

Reflection for Pentecost, May 19, 2024

Launch of the Pastoral Plan for St. John XXIII Parish

Hello, my name is Shelley Benson, and I am honored to speak to you as a member of your Parish Pastoral Council, and a very long-time member of St Mary church. My husband Jon and I have been here since 1984, which means we were very young when we arrived. I thank today's presider for allowing me to share a short reflection at this time.

*Jesus said to his disciples, "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will **teach you everything** and remind you of all that I told you."* John 14:26

My reflection is in two parts, **THEN and NOW**. I start with then.

The early apostolic age has always fascinated me. I marvel at the apostle's missionary zeal, their complete and utter conviction of their faith, their courage in the face of persecution, **facing death** for the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus, the true Messiah.

They had **one** clear directive from Jesus; **"Go and make disciples of all nations."**

Let's imagine them gathering for their first **"Evangelization Committee meeting."** The eleven apostles are assembled together, and maybe several other disciples, both men and women in the room as well. Peter opens the meeting in prayer. Then he reviews the *one-item* agenda:

Agenda: **To bring the Gospel of Christ to the world.**

Let's look closely to see what resources they had:

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|---------------------|-------------|
| Bishops | 11 |
| Priests | Same number |
| Deacons | none |
| Trained theologians | none |

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| Religious orders | none |
| Seminarians | none |
| Christian believers | a few hundred |
| Countries with Christians | one |
| Church buildings | none |
| Schools and universities | none |
| Written Gospels | none |
| Money | very little |
| Experience in foreign missions | none |
| Influential contacts in high places | next to none |
| Societal attitude toward Christians | Ignorant to hostile |

We can only imagine that the apostles, with their limited resources, would feel overwhelmed, no playbook or training manual, and facing challenges in every direction; vocational, financial, catechetical, educational, and numerical. But here's what happened...

Instead, while they were all in that one place together, *“Suddenly there came from the sky a **noise like a strong driving wind**, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were **all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak in different tongues, as the **Spirit enabled them to proclaim.**”*

*Just as Jesus promised, “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will **teach you everything.**”*

“Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth!”

Let's fast-forward to NOW.

We can learn from the men and women of the early church who were true missionary disciples. They knew that **obedience** to the Gospel is freedom, that **holiness** leads to happiness, that the Kingdom of God is at hand. **Our mission** is the **same mission** as the apostles, to bring the Gospel of Christ to the world.

TODAY is no different from then. Our newly composed **vision statement** for St. John XXIII Parish reflects this fact. Using our rich legacy of traditions from both St. Mary and St. Nicholas churches we aim to create a dynamic, unified, single parish community, and to do so without giving up any of our distinct traditions and beloved practices.

Our Vision: We make the kingdom of God present in our world by loving God, welcoming all, serving humanity, and caring for creation.

Our vision statement points to **four** concrete actions that should inspire us: 1) by **loving** God (encounter, worship, adoration, prayer, faith), 2) **welcoming** all (invitational, hospitality, openness, kindness, relationship), 3) **serving** humanity (service, meeting needs, compassion, respect), and 4) **caring** for creation (taking care of our earthly home, and taking care of all its inhabitants).

By these actions, we **make present the kingdom of God in this world.**

I hope you are as inspired by the new vision statement as I am.

TODAY we launch our **Pastoral Plan** for building the new reality at St. John XXIII Parish. We want to thank all those who completed our recent survey to affirm this pastoral plan.

Last Thursday we held a community prayer service to pray for the six priorities in our plan.

They are:

- Fostering Parish Unity
- Liturgical Life
- Engaging Youth
- Faith Formation for Children, Youth, and Adults

- Creating a Culture of Stewardship
- Discipleship and Evangelization

This Pentecost, I ask you to pray that the Holy Spirit will move your hearts to how you can get involved and build a future for our next generation. What will the next 40 years look like for our parish? **Today, we plant the seeds for new growth.**

In the pews we have an **interest form**. [[Click here](#) to find this form online.] We would love for you to prayerfully consider how God is calling you to serve, and what gifts you can bring to the pastoral plan. We have two ways of filling it out; a **digital form**, and a **paper form**. The paper forms are sitting at the end of the pews, and we ask you to take one, fill it out and drop it off at the hospitality table after mass. You can access the digital form from the QR code on page 6 of the Pastoral Plan or on our website.

Speaking of hospitality, today we invite you to join us in on the lawn in front of the church right after mass. We will have lemonade and a **special surprise treat** for you. This past week, we've had a number of bakers in our parish bake special **dove shaped cookies for Pentecost**. As part of our launch of the pastoral plan, we are introducing our new signature St. John XXIII cookie.

I truly hope you are as excited about the new pastoral plan as we are. The PPC and PFC thank you for sharing your voices, and we're pleased to have this plan before us. Please pick up a copy of the plan from the ushers when you leave today.

St. John XXIII, pray for us... and remind us to 'Let the spirit come through.'