

Looking in, looking out

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Pope Francis promotes discerning introspection. But, he also teaches that we must look outward as the path to fulfillment. Active concern for others purifies inner thoughts and motives.

One look-in is the pope's May 9 release of legislation called "You are the light of the world." It acknowledges that the sexual abuse by clergy crisis saddens the Lord, threatens the integrity of the Church, and causes awful suffering to the victims. The pope sets out laws to protect minors and vulnerable persons, and lays the main responsibility on the bishops worldwide. Some will note not much new for the United States. Our policies and practices have been in place for years. The next weeks will make the new elements more apparent, especially as the U.S. bishops will deliberate refinements during their June assembly in Baltimore. Planning discussions have also looked outward and ahead.

Another look-in that continues in this newspaper is a renewal of the Uniting in Heart pastoral conversation. Both clergy and laity have speaking parts. Because our mission is teaching the Gospel for the salvation of souls, we have to examine how our institutional commitments line up at the parish and diocesan levels. Yes, this is a matter of distinguishing needs and wants as the Holy Spirit would rate them. The route to long-term vitality for our Church always requires a faith response to the Holy Spirit.

We will continue to look outwardly in ways that reflect the social teaching of the Church. Sometimes we name these "social justice" advocacies. Because most of us were raised to not brag about the good we do, there can be a perception that the Church is not doing much. So we increasingly look at the community benefit models that non-profit hospitals use in government reports. Everything gets measured. In 2013, I surveyed the diocese (24 counties) for the community benefit provided by parishes and the diocese, respect life sites, hospitals and St. Vincent de Paul ministries. It was \$59 million for 2012, with the largest share coming from Catholic health systems before the Affordable Care Act became law.

Through *The Catholic Moment*, my offices will survey diocesan social justice activities during the coming months. Looking outward is not just about providing services or finances. And it is not about establishing advocacies on every issue. We look to learn about a couple of trends. First, what are the advocacies now taking place? Are they educational in nature, or are they also socially active or interactive? We should publicly recognize the good they do. Second, we can learn which opportunities or issues are inviting an active response so the best mechanisms can be brought to bear by local leadership.

The topics are numerous. Needs differ, and some responses are best when local. Sometimes community networks function best. Recently the Catholic Campaign for Human Development donated financial support for a job-training cooperative in Anderson that is lifting up people who really need help. These were funds earmarked by a special annual collection here. Then there are parish missions to places both inside and away from Indiana. There are groups responding to local food insufficiencies. Some are helping refugees and immigrants. Others will reach out in matters of prison ministry, prison reform, firearms safety, voter registration, capital punishment (Pope Francis

revised the Catechism teaching, paragraph 2267), clean drinking water, elder care, and race/ethnic relations. Educating children in church or government schools always requires attention by whole communities.

We all benefit by hearing good things that are propelled by Gospel values. Affirmation is a potent medicine, and may move new people into purposeful action.