

April 25, 2019

## Letter to the Faithful: Next Phase of Unleash the Gospel

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I would like to announce the next phase of our movement to *Unleash the Gospel*: the renewal of our parishes. For the Gospel to truly be unleashed, we must re-found our parishes so that everything we do — how we pray, how we minister, how we serve — leads us to be more effective witnesses to the Gospel.

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Jesus is risen! Praise to him now and forever! Easter blessings to all of you, Christ's faithful in the Archdiocese of Detroit.

With great joy we celebrate these 50 days of Easter, and in these days, we are renewed and ready for mission. It is the same mission as that of the apostles, and the other men and women who were the first witnesses of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. We too are sent into the world to witness Christ's victory over sin and death. This is the message that we are called to proclaim, the Gospel we are called to unleash: Christ is truly risen!

On Easter, we renewed our baptismal promises. By Holy Baptism we were given a new birth, and by water and the Holy Spirit, we have been forgiven of our sins. Through our Baptism, we have been consecrated as witnesses to the Gospel, so that every talent we have, every ability God has given us of heart and mind, must be used to spread the Good News. Unleash the Gospel is about this commitment, to do everything we can to help people encounter the Risen Christ.

And in this spirit, I would like to announce the next phase of our movement to Unleash the Gospel: the renewal of our parishes. For the Gospel to truly be unleashed, we must re-found our parishes so that everything we do — how we pray, how we minister, how we serve — leads us to be more effective witnesses to the Gospel.

This next phase of our missionary journey will require prayer, innovation, and hard work so that our parish communities become what God made them to be: places where individuals and families encounter Jesus anew, grow as his disciples, and are equipped to be witnesses of the Risen Christ.

This is about realizing the fruit of Synod 16, the work that began in 2014 when we were united with Mary and the Twelve and prayed for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We heard God calling us to move from maintenance to mission and to go out and unleash the Gospel.

Each parish in the Archdiocese will create a plan to realign all its activity and ministry to our shared mission to Unleash the Gospel. These missionary strategic plans will provide the direction and focus for each parish's missionary transformation.

Starting this summer, a small group of parishes will begin the process of creating these plans. Other parishes will follow early next year and more will continue after.

This is nothing short of a complete overhaul of our Church in Detroit. A task too great to do on our own. But we are not alone. Christ is risen. We cannot fail, because we are in communion with the risen Jesus and act in the power of his Spirit.

So, I ask you to join me in prayer. Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to come and transform our parishes. Let us pray for boldness in our plans and efforts. Let us pray that each one of our parishes may discern how it is called to unleash the Gospel with its unique set of gifts and circumstances.

With our eyes fixed on Jesus, through prayer and work, together, we will become who God wants us to become, a band of joyful missionary disciples in southeast Michigan. In the spirit of Blessed Fr. Solanus, and through the intercession of Our Lady, Star of the New Evangelization, I am thanking God ahead of time for our missionary transformation.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron

Archbishop of Detroit

## **The Next Phase: Frequently Asked Questions**

<https://www.unleashthegospel.org/frequently-asked-questions/>

*What is the next phase of Unleash the Gospel? What is a Missionary Strategic Plan? Find the answers to these questions and more here.*

- **NEXT PHASE OF UNLEASH THE GOSPEL**

The next phase of our movement to Unleash the Gospel focuses on the renewal of our parishes. For the Gospel to truly be unleashed, we must re-found our parishes so that everything we do — how we pray, how we minister, how we serve — leads us to be more effective witnesses to the Gospel.

The ultimate goal is for our parish communities to become what God made them to be: places where individuals and families encounter Jesus anew, grow as his disciples, and are equipped to be joyful witnesses of the Risen Christ. This phase is the next step for us to more fully realize the fruit of Synod 16, the work that began in 2014 when we were united with Mary and the Twelve and prayed for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In this next phase, each parish in the Archdiocese will create a bold plan to realign all its activity and ministry to our shared mission to Unleash the Gospel. This Missionary Strategic Plan (MSP) will provide the direction and focus for each parish's missionary transformation.

- **When will this next phase begin?**

This summer we will begin working with approximately 10 partner parishes. These parishes will be the first ones to go through the process of creating their Missionary Strategic Plans. These parishes will play a key role as each one of them will help inform the process we will then use for the rest of the Archdiocese. The lessons we learn during this stage will be incorporated into a final planning process for subsequent parishes. We are grateful for the willingness of these pastors and parish communities to lead the way in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The second cohort of approximately 30 parishes will follow in March of 2020. In 2020-21, the remainder of parishes will follow.

- **MISSIONARY STRATEGIC PLAN**

Archbishop Vigneron is asking every pastor and every parish in the Archdiocese of Detroit to prayerfully create a plan with a bold, actionable and concrete strategy that commits to measure results so as to focus all parish activity and efforts towards our shared mission to Unleash the Gospel, our fundamental commitment to evangelization. In particular, each parish MSP will be a vehicle to respond to the Synod Propositions for families and parishes. Importantly, since Catholic schools are a vital apostolate of all the faithful and of the whole archdiocese, each parish's MSP will need to incorporate ways it will support Catholic education for its families and children – whether the parish has a school or not.

