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**ADDRESS TO DRES, CATECHISTS, AND YOUTH MINISTERS**

**Given by**

**Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre**

**Thursday, November 2, 2017**

Good morning and thank you for your presence here today. I would like to structure my reflections offered here into three sections:

Section one: The urgency of Evangelization

Section two: C.C.D. through the lens of *Joy of the Gospel* and *Living as Missionary Disciples*

Section three: Practical implications moving forward

In this presentation I want to share my vision for youth formation within our strategic plan. As you hear my heart this morning, remember I am casting a vision. Today, we may not leave with all the questions answered or the details finalized. However, today we will leave with a direction; with a vision that will guide all as we – *together* – move forward into the future.

Let us begin by admitting what is at stake, *namely the salvation of souls*. As Bishop ... as a priest ... as one who is a spiritual father ... I have a great love for our youth. As a Bishop and spiritual father to all the young people of our diocese, I have a deep personal longing for their *true* happiness and eternal salvation. I want us to be grounded in the reality that ultimately any vision for C.C.D., any vision for youth ministry, and any changes to the structures that evangelize our youth are all oriented to one end: the salvation of souls. We are here today for one reason and one reason only: the salvation of every soul that is entrusted to us. We are here because both classic categories called “C.C.D.” or “Youth Ministry” exist for one reason, and one reason only: the salvation of every young person and their being offered the opportunity to flourish to their full potential, becoming the saints they were created to be. If we are to

appreciate the vision that God is calling forth in our diocese we must hear a new vision through the ears of what's at stake: *there is an urgency in our mission because there is an urgency regarding salvation. I repeat, there is an urgency in our ministry to young people.*

I think we can all agree that we are facing new and very real challenges in our culture. I think that the case can be made to support the fact that in the present age secularization has more of an influence on our youth than does the Gospel. There is a rapid acceleration of the use and influence of technology. There is more and more of a rejection of a common moral code held by community as a whole. There are complex issues within family. All of this is impacting our young people. We notice an atrophy in their attention span, difficulties in their ability to communicate in healthy ways, a real poverty of deep and meaningful relationships, as well as confusion over many foundational beliefs such as what it means to be human, what it means to be created male and female, and what is true love. Today's youth are being raised in a culture bombarding them with exposure to many "isms", each of which offers false promises of fulfillment only to leave us empty and searching for more. Some of these 'isms' are: narcissism, consumerism, and relativism, to name only a few.

A recent CARA study surveyed U.S. participants ages 15 to 25 who were raised Catholic but who no longer identify as such, as well as another of group of self-identified U.S. Catholic adults 18 and older. Nearly two-thirds of participants in the youth and young adult study reported "losing the faith" between the ages of 10 and 17. A startling number – 23% – stated that they had ceased believing the Catholic faith before the age of 10. Half of the surveyed group now self-identify as atheist, agnostic or without any religious affiliation.

*As I said, there is an urgency.* The situation we are facing with our young people demands that we produce an appropriate response. We *must* look for new ways to engage our young people. We *must* find new opportunities that allow them to encounter the love of Jesus personally. We *must* be ever more creative so that they take steps forward and grow in that relationship. In short, our efforts to reach young people in the area of catechesis *must* be renewed and adapted. The days of us speculating whether things

should change have passed us by. The days of us merely complaining about “the culture” or “how hard things are” are gone.

*There is an urgency.* We *must* help our young people discover the meaning of life. This means we *must* find ways to present the timeless Gospel message – the authentic, unchanging, fully Orthodox Truths of the Catholic Church. But, we *must* find new methods for presenting this Gospel message. We *must* present the message in such a way that allows our youth to see the Gospel within their real-life circumstances. We *must* discover ways that allow them to be excited about the richness of our Catholic faith. *Yes ... there is an urgency.* In a certain sense, we need to “learn *their* language” so that we can then speak it back to *them*. And, we need to grow in our capacity to truly listen to them and their needs. In his landmark Apostolic Exhortation entitled *Evangelii gaudium*, also known as *Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis writes:

*“Youth ministry, as traditionally organized, has also suffered the impact of social changes. Young people often fail to find responses to their concerns, needs, problems and hurts in the usual structures. As adults, we find it hard to listen patiently to them, to appreciate their concerns and demands, and to speak to them in a language they can understand.”*<sup>1</sup>

