

Led by the Holy Spirit: Parish Pastoral Plan Seeks to Build Missionary Disciples

Vision. Mission. Purpose. Strategic planning.

These are words common to the lingo of the secular world. But in a parish?

One parish in Lincoln is revolutionizing its approach to evangelization and discipleship. On Pentecost Sunday, St. Michael launched its first pastoral plan—a plan that puts the Great Commission at the forefront of all parish activity.

“Successful business organizations,” stated leadership team member, Patty Marmie, “function well because of a clear foundational plan. They have a why, a purpose, a vision, a mission. This foundational plan gets everyone moving in the same direction. These same concepts apply to parishes.”

Pastoral plan development began in 2014, when the Evangelization Team began studying the New Evangelization in Church documents and contemporary sources. Pastor Father Kenneth Borowiak and Assistant Pastor Father Eric Clark, at the time, attended the Amazing Parish Conference with other parish leaders.

“The Amazing Parish Conference gives busy pastors and their teams the tools they need to transform their parishes—to move from maintenance to mission,” shared Father Borowiak. “We came back energized to make St. Michael an amazing parish by focusing on three *Hs*—hymns, homilies, and hospitality.”



As many more conversations occurred, the plan’s focus became clearer. Jesus had already inscribed the purpose of parish activity in the Great Commission: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19). Logically, the vision and mission should follow suit. “This spring,” Father Borowiak continued, “we committed to becoming a community of missionary disciples. We gained full clarity that our purpose as a parish is to be intentional disciples who bring others to Jesus Christ and His Church.”

On Pentecost Sunday, Father Borowiak officially announced the St. Michael Pastoral Plan. In his homily that weekend to all Masses, he spoke of his vision for the parish. “And like living stones, let St. Michael be built into a spiritual house to glorify God and sanctify man (1 Peter 2:5).”

He shared with parishioners that like the disciples in the upper room over 2,000 years ago, we, too, need the Holy Spirit to come rest on us, that as a parish, we need to be renewed and revitalized in order to become a community of believers set on fire with the Holy Spirit. Why? Because we have a mission, too. “We have been called to not only be disciples of Jesus but to help others do so, as well.”

Discipleship begins with encounter. “When a person encounters the mercy and love of the living God in such a profound and personal way, he opens his mind and heart to the Holy Spirit, permitting transformation to begin,” said Joy Martin, Pastoral Administrative Assistant. “When he knows the joy and peace of Christ, he wants to share the great love with others. And meaningful sharing is, essentially, evangelization.”

“Father Borowiak’s vision is profound because it doesn’t stop at evangelization, which should always be ongoing,” claimed Martin. “Rather, it calls for a deepening in one’s own relationship with the Lord and a generous investment in the faith lives of others; it moves into discipleship.”

To accomplish this internal outreach, the pastoral plan clarifies its strategy through its mission statement:

St. Michael Catholic Church is a community of missionary disciples, dedicated to prayer and worship, nourished by the sacraments, emboldened by the Word of God, and sent forth by the Holy Spirit to bring others to Jesus Christ through charity.

In advancing this mission, the Evangelization Team has incorporated a number of parish-wide initiatives: facilitating encounters with Jesus Christ, promoting Eucharistic adoration, maximizing the Sunday experience, offering discipleship training, building a faith formation development plan, utilizing the evangelization efforts of the Legion of Mary, instilling more opportunities for communal prayer, and encouraging clarity and conviction regarding spiritual multiplication.

All of these initiatives are on-going. The leadership team realizes changing a parish culture takes time—years, even—and a tremendous reliance upon the Holy Spirit. Becoming missionary disciples of our Lord involves knowing Him intimately and then being emboldened to go out and bring others to Him.

The St. Michael leadership team marveled this summer at discovering the Holy Spirit’s active presence in other parishes and dioceses beyond Lincoln. “Archbishop Vigneron, from Detroit,” also launched a pastoral letter on the Saturday before Pentecost in which he is charging his entire diocese to become missionary disciples,” said Martin. “We were overjoyed to discover many of the same conclusions in his letter that we had derived in our prayer over the last few

years. Leaders in their diocese were also highly influenced by their Amazing Parish experience. Certainly, the Holy Spirit is guiding this all.”

The mission itself is not new. “The prayers and labor of so many great Catholics in our diocese and parish have paved the way for a new intentionality in missionary discipleship. As a parish, we’re trying to listen to how the Holy Spirit wants us to act more faithfully upon the Great Commission moving forward—and what that looks like at St. Michael,” shared Marmie. “We’re trying to follow the method of the Master.”

Father Borowiak is spending extra time before the Blessed Sacrament to better discern God’s will for his parish—and he is encouraging all parishioners to do likewise. God speaks in the silence. He waits for us, simply to come to Him and be with Him.

Ultimately, become a community of missionary disciples implies a three-fold intent. “It means committing ourselves to knowing and loving God. It means embracing our responsibility in the Church’s mission, and it means opening ourselves to receive the transforming power of the Holy Spirit,” explained the leadership team.

So they wait and listen and discern where and how to plant seeds. They trust that God will guide and give the growth, and they celebrate the privilege of growing as disciples of Jesus Christ.

For more information about the St. Michael pastoral plan, please contact Father Borowiak at frborowiak@cdolinc.net.