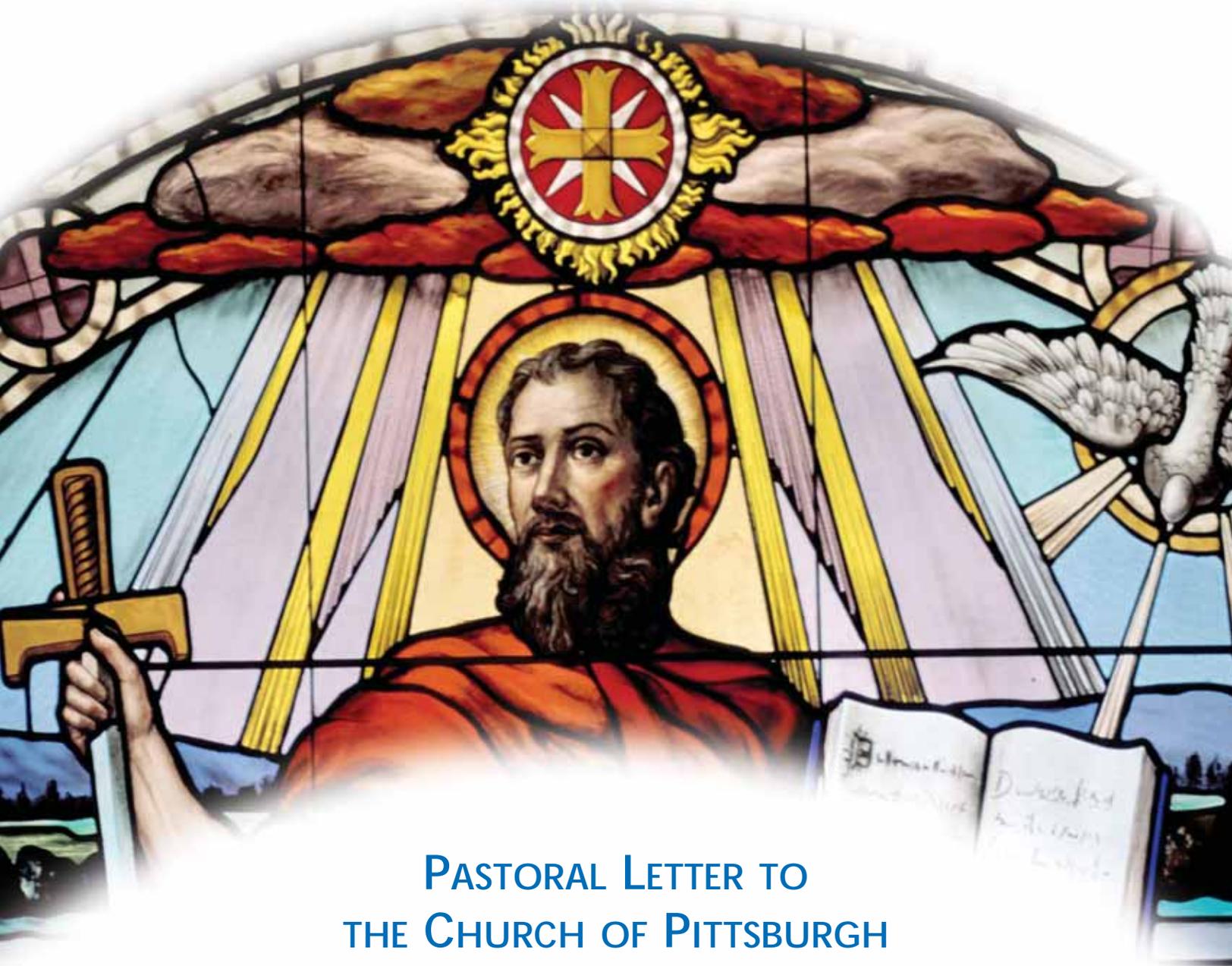


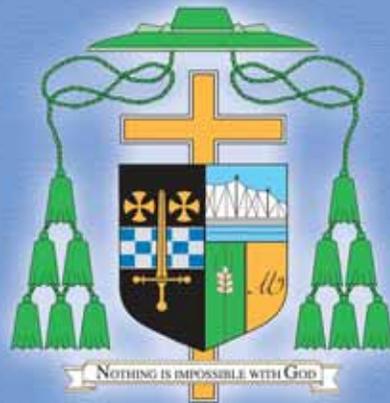
The Church Alive!



PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF PITTSBURGH



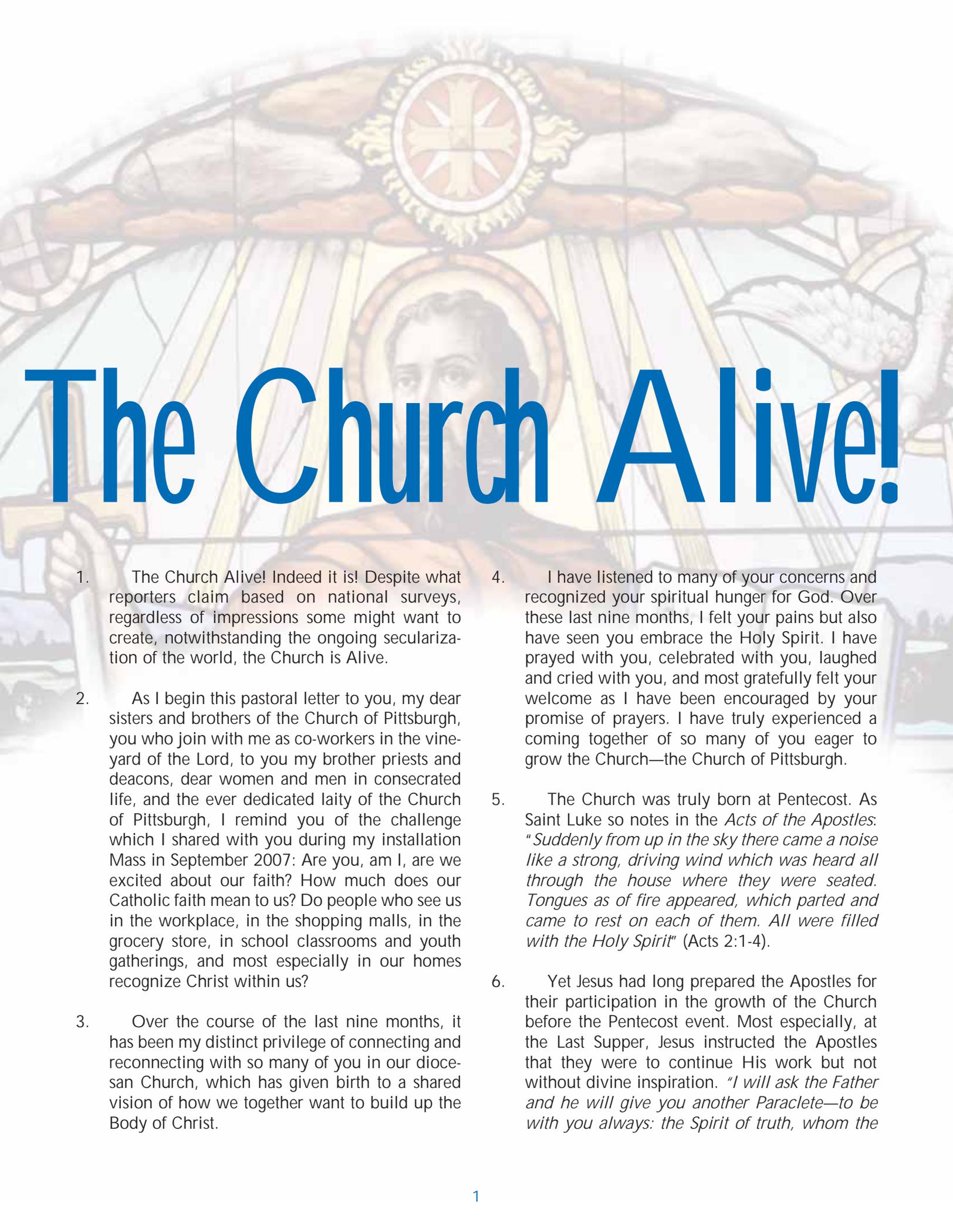
Most Reverend David A. Zubik, M.S. Ed., D.D.
Bishop of Pittsburgh



“As the Body of Christ, we,
all the baptized of the Church,
have an important role.