- **What does the process of creating the parish MSP look like?**

The process will be largely informed, on a parish level, by the process we followed for Synod 16. There also will be important training and coaching in parish organizational health and team dynamics, areas called out for attention in the pastoral letter. Lastly, if the MSP is bold and innovative, it will undoubtedly include elements that will require additional funding. A comprehensive diocesan fundraising effort will provide the structure and support for each parish to gather resources to help activate its own MSP as well as support diocesan-wide initiatives. Every parish will have a trained and dedicated missionary team specifically assigned to walk with them through the MSP process.

- **How is this different from what we have done in the past?**

This effort is unlike anything we have done in the past in the Archdiocese of Detroit. It is unlike anything that has been done in any diocese in the country in recent years. The MSP process will require prayer, innovation and hard work. It is an opportunity to dream big and allow God to lead our parish communities from maintenance to mission. Unleash the Gospel calls for the complete renewal of structures, the adoption of new modes and methods, and organization of everything we do for mission. This effort does not have an end date. When the plan is final, its implementation will result in a new way of missionary living in our parishes.

- **How much time will the Missionary Strategic Plan process take each parish?**

The current version of the plan calls for an MSP design process that lasts 9 weeks. This timeline includes prayer, formation, organizational coaching, parish engagement and the writing of a bold, actionable strategic plan. Immediately following the plan's development, each parish will determine what resources will be required to help activate the vision. This timeline may change after the partner parishes go through the process and we have time to learn from their experience. After we incorporate this feedback, we anticipate the MSP process will last between 9-12 weeks for the rest of the parishes.

- **When will my parish begin the MSP process?**

At the Pentecost Vigil on Saturday, June 8, 2019, Archbishop Vigneron will announce to the faithful of the Archdiocese the next phase of Unleash the Gospel at every parish. During this announcement, we will reveal the names of the approximately 10 partner parishes that will form the first cohort. The complete schedule of waves for parishes will be announced in January 2020.

- **Who will lead the MSP process in my parish?**

Archbishop Vigneron is asking every pastor in the Archdiocese to lead their parishes in the next phase of Unleash the Gospel. They will do so with the support of a team of lay leaders from the parish. We believe any strategic planning process should be done collaboratively, leveraging the skills and knowledge of the parish's key leaders. This group will be called a Parish Visioning Team (PVT).

Parish Visioning Team members will be prayerful and open to being led by the Holy Spirit. They will be chosen by the pastor based on familiarity with *Unleash the Gospel*, skills and qualities needed to contribute to the MSP planning process, availability, and commitment to complete training, attend meetings and complete assigned tasks.

For the partner parishes, the PVT will be led by the pastor, one or two parish staff and four to five lay leaders (non-staff). As with the rest of the process, this may change once the partner parishes complete the process and we are able to learn from their experience and incorporate best practices.

In addition to the Parish Visioning Team, each parish will be supported by diocesan staff members who will facilitate the MSP process in each parish. These "missionaries" will accompany pastors and the PVT through the entire process.

- **My parish already is well on its way to becoming a missionary parish. Do we still need to develop a plan?**

Many parishes have responded to the Holy Spirit and are well on their way to becoming a mission-oriented parish. Your success and progress will be beneficial to others. We are all part of the same team, and we excel when we collaborate and cooperate. Ensuring your parish work is conveyed in

a plan can help provide your parish with the additional resources for expanded missionary activity. It also will help us to learn from you and it will benefit others. We want to build upon all of the good things God has done through us, while recognizing that God may be calling us to more.

The MSP process and subsequent fundraising efforts also will help identify and secure additional resources needed to fully implement the vision of Unleash the Gospel in the parish.

- **Why are we doing this now in the midst of the abuse crisis?**

The recent news about clergy abuse has reminded us of the presence of sin in the world and in the Catholic Church. In the Archdiocese of Detroit, we have been diligent, doing everything we can to protect children and vulnerable adults, especially since 2002. We also have worked extensively to prevent any abuse and provide life-long healing and accompaniment for victim-survivors. Even one incidence of abuse is too many. We invite you to learn more about what the Archdiocese of Detroit has done and is doing by visiting [protect.aod.org](http://protect.aod.org).

It is because of the presence of sin in the world that we need to share the love and mercy of Jesus Christ more than ever. Through our baptism and confirmation, we have been consecrated as witnesses, just like the Apostles, and sent by Jesus, to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the world. These are the times in which God has chosen for us to be his witnesses. The Missionary Strategic Planning effort is our response: with the grace of God we will renew the Archdiocese of Detroit parish-by-parish.