In summary, there is a lot at stake – *the salvation of souls*. Youth ministry, in whatever form, whether it be C.C.D. session or Youth Ministry retreats, is about one thing: the battle for the souls and the eternal salvation of youth. Our ministry to young people is threatened by historic challenges and requires us to respond. We *have* to change our methods. We cannot minister in 2017 the way we did 20, 15, or 10 years ago. I, as your Bishop, can no longer in good conscience accept the words: “Well, if we only reach one person ...”. While I truly care about and rejoice in that one person, I nonetheless grieve for those we did not reach. Their souls – *all* of their souls – are worth fighting for. There is an urgency for us – all of us – every parish in our diocese. We *must* adapt. *There is an urgency.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 105

The reform of C.C.D. will only be understood if we together embrace a vision that is being given to us by God through the gift of our Holy Father Pope Francis and the response from our U.S. Bishops. Therefore, I would like to cast a new vision for C.C.D., a new vision that is best understood through the lens of two historic documents: Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Joy of the Gospel* and the U.S. Bishop's document *Living as Missionary Disciples*. To appreciate these two documents, let us begin by coming to a greater understanding the mind and heart of our Holy Father Pope Francis, attempting to appreciate his understanding of evangelization. Understanding the mind of Pope Francis will help us understand why the author of *Joy of the Gospel* wrote as he did.

In a conversation with some representatives of the Lutheran Evangelical church in Rome on November 15, 2015, a young boy named Julius asked Pope Francis this question: "What do you enjoy most about being pope?" The Pope's very personal and simple reply is worth sharing with you. He said:

*"The answer is simple. What I enjoy most is being a parish priest, a pastor. I don't like paperwork. I don't like those jobs. What do I enjoy most? Parish work. Once, when I was rector of the theology faculty, I was also priest of the parish that was next to the faculty, and you know, I loved teaching the children their catechism and doing a Mass with the children on Sundays. ... I like being pope in a parish-priest way."*

Francis continued:

*"Being pope means being a bishop, being a parish priest, a pastor. If a pope doesn't behave like a bishop, a parish priest, a pastor he may be a very intelligent, very important person and have a lot of influence in society, but I think he won't be happy in his heart."*

From the Holy Father's reply to Julius' question, we must admit that this Pope likes "*being pope in a parish-priest way*" or you might say he enjoys "*being a pastor.*" In fact, few of us can forget his homily at his first Chrism Mass on March 28, 2013, only two weeks after his election as the Vicar of Christ. It was during that homily that he painted a picture for us all: priests are called to be pastors "with the smell of the sheep." Simply put: Francis talks *like a pastor*. He thinks *like a pastor*. He leads *like a pastor*.

Therefore, we must first appreciate how Pope Francis is a pastor, and second we appreciate is that *he is a Jesuit*. Jorge Mario Bergoglio entered the Society of Jesus in 1958 at the age of 21 years old. He took first vows in 1960, was ordained a priest in 1969, and professed final vows in 1973. Worth noting, Fr. Pedro Arrupe was Superior General of the Society of Jesus from 1965 to 1983. The most influential years of Pope Francis' Jesuit imagination came under the tenure of Fr. Pedro Arrupe. Arrupe's mind influenced Francis' mind just as much as Ignatius' mind influenced the young Jorge Mario Bergoglio. In 1976 Fr. Pedro Arrupe was at the high point of service as Superior General of the Jesuits. He was invited to the 41<sup>st</sup> International Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia and asked to deliver a keynote address to Catholic educators from the across the country. Fr. Arrupe's keynote was distinctly Jesuit: urging Catholics to fall in love with God. Following the speech, Fr. Arrupe fielded questions from the crowd and one of the participant listeners passively remarked: "Falling in love. That's great. Now give me something practical." To this comment, Fr. Arrupe spontaneously replied:

*"Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."*

At the heart of Arrupe's vision is encounter, relationship, falling in love with God in such a way that one's life changes. This is distinctly Ignatian. This is distinctly Jesuit. This is the perspective that formed the mind of Pope Francis when he was a young Jesuit.