Let no one ever question their importance.
Let no one ever feel disregarded in the Church.

Let all the members of the Church
as the Body of Christ embrace what it means
to embody Christ.”



The Church Alive!

1. The Church Alive! Indeed it is! Despite what reporters claim based on national surveys, regardless of impressions some might want to create, notwithstanding the ongoing secularization of the world, the Church is Alive.
2. As I begin this pastoral letter to you, my dear sisters and brothers of the Church of Pittsburgh, you who join with me as co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord, to you my brother priests and deacons, dear women and men in consecrated life, and the ever dedicated laity of the Church of Pittsburgh, I remind you of the challenge which I shared with you during my installation Mass in September 2007: Are you, am I, are we excited about our faith? How much does our Catholic faith mean to us? Do people who see us in the workplace, in the shopping malls, in the grocery store, in school classrooms and youth gatherings, and most especially in our homes recognize Christ within us?
3. Over the course of the last nine months, it has been my distinct privilege of connecting and reconnecting with so many of you in our diocesan Church, which has given birth to a shared vision of how we together want to build up the Body of Christ.
4. I have listened to many of your concerns and recognized your spiritual hunger for God. Over these last nine months, I felt your pains but also have seen you embrace the Holy Spirit. I have prayed with you, celebrated with you, laughed and cried with you, and most gratefully felt your welcome as I have been encouraged by your promise of prayers. I have truly experienced a coming together of so many of you eager to grow the Church—the Church of Pittsburgh.
5. The Church was truly born at Pentecost. As Saint Luke so notes in the *Acts of the Apostles*: "*Suddenly from up in the sky there came a noise like a strong, driving wind which was heard all through the house where they were seated. Tongues as of fire appeared, which parted and came to rest on each of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:1-4).
6. Yet Jesus had long prepared the Apostles for their participation in the growth of the Church before the Pentecost event. Most especially, at the Last Supper, Jesus instructed the Apostles that they were to continue His work but not without divine inspiration. "*I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete—to be with you always: the Spirit of truth, whom the*

world cannot accept, since it neither sees him nor recognizes him; but you can recognize him because he remains with you and he will be within you" (John 14:16-17). Jesus makes the promise of the gift of the Advocate. He lets them know that it is the ever-abiding presence of the Holy Spirit Who will be with them, the same Spirit Who will give birth to the Church and the same ever-abiding presence of the Spirit Who will guide the Church through all ages until the end of time.⁷ The promise which Jesus made at the Last Supper was also prefaced by His public ministry in which Jesus let the Apostles share in His teaching; witness His miracles; learn from His prayer; and, most important of all, be transformed in His life. As firsthand witnesses of the marvelous events of the life of Jesus, the Apostles were more than well prepared to continue the work of the Savior.

8. We too, through the life of the Church, become witnesses to the mission of Christ. We are no less fortunate than were the early disciples in coming to learn from the words, miracles, prayer, and deeds of Jesus, and to be transformed by His life. We all come to know Jesus through the inspiration and Revelation of the Word in the Holy Scriptures; in the rich Tradition of our Catholic Church; through our catechesis of both; but most especially in the formation that connects our faith in the past with the present moment, linked to our hope of becoming citizens of God's Kingdom in Heaven.
9. As you and I recall the great event of Pentecost, that signature moment in the life of the Apostles as well as the signature moment in the birth of the Church, happened within the context of prayer. And so it is within that most important and indispensable part of our lives as fellow travelers on the road to the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven that I invite you to join with me in this pastoral letter to reflect upon the legacy and the future of the Church of Pittsburgh, as "the Church Alive!"

I. Spirituality: Being Connected with God

10. In his apostolic letter *Tertio Millenio Adveniente* (The Coming of the Third Millennium), our late

Holy Father, Pope John Paul the Great, recognized a critical new beginning of the Church as we crossed the threshold of a new millennium. Yet even though John Paul II underscored the challenges that we face as the people of our day, he did so within the context of an experience not totally new. Our ancestors in the faith over the course of the two thousand years of Christianity have experienced similar challenges. And clearly, the struggles which the Church faces today are no less difficult and no less significant than they were for the Apostles at Pentecost.

11. The Holy Father wrote: "*The whole of Christian history appears to us as a single river, into which many tributaries pour their waters. The Year 2000 invites us to gather with renewed fidelity and ever deeper communion along the banks of this great river: the river of revelation, of Christianity and of the Church, a river which flows through human history starting from the event which took place at Nazareth and then at Bethlehem two thousand years ago*" (*Tertio Millenio*, 25). My dear friends, the river of God's love flows here in our diocesan Church. The great river of faith, hope and love is what sustains us on our pilgrimage to God's Kingdom. The Holy Spirit has gifted each of us with charisms that breathe new life in each generation of the Church.
12. As the Church of Pittsburgh, and in the experience of our "new" Pentecost of this moment, many challenges confront us. One of those struggles is what Pope Benedict XVI refers to as "moral relativism." The secular world, seeking to endorse its own view that disregards religious faith, offers people what can be an enticing smorgasbord of options without regard for the moral values involved in those choices.
13. When he recently visited our country, Pope Benedict challenged us Catholics to live our faith consistently and persistently for in doing so the world sees in us the image of God's Kingdom here on earth. It is a contradiction when we Catholics profess one thing and live another way. "*Is it consistent to profess our beliefs in church on Sunday, and then during the week to promote business practices or medical procedures contrary to those beliefs? Is it*

consistent for practicing Catholics to ignore or exploit the poor and the marginalized, to promote sexual behavior contrary to Catholic moral teaching, or to adopt positions that contradict the right to life of every human being from conception to natural death?" (Pope Benedict XVI, Celebration of Vespers and Meeting with the Bishops of the United States of America at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, April 16, 2008).

14. Often this inconsistent approach to life is rooted in our understanding of what freedom is and how we want to be successful in life. As a result, we can be quick to compromise our faith for something more worldly. Indeed, the secularization of society tempts us to conclude that the achievement of success is linked with power, prestige, popularity. Moreover, an unfortunate view of life and persons that mistakenly values the importance of each person based solely on their usefulness rather than on their God-given inherent dignity does away with the very value of life itself.

15. Yet, in the midst of all of these powerful but flawed forces of contemporary society, there is an apparent resurgence and recognition in the spiritual hungers of the people in our diocese. Over the course of these last nine months, I have seen that hunger in your eyes, expressions of your need for God, and your need for dependence upon God. I have experienced that hunger in response to my challenge to you

about getting excited about our faith. I have seen that hunger in the generosity that you demonstrate in your outreach to those in need. I have seen that hunger in your increased devotion to faith, particularly to the Eucharist. I have experienced that hunger in your letters and email messages to me. I have felt that hunger as a revolt against preconceived notions of our destiny, replaced by a growing awareness of the powerful breath of God's Spirit, leading us to, and letting us know, the will of God. I have "heard" that hunger in the humble and genuine confessions that so many of you have shared. I have experienced that hunger in your deepened desire for the Eucharist as the "Living Bread come down from Heaven."