- **FUNDING THE MSPS AND OUR MISSIONARY TRANSFORMATION**

- **When will we learn more about fundraising efforts in the diocese?**

Archbishop Vigneron has asked all pastors to join him on June 17 to discuss with the presbyterate how the archdiocese will organize fundraising efforts to gather the necessary resources for parishes to help activate their MSPs as well as other diocesan missionary efforts.

- **What is the timing of the archdiocesan-wide campaign to gather the necessary funds for the Missionary Strategic Plans and other missionary needs of the archdiocese?**

Resources will be needed at the diocesan level to launch the next phase of the Unleash the Gospel movement. Archbishop Vigneron has started meeting with members of the lay faithful to ask for support for these resources. At a parish level, fundraising will begin after the Missionary Strategic Plans process is complete for each parish. The approximately 10 partner parishes will begin fundraising this fall. After the partner parishes, the next wave of parishes to begin the MSP process is in March of 2020 with fundraising beginning in June of 2020. Additional waves of parishes will follow from 2020 to 2022.

- **How will the transition from Missionary Strategic Planning to fundraising occur?**

Following the approval of each Missionary Strategic Plan by the new Unleash the Gospel Council, CCS Fundraising will work with each individual parish to translate the Missionary Strategic Plan

into a Case for Support over a period of two to three weeks. During this time, CCS Fundraising will work with the pastor and leadership to identify and recruit a body of leaders for the fundraising effort. It is anticipated that some of the Parish Visioning Team may transition to this second body of leaders.

- **Will my parish fundraising goal be tied directly to my Missionary Strategic Plan?**

Yes. The MSP process will identify a set of individual parish goals and initiatives to be activated locally at each parish – this will require reallocation of existing resources, and new resources to achieve. Archbishop Vigneron has said our missionary transformation is the work of a generation. We know that to fully support and realize these new paths across the archdiocese, this fundraising effort will need to address both the local parish plans and a share of broader archdiocesan priorities that provide a foundation of support for the work of all parishes.

These broader, foundational initiatives include Catholic education, strengthening parish leadership, outreach to underrepresented communities, seminarian and lay ministry formation, evangelization, communications, and others.

- **We recently finished the Changing Lives Together Campaign so why are we doing this now?**

The Changing Lives Together Capital stewardship initiative was launched in 2011 to address some of the most critical financial needs of the parishes in the Archdiocese of Detroit such as debt retirement and renovating school and parish structures. This enabled pastors to fortify parish finances and address critical capital and operational needs. This Missionary Strategic Planning effort, and future fundraising to help activate the plans, is about mission – about becoming evangelizing and missionary parishes. There will be criteria to help parishes dream big – to see their parish through God’s eyes.

- **UNLEASH THE GOSPEL COUNCIL**

- **What is the new Unleash the Gospel Council and what happened to the New Evangelization Council?**

In his pastoral letter, Archbishop Vigneron called for the establishment of a New Evangelization Council as a permanent body to assist him in assessing the response of the Church in the Archdiocese of Detroit to Synod 16 and to advise on ways to make continued progress in unleashing the Gospel.

To provide better support for that work, and to help achieve greater accountability, the former New Evangelization Council has been named the Unleash the Gospel Council. It will be led by Auxiliary Bishop Gerard Battersby, who has led the former council since its August 2017 creation. To better support the next phase of the movement, and to make the Synod graces incarnate – visible – in every parish, this reimagined council will have all the same charges as dictated in the pastoral letter but first, and foremost, it will have oversight of the overall MSP process.

- **How will parish Missionary Strategic Plans be approved?**

Bishop Battersby and the Unleash the Gospel Council are responsible for the entire MSP process to ensure that each parish plan aligns with the letter and movement. The Council has a committee who is responsible for creating criteria for the plans, reviewing them and generally working with parishes to ensure the plans will lead to a parish's transformation as a missionary parish. Once the committee is confident the plan is bold, concrete, and actionable, it will present the plan for approval by the entire council.

- **CATHOLIC FOUNDATION OF MICHIGAN**

- **I have heard that when we begin fundraising we will be working with the Catholic Foundation of Michigan. How will that work?**

We are working on a partnership with the Catholic Foundation of Michigan, which is an independent nonprofit lay-led community foundation, created to support the good works in southeast Michigan primarily at our parishes, schools and other ministries. The goal of this partnership is to ensure funds are protected and stewarded according to donor wishes. Importantly, donor funds are invested according to our Catholic values. To learn more about the Catholic Foundation of Michigan visit: [CatholicFoundationMichigan.org](http://CatholicFoundationMichigan.org).

- **How can we be certain that funds raised will go to the areas directed by parishes?**

Canon law (church law) and civil law charges our leadership with ensuring that restricted donations are used for the stated purpose(s) and that they fulfill the directions made by the donor(s). The campaign's cash receipts will be overseen by the Foundation's Board of Trustees who will ensure distribution to the designated case elements. The revenues and expenses will be reviewed annually by independent auditors.