of God, formed by the Holy Spirit, are the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. We are called by Jesus Christ through baptism to:

- Grow in our communion with God and one another through prayer and the celebration of the sacraments, especially Sunday Eucharist;
- Respond to God's call with lives of commitment and generous service;
- Study and share Sacred Scripture and our Catholic Faith; and,
- Live our Catholic Faith by practicing charity and justice.

We commit ourselves as good stewards to cultivate what God has sown among us and share with others the richness of the harvest.

Catholics throughout the world share the same mission—to cast off our isolation and loneliness as individuals and enter into full communion with God and one another as disciples of Jesus Christ. God initiates this call to deeper communion

through our baptism in Christ and gives us the grace to respond generously.

As the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, we have the privilege and the serious responsibility to be the Body of Christ, the Church, in this time and place. With the voice of Christ, we are called to speak the truth and to challenge the many false voices of doubt and despair in our culture. With the heart of Christ, we are called to care for our sisters and brothers, especially those who are most vulnerable; to work for peace; and, to cry out for justice and charity for all. With the hands of Christ, we are called to feed the materially and spiritually hungry, to heal the sick and comfort the dying, and to do all that we can to build up the dignity of the human family.

We carry out this mission with full confidence that the Holy Spirit guides all our efforts to cultivate what God has sown among us and share with others the richness of the harvest.

The Plan

Goal 1

Grow in our communion with God and one another through prayer and the celebration of the sacraments, especially Sunday Eucharist

- Promote catechesis on the Holy Eucharist as the source and summit of Catholic life
- Promote catechesis on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and its place in Catholic life
- Foster full, conscious, and active participation in the life of the Church
- Revitalize Sunday as the first holy day of all—a day of Christian joy
- Encourage Eucharistic adoration in parishes and institutions
- Participate in retreats and renewal programs

Our response to God's invitation to grow in our communion with him and with one another leads us to prayer, to the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. The Second Vatican Council expressed the profound hope that all members of the Catholic community would be engaged in "full, conscious and active participation" in the liturgy and, therefore, the life of the Church. This is our primary goal as a diocesan Church—to grow in communion with God and one another by participating fully in the life of the Church.

Goal 2

Respond to God's call with lives of commitment and generous service

- Catechize on vocation as a committed way of life
- Encourage vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and religious life
- Foster the Christian vocation to the single and married life
- Call forth women and men for lay ecclesial ministry and volunteer ministry
- Develop and promote ongoing formation programs to nurture all Christian vocations

As Catholics, we believe that God has called each of us by name. We are called personally and individually through our baptism to follow Jesus Christ. As disciples, we have also been called to live the Gospel in specific ways through our vocations—as single and married people and as priests, deacons, and religious. We are called also as people who carry out the ministry of the Church in diverse ways according to our individual gifts and talents. God gives us these vocations and gifts. Our responsibility is to discern the Father's will for us through prayer, reflection on God's word, participa-

tion in the sacramental life of the Church, and acts of charity and justice.

Goal 3

Study and Share Sacred Scripture and our Catholic Faith

- Strengthen our commitment to evangelize and teach Catholic beliefs, traditions, and values
- Assist people of all ages to understand the relationship between Gospel living and the Eucharist
- Reinforce the Catholic identity in all institutions and programs
- Encourage small faith communities based on the study of Sacred Scripture and reflection on its meaning
- Teach stewardship as a way of life

We are called to be Christ for others. Through generous sharing of the individual gifts and talents we have received from God, we build up the one Body of Christ and carry on the saving work of the Church here in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. We accept the commission we have received from our Lord to proclaim his Good News over and over again through words, actions, and our very lives.

Goal 4

Live our Catholic Faith by practicing charity and justice

- Defend and nurture the dignity of all human life
- Continue the work of Jesus by responding to the human needs of the Church and community
- Advocate for issues of charity and justice through legislative networks and parish outreach
- Work for just compensation for all
- Promote generous sharing and use of all God's gifts

We are also called to transform our culture according to Gospel values. As we live the Catholic faith—fully, consciously, actively—we continue the work of Jesus by defending the dignity of all human life and by advocating for charity and justice for all members of our society, especially those who are materially and spiritually poor and those who are most vulnerable.

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For the vision still has its time,
presses on to fulfillment,
and will not disappoint;
If it delays, wait for it,
it will surely come,
it will not be late.

Habakkuk 2,3