16. This hunger truly does begin with an acknowledgement of the need to depend upon God in prayer. Spirituality, as I understand it, is a connecting with God, coming to know intimately the mind and the heart of God, so as to become who God created us to be.
17. Our hunger for the truth is an expression of our real hunger for God Himself. As Catholics, we have come to understand the great gift which Jesus Christ instituted as a means for us to abide in the life of God—the Holy Eucharist. If spirituality is connecting with God then the Eucharist is the means for doing so. If the Church of Pittsburgh is going to grow, and if we are going to be excited about our faith, we must, in every act of our faith, appreciate the greatest gift of God to us—Christ in the Eucharist. Pope John Paul II, in his last encyclical to the Church wrote: *“The Eucharist, as Christ’s saving presence in the community of the faithful and its spiritual good, is the most precious possession which the Church can have in her journey through history [...] The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift—however precious—among so many others, but as **the** gift par excellence, for it is the gift of himself, of his person in his sacred humanity, as well as the gift of his saving work” (Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 9, 11, emphasis added).*
18. Therefore, in the context of this spiritual reawakening, I enthusiastically invite you, the faithful of the Church of Pittsburgh, to join with me in a special observance of the Year of Saint Paul. On June 29, 2007, in his homily at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls at Rome, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, invited us as a Universal Church to observe the Year of Saint Paul in commemoration of the two thousandth anniversary of his birth. This pastoral letter marks a concrete beginning to that observance within our beloved local Church. What lies at the heart of our special observance is a renewed special attention to the saving presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The inexhaustible richness of the Mass can be seen in the various names by which we refer to it: Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper, the Breaking of Bread, the memorial of Christ’s passion and resurrection, the Holy Sacrifice. Elsewhere in this Pastoral Letter (cf., #73 through #81), I will address the importance of the worthy celebration of Mass in our parishes. Here, I want to focus on the richness of the Eucharist, a richness that can be more fully understood and appreciated through the practice of Eucharistic Adoration.
19. I am thrilled to know that all 214 of our parishes, in one way or another, either through a 24-hour observance of Eucharistic Adoration or an adaptation of such, will provide spiritual opportunity for us from June 29, 2008 through June 29, 2009. We come to spend some quiet, reflective time before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. And as we do so, we not only renew an ancient tradition in the Church; more importantly, we also find in the Eucharist a focus for our lives before the presence of Christ and become more receptive to the call of Christ to us. That invitation calls each of us to become a witness to the presence of Christ who lives in and through us.
20. When I was a seminary student many years ago at Saint Mary’s Seminary and University in Baltimore, Maryland, one of my professors wisely expressed a beautiful prayer immediately before receiving Holy Communion. “May the Body of Christ enable us to embody Christ.” Are not these sentiments, in fact, the deepest desire of Jesus for each of us—that the Body of Christ in the Eucharist and the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church enable us to embody Christ in our lives!
21. It is not only my fervent hope but also my firm belief that this next year of Adoration of the Eucharist will truly help the Church of Pittsburgh grow. It is not only my fervent hope but also my firm belief that we as a Church will especially come to appreciate and embrace the value of vocation in our lives.
22. As we have already reflected, Jesus called the early Apostles to be instruments of His important mission. One of the practical ways that the work of Jesus continues in each of our lives is through the Vocation that God shares with us—God’s call of what He designs us to be and how He wants us to live. Longstanding in our tradition as Catholics, we have

II. Vocation and vocation

come to appreciate the four distinct calls of Christ in our lives: the Vocation to the married life; the Vocation of the single life; the Vocation of the consecrated life; and the Vocation to the ordained life.

23. There can be very little doubt that we as a secular society have lost an appreciation for the value of Vocation. How else could it possibly be that statistics would show that a high percentage of marriages end in divorce? How else could it be that many single people feel slighted and forgotten, second class citizens in the world? How else could it be that the numbers of women and men answering the call to consecrated life and men answering the call to priesthood would be on the wane? If we choose not to follow the will of God, we choose the selfish desire.

24. But God still calls. And God expects an answer. The answer that a believer offers to God's question is understood from the theological virtue of Hope. Pope Benedict offered the Church an extraordinary reflection on Hope in his recent encyclical *Spe Salvi* (On Christian Hope, November 30, 2007). The believer's ability to respond through our human nature to God's call is how we begin to experience the Kingdom of God on earth. Was this not the preaching of Saint John the Baptist—the Kingdom of God is at hand! Vocation is how we live our faith for the good of others and for building up the Body of Christ. Hope is our ability to trust in God and surrender our limited way of understanding to the magnificence of what God has in store for each of us. *"Faith draws the future into the present [...] The fact that this future exists changes the present."* (*Spe Salvi*, 7).

25. It is my sincere hope and my firm belief that this Year of Saint Paul in the Church of Pittsburgh and our Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament will have a dramatic impact on the number of happy and holy Vocations in our Church—that there will be many more happy and faithful marriages; that there will be more recognition of the importance of dedicated single people in our Church; that there will be more priests, deacons, sisters, and brothers.

26. In a world where commitment seems to be passé, God is still calling! God is still expecting

an answer. Both the call and the answer are found in Vocation with a capital "V"—the Vocation of Marriage; the Vocation of Single Life; the Vocation of the Consecrated Life; the Vocation of the Ordained, both to the diaconate and the priesthood.

27. But I also ask you to pay close attention to another type of vocation in the Church. That type of vocation with a small "v," invites us to take a look at what role we play in growing the Church. The first vocation of any believer is to be a disciple of the Lord, keeping close to Him and He to us. Worshipping God each week at Sunday Mass is the first act of a disciple and the first expression of vocation. How often do people say they believe in God but do not want to go to Church? How often do people say they are "good Catholics" but fail to attend Mass? I am so often mystified as to why such a large percentage of people would choose to ignore the command of Jesus: to "do this in memory of me." If we really believe that Jesus is in the Eucharist, what could possibly be a good reason why we would choose not to take that gift seriously or to embrace it more tenderly? It is my firm belief and fervent hope that the Year of Saint Paul and the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will help bring more people back to Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days.

28. The non-ordained are called to manifest and extend the Kingdom of God in their own unique way. So often when we speak about "vocation," our minds think only of ordained ministry or consecrated life. Indeed, these are essential vocations in the life of the Church. But I want to help us understand how the Church considers the vocation of the lay faithful. In my reflections, there are three expressions of lay vocation in the Church.

29. The first and most fundamental expression of lay vocation is what the Church calls the "lay apostolate." The Second Vatican Council helped us understand this notion in its document *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, 1965). Here, the council fathers explain how the lay faithful are first called to be disciples within the temporal and social orders of culture, living their faith in a way that will purify all human systems from sin and manifest the glory of God in the ordinary ways of

life. This can be done when Catholics hold political and civic positions, in the way they run their businesses, raise their families, get involved in the community; when Catholics live their faith in the marketplace and public square instilling in our society Gospel values which are at the service of all people, both Christian and non-Christian alike.

30. I would encourage all of you to access this document of Vatican II, read through it, discuss it with your family and friends, study it with the groups you associate with in the Church, and determine if your faith as lay faithful is really something that makes a difference in our society. This was again something Pope Benedict noted in his visit to our country: *"Any tendency to treat religion as a private matter must be resisted. Only when their faith permeates every aspect of their lives do Christians become truly open to the transforming power of the Gospel"* (Pope Benedict XVI, *Celebration of Vespers and Meeting with the Bishops of the United States of America at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, April 16, 2008*).

31. The second expression of lay vocation is at the service of the Church in catechetical, liturgical and pastoral ways. Those with planning and leadership abilities and administrative gifts experience the call to be members of parish pastoral councils and finance councils. Those who are good readers experience the call to proclaim God's Word in the sacred liturgy. Those with a sense of good hospitality assist as ushers and greeters at Mass. Those with a particular devotion to the Eucharist have the opportunity to share this gift as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Those who have particular talent in music can help raise our minds and voices to God as cantors and choir. Those who have a great understanding of the faith can share this ability as catechetical or sacramental instructors. Those who have a concern for the poor and marginalized can volunteer with such groups as Saint Vincent de Paul Society or Ladies of Charity or other ministries of care and concern for the sick, shut-in, hospitalized, those in need of transportation, etc. The vocation to serve in these and many other ways allows the Church to be intimately involved in the life of our communities and to assure that our parishes are vibrant and effective in ministry.

