

The Foundations of *Unleash the Gospel*

(from STM Bulletin – June 18, 2017)

“Jesus Christ makes all things new! He himself is at work to renew his Church in the Archdiocese of Detroit. He is pouring out his Holy Spirit anew so that every member of the Church may be formed and sent forth as a joyful missionary disciple, so that the Gospel may be unleashed in southeast Michigan.”

So begins Archbishop Vigneron’s Pastoral Letter *Unleash the Gospel*, “the charter” for fanning ablaze the “spark” that was Synod 16. The fruit of the Synod is to be “a radical overhaul of the Church in Detroit, a complete reversal of our focus from an inward, maintenance-focused church, to an outward, mission-focused church.”

The **Foundational Conviction** of the Synod and of the *Unleash the Gospel* initiative is that we are “resolved to obey the Holy Spirit and be made by him a band of joyful missionary disciples.” Obeying the Holy Spirit was the first action the Apostles took at the first Pentecost and by that the whole world *was* changed.

The Pastoral Letter encourages us to embrace our “missionary conversion” and to respond with hope to Jesus’ command to proclaim the Gospel to all. This mandate “defines the Church for all time [since] ... ‘Evangelizing is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity’ [and]... a responsibility not only of bishops, priests, and religious, but of every individual Christian.” Archbishop Vigneron outlines the challenges we face here and now. He reminds us that Pope St. John Paul the Great preached a **New Evangelization** directed to strengthening us Catholics to meet a crisis of a dimming light of Christianity in our culture. We are to Unleash the Gospel to counter practical atheism and materialism, to repudiate moral relativism, and to shun the prideful view that mankind can save itself. We must attend to the “habits that affect our witness to Christ.” Synod 16 noted that spiritual lethargy, a complaining attitude, and fear are some of our “bad habits.” Our good habits, those “dispositions of mind and heart” we need “to become a radically mission-oriented Church ... are in fact a participation in the mind and heart of Jesus.” These virtues include praying for an “Apostolic boldness,” inspirations of the Spirit, spirits of innovation and cooperation, and an attitude of gratitude.

We are “on the road together” toward becoming joyful missionary disciples. Among the “precious fruits” of the Synod are “signs to mark out the way for us.” Next week, we will discuss these **Guideposts** that, according to the testimony of Synod members, have been set out by the Holy Spirit to mark our way in the New Evangelization.