32. The third expression of lay vocation involves the direct collaboration of the non-ordained with ordained ministry. These women and men are called lay ecclesial ministers. Having special training and a mandate from the bishop or pastor, lay faithful collaborate in the ordering of pastoral ministry as youth ministers, catechetical administrators, liturgical and music ministers, pastoral associates, social service ministers, business managers, etc. Recently the conference of bishops in our country released a document called *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* that describes the necessary and rightful place of lay faithful who are appointed in the name of the Church to carry out formal ministry in the Church. In our local Church of Pittsburgh, we are in need of these ministers in order to sustain the quality of ministry that all of our faithful expect from the Church. I recently approved a plan that will help finance the training of the non-ordained to prepare for the positions needed in so many of our parishes. It will be important for our parishes to discern how lay ecclesial ministry can be of service to the parish community in order to sustain the quality of ministry that assures the proper and rightful celebration of the sacraments and the handing-on of God's Word by our priests and deacons.

33. The Year of Saint Paul and our diocesan plan to promote Eucharistic Adoration in all of our parishes is a golden opportunity for all the faithful of this diocesan Church to come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of "vocation." I challenge all of us to consider how greater numbers of lay faithful can become more active in the lay apostolate, in the various leadership roles in the Church, and how we can promote vocations to lay ecclesial ministry.

34. Within the context of this opportunity rests the necessity of reflecting on the personal gifts which God has given to each of us and how we might best use them in service to His Church and in His honor. This reflection also necessitates prayer. The result of such prayer is an awesome opportunity to come closer to God.

35. Shortly after my return to Pittsburgh, and after moving into Saint Paul Seminary where it is my privilege to live with the candidates for priesthood, I was praying in the chapel late one evening. One of the younger seminarians slid into the pew where



I was praying. He asked if he could interrupt my reflection and then posed an interesting dilemma. “You know, I feel rather useless. I’m only out of high school and I’m wondering why in the world God would be calling me to be a priest. After all, there are so many others who are older and wiser than me in the seminary.” As I tenderly reflected on his dilemma, I shared with him an experience that had occurred in my life just the night before, which I now share with you.

36. As I found myself going to one of the diocesan offices at the Seminary, this particular night I found myself catching a glimpse of Bishop Michael O’Connor, the first Bishop of Pittsburgh, whose portrait hangs in the Hall of Bishops in Domenec Hall at Saint Paul Seminary. I paused to look at Bishop O’Connor’s face and then, by the power of Divine Providence, stopped at the portraits of each of the twelve Bishops of Pittsburgh, beginning with Bishop O’Connor, then to Bishop Domenec, Bishop Tuigg, Bishop Phelan, Archbishop Canevin, Bishop Boyle, Cardinal Dearden, Cardinal Wright, Bishop Leonard, Cardinal Bevilacqua, Archbishop Wuerl, and then Number Twelve. When I stopped at Number Twelve, I recognized the face. It was one that I see in the mirror each morning. As I looked at my portrait hanging in the Hall of Bishops, I thought of each of my predecessors and began to think how I was not like them. I am not a theologian. I am not a lawyer. I am not a historian. I am not a pioneer. And the more that I thought of myself in comparison to my predecessors, the more I became ill at ease. This struggle prompted me to go to the chapel. And as I prayed to God, I asked: “Why would You have ever sent me to be the Bishop of Pittsburgh? What could You possibly have in mind for me to do?” What I heard in return were these sentiments from God: “It is up to Me to know. It is up to you to find out.” It struck me like a bolt of lightning. God had a plan. God had a reason. I was sent to Pittsburgh to do something.

37. And it was precisely this thought that I was able to share with the young seminarian. I reminded him of God’s words to me: “It’s up to Me to know. It’s up to you to find out.”

38. Whether we speak of vocation with a capital “V” or a small “v,” God calls us to both. It’s up to us to respond.

III. The Church: The Body of Christ

39. The Second Vatican Council in its document on the Church called *Lumen Gentium* reflected on the many ways in which we come to understand what it means to be “Church.” It is important that when we contemplate the various images of Church that we do so understanding its essential nature as “mystery.” Sometimes when we try to define what it means to be Church we lose the sense of mystery and awe. Nevertheless, we do know that our participation in the life of the Church brings us into a direct, personal relationship with God.

40. For purposes of this pastoral letter, I would like you to consider an image of the Church that we all have become familiar with—the Church as the Body of Christ. In the New Testament, how often do we see the intimacy of how Jesus relates with his disciples: *I am the vine, you are the branches* (John 15:5); *the man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him* (John 6:56); *I will make you fishers of men* (Matthew 4:19); *I know my sheep and my sheep know me* (John 10:14); *Blest are the eyes that see what you see* (Luke 10:23). The intimacy and communion that Christ invites us into is fulfilled and brought to completion with the institution of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday. On that holy night, the Church herself was conceived with the words—*Do this in remembrance of me* (Luke 22:19). How intimate our experience of God is to be! When we receive the Eucharist, we are to become Christ-like. We, indeed, are to become the Body of Christ.

41. The relationship between the mystery of the Eucharist and our identity with the Church is inseparable. The Church **cannot** exist without the Eucharist. As we strive to keep our “Church Alive,” we cannot do so without our reception, reverence, love and adoration of the Eucharist. This is why I believe that when every parish in our diocese commits itself to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, we are going to see a renewal in this local Church not seen before. Not long ago I

joined nearly two thousand men at the annual Catholic Men's Fellowship for their daylong gathering. The morning began with adoration and the procession of the Blessed Sacrament and concluded in the afternoon with Mass. This particular apostolate of lay men is growing. The Eucharist is making a major difference in their lives.

42. To become the Body of Christ is to embody Christ Himself in both word and deed. As I noted earlier in this letter, the prayer of my seminary professor just before Communion, "May the Body of Christ enable us to embody Christ," expresses the expectation of Jesus that all of the baptized, in one way or another, embody the Body of Christ wherever we are, in whatever we do, whoever we are. When Pope Benedict spoke to educators during his visit to the United States, he reflected about what happens to people when one experiences a personal encounter with Jesus Christ: *"This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way those who meet him are drawn by the very power of the Gospel to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord's disciples, the Church"* (Pope Benedict XVI, *Meeting with Catholic Educators at the Conference Hall of the Catholic University of America in Washington*, April 17, 2008).

43. To embody Christ in the Eucharist and to become the Body of Christ truly transforms us. Not only are our lives transformed but also the lives of the people to whom we are able to witness. Again, this is why I believe devotion to the Holy Eucharist must be the starting point for evangelization and renewal in the life of the Church.

44. As we consider how much "the Church is Alive" in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, we are all challenged to look for, embrace, and welcome the presence of Christ in each other: in the rich and in the poor; in women and in men; in the unborn and old, the young and the in-between; in the Native American, the Latino, the Pole, the Slovak, the German, the Italian, the African, the Vietnamese, the Korean, and every ethnic culture that adds such richness to the fabric of who we are as Church.

45. The "Church is Alive" in Pittsburgh precisely because of the union that we experience through baptism, through the various and multiple gifts that God has given to each person who belongs to the nearly 800,000-member family of who we are as the Church of Pittsburgh.

46. In giving consideration to how the "Church is Alive" in our day, we cannot in any way disregard or discount the importance of each other. The mission that Jesus passed on to those early apostles before He ascended into Heaven is the message that He continues to share in, through and with all of us.

47. As the Body of Christ, we, all the baptized of the Church, have an important role. Let no one ever question their importance. Let no one ever feel disregarded in the Church. Let all the members of the Church as the Body of Christ embrace what it means to embody Christ. God speaks to each of us. What is He saying to you and me? What and who is He calling you and me to be? Can you and I hear Him? How can we respond to the Lord?

IV. The Priesthood of the Baptized and the Priesthood of the Ordained

48. Truly through baptism into the Church, we not only become members of God's family, we are also entrusted to embody Christ. It is no wonder, that through the ages, the Church has taught that the baptized truly have a share in the priesthood of Christ. We have all had an opportunity at one time or another to witness a baptism. Immediately after the waters of Christ are poured upon those who are baptized, the sacred chrism of the Church is placed on the crown of the newly baptized's head. The deacon, priest or bishop who celebrates the baptismal ceremony then speaks directly to the newly baptized who has a share in the priesthood of Christ. The ritual of the Church expresses the beauty of this reality:

49. *"God the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit and welcomed you into His holy people. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King, so may you live always as a member of*

His body, sharing everlasting life." (Rite of Baptism). Baptism truly brings us into the life of God Himself and into His Body, the Church.

50. Everything about the baptismal ceremony confirms this truth—from the water that expresses the life of Christ, to the white garment which signifies putting on Christ, to the sacred chrism which confirms the power of Christ within, to the share in the light which is Christ taken from the Easter candle.
51. Saint Paul writes to the early Church of Ephesus that "there is but one chosen People of God: one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5), explaining how we are members of the one Body of Christ. The experience of salvation and the redemptive power of our faith are understood from the theological sense of "priesthood." It is in Christ's priesthood that the power of almighty God comes to save us and prepare us for everlasting life. Through baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we are consecrated into this priesthood of Christ (cf., *Lumen Gentium*, 10). What does this mean? If we are now members of the Body of Christ and share in the one priesthood of Christ, we too become instruments of salvation.
52. The function of priesthood is understood in three ways—to teach, sanctify, and lead. We see how Jesus' ministry was carried out in the triple functioning of His priesthood. He taught us the ways of God's Kingdom (*i.e.*, the Beatitudes); He sanctified the lives of people (*i.e.*, miracles, forgiveness of sins); He gathered people to lead them (*i.e.*, call of the apostles, the Good Shepherd). The fullness of Jesus' priesthood is exercised in the Paschal Mystery which begins with the Last Supper through the events of Pentecost. We see the triple role of Jesus' priesthood—to teach, sanctify and lead—carried forth in the Paschal Mystery.
53. Every baptized and confirmed member of Christ's Body also shares in the triple functioning of His priesthood. Each disciple, through the grace of baptism and from the gifts given in confirmation, is called to teach, sanctify and lead. However, we do so in different ways and our mode of participation differs accordingly.
54. The non-ordained participate in Christ's priesthood as the priesthood of the baptized. As I noted earlier in this letter, the lay faithful can exercise or express their vocation in the priesthood of the baptized through their apostolate within society, assisting in the liturgical, catechetical, and pastoral life of the Church, or collaborating with the ordained in carrying out formal ministry. The priesthood of the baptized truly does bring God's Kingdom into our world with a faith lived in the temporal and social order of society.
55. The priesthood of the baptized is lived at home, within the family, as parents and children, as single women and men, old and young, rich and poor, through career and volunteer service, in the marketplace and public square, through society's recreational practices, in science and education, politics and law—it is here the lay faithful are first called to live their priesthood.
56. As we witness in the pages of scripture, Jesus calls some men from among the priesthood of the baptized to share in his mission, exercising sacred power for service to the Body of Christ: the forgiveness of sins, to teach the faith officially in the name of the Church, to celebrate the Eucharist—ministry directed to building up the Body of Christ. This participation in Christ's priesthood is called the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood.
57. Why is this ministerial priesthood so necessary? The personal and intimate experience of Christ was not something willed just for those people of two thousand years ago but also a relationship that is extended to all believers. The ministerial priesthood guarantees that people today can experience the same Jesus Christ: the forgiveness He offers, the sacramental consolation given to those of His day to people of today, and most importantly, the guarantee of the Holy Eucharist.
58. Frankly stated—there can be no Eucharist without the ministerial priesthood. This is why the promotion of priestly vocations is an urgent task of the Church today as it is for every age. If we ever lose sight of the Eucharist and the necessity of ministerial priesthood, we begin to diminish the real understanding of what Christ came to accomplish.



59. In ministry, sometimes I sense a competition among the ordained and non-ordained. Clergy who forfeit their inherent pastoral responsibilities to the lay faithful and lay faithful who attempt to assume rightful roles of the priest can lead to a laicization of the clergy and clericalization of the laity. This, in my experience, is the result of a poor theological understanding of what it means to participate in the priesthood of Christ.
60. Saint Paul was very clear in his writings to the early Church that what makes the Body of Christ rich, strong, vibrant and healthy is the diversity that exists among the members of the Church (cf., 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Romans 12:4-5). If we all try to be the same or feel that all must exercise the same gifts—how does the Body grow?
61. The distinction between the two modes of participation in the one priesthood of Christ is essential for growing the Church of Pittsburgh. The priesthood of the baptized thrives when the lay faithful discern their gifts and talents, using

them generously within society and the Church as witnesses of the Gospel. The ministerial priesthood thrives when the ordained generously serve the Body of Christ in sacramental ministry and pastoral leadership.

62. I wonder if the reason tension exists in some circles results from the misconception that the ordained have more power or are seen as more holy. This simply is not the case nor should it be. The concept of “collaboration,” when understood correctly, brings the non-ordained and the ordained into such an integral relationship that both see how ministry in the life of the Church requires the use of everyone’s gifts. Pope John Paul II wrote in his document on priestly formation: *The ministerial priesthood does not of itself signify a greater degree of holiness with regard to the common priesthood of the faithful; through it, Christ gives to priests, in the Spirit, a particular gift so that they can help the People of God to exercise faithfully and fully the common priesthood which it has received (Pastores Dabo Vobis, 17).*

63. Indeed, the ministerial priesthood differs from the priesthood of the baptized because it possesses "sacred power" which is at the service of the Body of Christ (cf., *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1592). This sacred power is what brings about the Eucharist, the celebration of the sacraments, and the faithful handing on the Gospel. Again, without this priesthood, there would be no Eucharist and therefore no Church.

64. As you and I, members of the Church of Pittsburgh, embark on the dawn of a "new Pentecost," it is important to remember how essential the distinctions must remain between the priesthood of the baptized and the priesthood of the ordained. Forgetting about the essential distinctions, at best, adds confusion to the important task of advancing the mission of Jesus, and, at worst, betrays the vision of Jesus Himself.

65. As the Church of Pittsburgh continues on our journey of Envisioning Ministry, a process that seeks to let the Spirit enliven all of the 214 parishes and numerous other faith communities in our Church, it is important that we remember and live the distinctions between the priesthood of the baptized and the priesthood of the ordained. It was that distinction that Jesus intended at the Last Supper. It was that intention that found the promise of Jesus fulfilled with the birth of the Church at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that first Pentecost. That sacred moment, the seminal experience of the Church being born, is an experience that we relive in the ordinary experience of faith encountered at the parish level of the Church.

V. The Parish and What Makes It So

66. While it is so important for us as Church to recognize the nature of the Church as Universal, it is important for us to speak of ourselves as Church within the diocese and within the family which is the domestic Church. The place where we first come to know what it means to be Church, however, is in the parish. It is in the parish where we first come to know Christ's faith community in Baptism. It is in the parish that we come to experience the mercy of God in the Sacrament of Penance. It is in the parish that we

first receive the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion. It is in the parish that we receive the Holy Spirit again in Confirmation. It is in the parish that couples join their hands and hearts in the sacred bond of Marriage. It is in the parish that the ordained exercise their ministry as deacon, priest, and bishop. It is within the parish that the sick come to appreciate the healing presence of Christ in the Anointing of the Sick. It is in the parish that we celebrate the passing of our loved ones from this life to the next in the Mass of Christian Burial.

67. In our reflection on "the Church Alive," it is imperative that in this final section of the pastoral letter we give serious consideration to what it means to be the Church as parish.

68. Since it is impossible for us to disconnect our Catholic faith from the experience of the parish community, we all have affection, loyalty, and even a sense of ownership of the parish to which we belong. The church building itself becomes an important part of our faith development. While this heartfelt respect for the church building expresses our love for the Church herself, we must not be distracted from the wider understanding of what it means for us to be members of the Body of Christ, our true spiritual home.

69. In my priestly ministry here in the Diocese of Pittsburgh and during my Episcopal ministry in the Diocese of Green Bay, I noticed an unfortunate tendency of some who placed more importance on the parish buildings than what it means to be a community of faith, the Body of Christ. In responding to pastoral needs, some parishes may have to downsize, merge with other parishes, or grow into larger parishes. How regrettable to learn that people actually leave their parish or even stop practicing their faith to protest their dissatisfaction when such necessary decisions are made. We must never lose sight of what it means for us as a Church to be the Body of Christ.

70. Shortly after I arrived back in Pittsburgh to be your bishop, many asked me about what decisions I might make regarding parish life or what decisions could be made around the Envisioning Ministry process now underway. I think, in response to such questions, we must together

reflect on what constitutes a parish, what determines vibrancy in parish life.

71. An approach that I try to take in my life is to view things from the lens of the Holy Spirit. As a result, I have not focused on how many of the 214 parishes will continue to exist but how many parishes are vibrant in faith? In taking a look at the Envisioning Ministry process, I do not see this as a matter of designing the Church according to my likes but rather as an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work “from the ground up,” inspiring the numerous clusters in the diocese with what the Spirit wants us to become as the Church of Pittsburgh. To respond in that fashion is, I believe, what it means to experience “the Church Alive.”

72. Relative to what constitutes a parish, there are many models reflective of the question, “What is a parish?” In my ministerial experience over the years, and even more importantly, my experience of parish, and following some considerable prayer, I focus on five essential qualities of parish life: (1) the Eucharist; (2) evangelization; (3) catechesis; (4) formation; and (5) stewardship. Permit me to reflect with you on each.

(1) *The Eucharist*

73. To speak of the Church as “Catholic,” what is foundational, what is absolutely necessary for us is the Eucharist. What is most important about the Eucharist is that in it Jesus gave us Himself as our spiritual food and drink, His abiding presence with us always. When we speak of the Eucharist, we speak of the celebration of Christ with the priest as presider, with the complement of ministers, with the great care demanded by the celebration and with the presence of as many believers as possible. When we speak of the Eucharist, we consider the real presence of Christ housed in the tabernacles of our parishes and faith communities.

74. “The Church Alive”—this is the goal of what it means to be a Church. Most people experience the Church at the parish level. Therefore it is my desire to insure that all of our parishes are being constantly reinvigorated. Pope John Paul

II wrote an exhortation to Catholics in North and South America shortly before the turn of this century. He explains that all renewal must be connected to the Eucharist. “*The parish is a privileged place where the faithful concretely experience the Church. The parish needs to be constantly renewed on the basis of the principle that the parish must continue to be above all a Eucharistic community*” (*Ecclesia in America*, 41). As the apostles celebrated that first Eucharist with Christ so do we today during Mass. This is what a parish is all about.

75. Whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, what we do is no less significant than what the apostles encountered with Jesus at the Last Supper. We are to be enthralled with the message that God wants to share with us through the word of the Scriptures. We have the incomparable experience of receiving the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ. And finally, within the Eucharist, we are, in fact, charged to become servants of one another, just as Jesus charged the early apostles to be servants, signified by His washing of their feet.

76. The statistics of people who do not come to the Eucharist on a regular basis continue to baffle me. The fact that, in our own diocese, the percentage of “regular attendees” is within the 35% range and it is much lower in western Europe, makes me wonder where the other 65% are. If we truly believed that, in every Mass, we encounter Christ in His Word, in His Body and Blood so that we can become good servants, why are we not there around the table of God’s Word and around the table of the Eucharist?

77. In the summer of 2007, I had the opportunity for the first time to visit Poland and the Slovak Republic, homeland of my paternal and maternal ancestors. I was truly amazed by the number of people who attend Mass on a regular basis. As I visited the shrines and churches in Poland during the course of a weekday, I was inspired by the number of people, particularly the young adults, who were there. Our tour guide shared with us the statistics that, in Poland alone, 97% of the population is Catholic and nearly 90% practice their faith regularly. Why is it not that way here?

THE CHURCH ALIVE!

78. It seems to me that the answer is found in the greater care that we must take in making the celebration of Mass the best possible experience it can be in every one of our parishes and all of our faith communities. It can be by the way in which we invite those who have not been joining us to do so. The first challenge demands that we truly see the Eucharist as a priority in our diocese. The second demands that we have the courage and the hospitality to invite others to join us.

79. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in their *Decree on Ecumenism* addressed the need for our faith communities to be evangelized in such a way that if we are going to invite others into our communities, we have to be sure that, in fact, we

are ready for them. "*[The] primary duty is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be renewed and done in the Catholic household itself in order that its life may bear witness more clearly and faithfully to the teachings and institutions which have been handed down from Christ through the apostles*" (*Decree on Ecumenism*, 4).

80. Whenever we take a look at making the Eucharist the prayer that it is and what Jesus intended it to be for us, that expectation demands that we set aside sufficient resources to make it the best possible celebration. For us as deacons, priests and bishops, it means that we do our very best to be prepared in our preaching of God's Word that is not only faithful to God's intent but that we



become the bridges to help God's Word become more deeply rooted in the lives of our faithful.

81. For parish communities, it demands that how we celebrate the liturgy reflects the mind and heart of the Church, expressed in so many of the Church's documents. It falls to the priest as presider of the Eucharist to insure that the Liturgy be celebrated properly. He should guarantee that music be most appropriate to the celebrations and that proper resources be set aside to make it such; that great care be given to enhancing the environment that focuses on the various liturgical seasons of year; that readers who proclaim God's Word do so convincingly and following much preparation; that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who share the Body and Blood of Christ not do so routinely but in a Christ-like manner; that those who serve at the altar understand the great witness they give to the rest of the congregation; that the ushers more clearly see their role as being inviters of stewardship; that greeters, who have the special talent of hospitality, truly make old comers and new comers welcome to our parish. And finally, that all of us, at the conclusion of each Mass, genuinely look for ways in which we are to live the reality we have just celebrated. To be the Church of Pittsburgh, to be "the Church Alive," demands first and foremost that we never take for granted the Eucharist and that we always think of the priority which it ought to be in our lives.

(2) Evangelization

82. As has already been recounted several times within the context of my letter to you, at the end of His public life, Jesus entrusted His work to the apostles by saying: "Go forth and make disciples of all nations!" In a word, Jesus passed on the important work of evangelization.

83. Over the course of the last several decades, we as Catholics have become much more comfortable with the word "evangelization" and the action "to evangelize." "To evangelize" is not a foreign reality to most of us. Like so many of you, I can remember as a youngster watching on television the powerful speaker, the Reverend Dr. Billy Graham. I marveled at the way he was able to touch people's hearts. But we as Catholics can and must do the same, from Pope John XXIII to Pope

Benedict XVI, from Mother Teresa of Calcutta to you and me. This is the work that Jesus gives to us. But from the most elementary level, to evangelize means to bring others to God. Each of us can and must do that through our words and in our deeds. Would the words you and I speak truly reflect words that would come out of the mouth of Jesus? Do our deeds inspire other people to do good? Our ancestor in the faith, Saint Francis of Assisi, was ever so right when he reflected on the challenge of Jesus to be a disciple and urged followers of Jesus to "always preach the Gospel and, if necessary, use words."

84. Today we have reached a moment and opportunity not only to witness by our deeds but also by what we have to say as a Church. In a very complex society in which rapid progress is being seen in the areas of science and medicine, the need to bring a clear and forthright catechesis exemplifies the important role of the Church in guiding the affairs of humanity from the moral and ethical standpoint to which the Gospel of Christ provides. Pope Paul VI wrote in the landmark document on evangelization that "*Even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified—what Peter called always having 'your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have'—and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus [...] There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed*" (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 22).

85. Witness and proclamation are the hinges of evangelization. Renewal in our parishes must consider how each believer witnesses and proclaims their faith, each according to their own gifts and charisms, and their status within Christ's Body. There are three groupings of people to whom I believe our evangelization efforts ought to be first directed: (a) those who have left the Church; (b) those who have no or little religious upbringing called the unchurched; (c) and the churched, those who practice their faith and need to be sustained.

86. (a) **Those who have left the Church.** Sadly, because the Church is a human reflection of

the Body of Christ, we can sometimes make mistakes. Those mistakes made either by the ordained, religious or the lay faithful can cause people to leave the fold intentionally. As I reflect upon my life and perhaps as you reflect upon yours, we need to do more than just consider their decision to leave the Church as something unfortunate. It seems to me that for us it becomes an opportunity to invite them back and to make them feel welcome.

87. As we seek to grow as the Church of Pittsburgh, I invite you to join with me in inviting those who have left to come back. They were not only once important to us, they still are! Sometimes all it takes is a simple invitation. Other times, it takes a great deal of effort. Both investments are worth it.

88. (b) **The Unchurched.** Over the course of the last months, I have been intrigued by the numbers of people who are not Catholic or who were baptized Catholic but never really catechized in the faith, who have asked me many questions about who we are as Church. Many of the questions came from people who were eventually brought into the Church through the RCIA at the Easter Vigil. There are many others out there who are curious about our Church. We should be more than curious about encouraging them to give us a good look. Then, there are those large segments in our society who have never been baptized or were baptized but never introduced to the Church. There are an alarming number of people in this situation. These people often look for God in the wrong places. The New Age philosophy places spirituality in opposition to religion. We, as a Church, need to demonstrate to these people that we are indeed a people of faith, prayer, and spirituality.

89. (c) **The Already Churched.** And finally, evangelization means not taking for granted those who are already in our Church. I need to do more; we all need to do more in building each other up as the Body of Christ. We can do so by simply saying thanks for the ways that others inspire us. We can also do so by encouraging others to use their talents for the sake of the Church. We can especial-

ly do so by sensing a vocation to the priesthood, diaconate or brotherhood in men and religious commitment in women as sisters, encouraging them to pursue God's call. The *Acts of the Apostles* describes the first community, the parish, in how those believers ministered to one another. This ought to be the concern we demonstrate to one another. We should never presume that just because people are attending Mass, getting involved in the parish, that things are fine. We need to be engaged in each other's lives, knowing how we can be of service to one another. Some of the evangelical Christian communities model this service well, so much so that a large portion of their congregations are Catholics who have left their parishes to find the personal experience of charity that may often be lacking in our parishes.

90. "The Church Alive"—we will grow the Church of Pittsburgh when our evangelization efforts consider those who have left the Church, the unchurched, and those of us who need to be sustained in our faith. As Pope John Paul II reflected: "*Parishes are called to be welcoming and fraternal, places of Christian initiation, of education in and celebration of the faith, open to the full range of charisms, services and ministries, organized in a communal and responsible way, capable of utilizing existing movements of the apostolate, attentive to the cultural diversity of the people*" (*Ecclesia in America*, 41).

(3) Catechesis

91. Over the course of the last several decades, we in the Church have also become very familiar with the word that has its early roots in the Church, "catechesis." The word "to catechize," simply put, means: to teach about Christ and the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church He established. Catechesis, or learning the Good News, follows directly from both the Eucharist and evangelization.

92. As a high school graduate in 1967, I can say that our class was one of the last to learn the faith from the *Baltimore Catechism*. That text, put in question and answer form, outlined the



doctrine and traditions of the Church that allowed us to come to know the Catholic faith. For several decades following, at least two generations of Catholics did not have the opportunity really to learn the faith without a definitive resource that conveyed the faith in its fullness. Thanks to the inspiring efforts of Pope John Paul II, and the birth of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as well as a number of efforts of the bishops in our own country in this regard, we are now headed back in the right direction. Yet it is going to take some time for us to “catch up” in the process of faith education.

93. As the Church of Pittsburgh, it will be imperative for us to embrace catechesis in four areas: (a) Catholic schools; (b) religious education; (c) youth and young adult ministry; and (d) adult faith formation.

94. (a) **Catholic Schools.** A number of you know that I am a product of Catholic school education—37 years of it to be exact. With 24 years as a student and 13 years on the other side of the desk as a teacher and an administrator, I am so grateful for the opportunities my parents and the Church gave me to learn about God and the Church in the classroom. While catechesis rightly begins in the home, there is great value in our Catholic schools. There is also great expense involved in this enterprise and, especially, great sacrifice. As we look to the challenges of the future, we will most probably have to “think outside the box” and look for new ways in which our Catholic schools can continue to thrive. What those models might be and how we can best implement them in the Church of Pittsburgh remains to be seen. Yet, in meeting this challenge, it is a challenge in which I welcome support from all of you. Given that this is one of the important arms of catechesis over the centuries, it is important for our growing of the Church not to discount their important value and timeliness.

95. (b) **Religious Education.** While citing the importance of Catholic schools, it is equally important to emphasize the central role of religious education in our parishes. For students who attend public schools, religious education must be the best it can be. Those

who teach religious education must be well prepared to meet the challenges of handing on God’s Word in a way that our students can truly learn and be excited about their faith. Those who teach religious education must be publicly recognized for their important service. Those students who are part of the religious education programs must see that they are as valued as are those who come to Catholic schools. My fear is that, often-times, religious education programs are seen only as the “ticket,” the rites of passage, to the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation) rather than what they are intended to be—growing in the faith in a lively and dedicated manner.

96. (c) **Youth and Young Adult Ministry.** I have witnessed firsthand the enthusiasm of countless youth and young adults and their great desire to be involved in their parishes and in the life of the Church. Our young people today have a strong sense of apostolic zeal in serving the needs of others and want to make a difference. So often, however, the materialist and secular culture in which we live makes it difficult for young people to embrace their faith. The Church must find effective means to reach out to our youth and young adults and enable them to become active members of the Church community.

97. (d) **Adult Faith Formation.** This is perhaps the greatest challenge we face in our Church. Because of the several generations who have not received a good understanding of the faith, the Church must look toward many innovative ways to welcome a better understanding of the Church for those who have not received such a good formation. As is the case with the celebration of the Eucharist, so must the case be for adult faith formation. There must be an appropriate investment of resources to allow for well established adult faith programs. The end result of such an effort will truly be “the Church Alive!”

(4) Formation

98. To speak of catechesis which flows from the Eucharist and evangelization cannot stop at a

point of education in the faith. The faith is meant to be lived. Faith formation is about helping each of us find ways in which we can better live our faith as servants in the example of Jesus Himself.

99. During the time that I served as an administrator at Quigley Catholic High School, one of the requirements for graduation was that all students take part in what was called a "Senior Service Project." During the course of that week, students had the opportunity to be part of a supervised program where they would put their faith into action. We began that process during my last year at the high school. The results were phenomenal. As a matter of fact, through the Senior Service Project, some students discovered their own careers.
100. The experience of these students is one that must be the focal point for us as Church. The celebration of the Eucharist, the experience of evangelization, the various models of catechesis, all fall short of their purposes unless faith is lived. Many of our parishes are already engaged in opportunities for people to put faith into practice. Those opportunities assure that living our faith becomes a priority every day of our lives.
101. When questioned about her own fidelity, Mother Teresa said: *"It's simply a matter of living my faith one day at a time with one person at a time."* That mindset has put her on the road to canonized sainthood. It can, in fact, do the same for you and me.
102. For us to grow the Church, for us to be "the Church Alive," the time is now for us to consider how each of us can live our faith in bold, courageous and effective ways, especially and on behalf of the poor, the marginalized, the often forgotten in our cities and neighborhoods.

(5) Stewardship

103. Finally, we must consider the understanding of stewardship, another word becoming more familiar in the life of the Church, when we consider the requirements of discipleship. If the Church of Pittsburgh is going to grow, if we are truly excited about our faith, if the Church is

going to be Alive in the Spirit, then active discipleship must be pursued. For some time now, the word "stewardship" was correlated with financial giving to the Church. Then the three "t's" of time, talent, and treasure expanded the notion of stewardship. A more expansive application of stewardship is one that considers three other realities: prayer, sharing and service.

104. (a) **Prayer.** First of all, whenever we speak of stewardship as Church, simply put, stewardship means giving back to God what God has given to us. God has given us many gifts. It is up to us to give those gifts back to Him. Before we can do so, it is important that we spend time in prayer to identify those gifts. In the earlier section of this letter addressing Eucharistic Adoration as part of our observance of the Year of Saint Paul, I address the need for us to reflect upon the gifts that we have been given and what of those gifts can be given back to growing the Church, of helping Pittsburgh to be "the Church Alive." Whenever you and I take some quiet moments to consider what God has given to us, we are and will be surprised at how many ways in which God has made us special. Sharing those special aspects of who we are is what makes this Church so very special.
105. (b) **Sharing.** Once we have an opportunity to reflect on the gifts that God has given us, there comes the opportunity for us to share those gifts, for the honor and glory of God and for the benefit of each other. I am remembering well, as I do often, the life of my mentor, the late Father Edward Farina. Father Farina would note that he was not a great speaker, nor a man of power, nor an innovator, nor an administrator. But he was an outstanding pastor. He loved his people as much as he loved our God and the gift of priesthood. He shared his life for the sake of the Church, for the sake of his people. And because of his example, I heard God's call to the priesthood.
106. It seems to me that, just as it was with Father Farina, so must it be with all of us. God wants to use our gifts, shared with others, to inspire each of us to become more like

Christ. To do so is to help grow the Church and to help the Church of Pittsburgh to be the Church Alive.

107. (c) **Service.** And finally, whenever we share our gifts, we come to a better understanding of what it means to be servants. That, in his Last Supper discourse recorded in the Gospel of John, after Jesus washed the feet of His apostles, He says: *“You address me as ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and fittingly enough, for that is what I am. But, if I, Who am your Teacher and Lord have washed your feet, so must you wash each other’s feet. What I have done for you is to give you an example. As I have done for you, so must you do for each other”* (John 13:13-15).

108. Jesus was serious about this reflection. He called His followers then, and all of us now, to be servants. To be a servant means to think first of Christ and others and second of ourselves. Peace and justice demand no less. Every single one of us is called to servant leadership. To embrace that call is to help grow the Church and to help the Church of Pittsburgh be “the Church Alive.” This especially becomes the focus of our outreach to the poor in our midst.

VI. Final Thoughts

109. Over the course of these reflections, I have embarked on my first pastoral letter. It is written for you, the people whom I love so much, the Church of Pittsburgh. It is written from me, your shepherd, who deeply desires to grow with you in holiness. But it is written at a time that I believe is a new Pentecost. It is written at a time where I believe God is calling you and me to be excited about our faith. It is written at a time when we are called to, in fact, grow the Church. It is written at a time that the Church of Pittsburgh is recognized for what it must be and is: “the Church Alive!” It is written at a time when we place the spotlight of our attention on Saint Paul. It is written at a time when we are consoled with the knowledge that Mary, the

Mother of Jesus and the Mother of the Church, protects us under the mantle of her love.

110. In his closing words during the homily that Pope Benedict XVI delivered in Washington, DC at Nationals Park, a word of encouragement was given to us Catholics in the United States. With the same sentiments and eagerness, I encourage you, the faithful of Pittsburgh, to be alive, to be excited, to be joy-filled in your faith. *“As the Church in the United States gives thanks for the blessings of the past two hundred years, I invite you, your families, and every parish and religious community, to trust in the power of grace to create a future of promise for God’s people in this country. I ask you, in the Lord Jesus, to set aside all division and to work with joy to prepare a way for him, in fidelity to his word and in constant conversion to his will. Above all, I urge you to continue to be a leaven of evangelical hope in American society, striving to bring the light and truth of the Gospel to the task of building an ever more just and free world for generations yet to come”* (Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily during the Celebration of Holy Mass at the Washington Nationals Stadium, April 17, 2008*). Clearly, the Holy Father’s message, while meant for all Catholics in our country, serves specifically for us as the Church of Pittsburgh in this time of “A New Pentecost.”

111. And so now in response to the trust which Jesus Himself places in us and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is our challenge to be excited about our faith, to grow the Church of Pittsburgh and most especially to be “the Church Alive!”

Grateful for our belief that “Nothing is Impossible with God,” I am

Your brother in Christ,

Most Reverend David A. Zubik
Bishop of Pittsburgh

June 29, 2008
Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles

Questions for Discussion

Paragraph numbers of the pastoral letter are cited at the end of each question to help guide your discussion. Parish pastoral councils, parish staffs, organizations and apostolates, students and teachers, and all of us can use these questions to help us discern how we can be "The Church Alive!"

1. *The Church Alive!* In what ways would you like to see your personal faith enlivened? Do you sense personally the same excitement that Bishop Zubik senses for the Church of Pittsburgh (1-4, 9)?
2. Discuss how the Holy Spirit inspires you and how you sense the Holy Spirit guiding your faith. Do you sense a connection to the miracles, words and deeds of Christ through the life of the Church (6, 8)?
3. The Church yesterday is the same Church today yet each generation faces its own challenges. Discuss what challenges you see for the Church of Pittsburgh today (10-12, 23).
4. When Catholics do not live their faith each day or do not follow the teachings of the Church, confusion erupts. Are there any practices in your life that need to be purified and changed? How can each of us be more faithful to the Gospel (12-14, 84)?
5. Prayer is the essential hallmark of a Christian. In what ways can our parish become more of a prayerful community; how can we become more of a Eucharistic community (17-21, 34, 104)?
6. How active am I as a lay member of the Church in living my faith away from the parish grounds—at work, in my community, in school? Do people even know that I am a Catholic? Am I helping to transform my community or its institutions into a reflection of God's Kingdom (29-30, 54-55, 85)?
7. For any parish to grow, to be vibrant and healthy, requires that each member contribute their charisms and gifts—how active am I in my parish? How can we invite others to be more involved (31, 81, 105-106)?
8. Discuss how we can encourage more people to be trained for professional ministry in the Church which assures competent, effective ministry (32).
9. A true sign of a vibrant parish is how we welcome the stranger, the alienated, those who feel left aside. What are we doing at the parish level and even the personal level to be a welcoming and serving Church, especially to and for the poor (44, 47, 86-87)?
10. Ordained priesthood is absolutely essential for the life of the Church for without it, we have no sacramental life. Does a culture of vocation exist in the parish? How do we support our priests today? Are parents encouraging priestly vocations among their sons? What can the parish be doing even more to promote priestly vocations? What am I doing (57-58)?
11. Effective ministry presumes that each member of Christ's Body knows their own role, knows where on the team they play as with any member of any team. Discuss how the laity and the ordained can work more closely together while preserving each other's rightful duties and roles in the Church (59-62).
12. The stewardship of our financial and temporal resources is to be used in growing our parish communities. Is the celebration of the Sunday Mass the best it can be? What resources do we need to invest in order to make the Eucharistic liturgy the best it can be for true, authentic worship (79-81)?
13. During the Year of Saint Paul—what time, prayer, sharing, service can be offered to grow my faith, my parish, my Church (103-107)?



“God speaks to each of us. What is He saying to you and me?
What and who is He calling you and me to be?
Can you and I hear Him? How can we respond to the Lord?”