Pope Francis is a Jesuit, and, as such, at the heart of his mind is a call for every person to *encounter* God in a life-changing way. To Pope Francis, the word "encounter" means more than "meeting". Encounter means "encounter with God"; it means "life-changing encounter with God." Encounter means "relationship with God." It is central how Pope Francis views Christianity and evangelization. It's all about encounter.

Pope Francis – he is a pastor, he is a Jesuit, and he is one who bold in addressing what needs to be reformed. He has taken bold steps in reform of the Vatican. He has taken bold steps to refocus the priesthood on the ministry of service. He is challenging us to be urgent in our response to reforming the structures of evangelization to youth and in this regard C.C.D. stands as most prominent.

Pope Francis – he is a pastor, he is a Jesuit, and he is one who bold in addressing what needs to be reformed. These understandings of his mind now help us appreciate his landmark Apostolic Exhortation entitled *Joy of the Gospel*. It is the clarion call from the Church regarding the future of parish life and evangelization. The *Joy of the Gospel* is a very bold document. Permit me to allow Pope Francis himself to address us as we listen directly to his own words:

*“I am aware that nowadays documents do not arouse the same interest as in the past and that they are quickly forgotten. Nevertheless, I want to emphasize that what I am trying to express here has a programmatic significance and important consequences. I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are.”<sup>2</sup>*

Again, Pope Francis writes:

*“I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself. As*

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<sup>2</sup> *Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 25

*John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: “All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion”.<sup>3</sup>*

Still ... the Holy Father urges us:

*“To make this missionary impulse ever more focused, generous and fruitful, I encourage each particular Church to undertake a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform. ... Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way.’ I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization.”<sup>4</sup>*

And, finally we read:

*“Here I have chosen to present some guidelines which can encourage and guide the whole Church in a new phase of evangelization, one marked by enthusiasm and vitality. All of them help give shape to a definite style of evangelization which I ask you to adopt in every activity which you undertake.”<sup>5</sup>*

*Joy of the Gospel* reflects the mind of Pope Francis, specifically the three attributes mentioned a few moments ago. First it sounds like a pastor; it’s written from a parish priest to parish priests and those who minister in parishes. Second, the central theme of *Joy of the Gospel* places an emphasis on the disciple having an encounter with Jesus Christ. In fact, *Joy of the Gospel* couches all evangelization through the lens of encounter. Third *Joy of the Gospel* is bold and carries with it an urgency.

Responding directly to the Holy Father’s vision for evangelization, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops through the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis produced in March of 2017 a document entitled *Living as Missionary Disciples*. Inspired by Pope Francis we bishops echo the urgency

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<sup>3</sup> *Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 27

<sup>4</sup> *Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 33

<sup>5</sup> *Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 17

for reform and the need for renewal within all structures of evangelization. A few quotes from *Living as Missionary Disciples* can help us appreciate the mandate:

*“One of the great challenges facing the Church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the Church’s mission .... This will require creativity in adapting to changed situations, carrying forward the legacy of the past not primarily by maintaining our structures and institutions, which have served us well, but above all by being open to the possibilities which the Spirit opens up to us and communicating the joy of the Gospel, daily and in every season of our life.”<sup>6</sup>*

The U.S. Bishops also published an accompaniment to *Living as Missionary Disciples* entitled *National Directory for Catechesis Worksheets*. There we read:

*“This is clearly a time of immense possibilities for the Catholic Church in the United States as new directions for evangelization, catechesis, and missionary activity have been identified within the process of discipleship formation. The renewal of emphasis on evangelization and catechesis within the context of the new evangelization has produced many praiseworthy initiatives and efforts in the formation of youth, adults, and children. As such, it has been a remarkable period for the reorientation and promotion of evangelization and catechesis within the universal Church.”<sup>7</sup>*

*“Before we take another step, we must acknowledge that we cannot talk about catechesis without talking about evangelization. In his apostolic exhortation, *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, Pope Paul VI articulated an important principle for the renewal of catechesis when he described catechesis as a work of evangelization in the context of the mission of the Church.”<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> *Living as Missionary Disciples*, pg. 20

<sup>7</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis Worksheets*, Introduction pg. i

<sup>8</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis Worksheets*, Introduction pg. iii

*“Catechists therefore need to embrace a larger role as evangelizing agents who are skilled in the process of evangelization and carefully equipped to discern the opportune moments when a person’s initial faith is ready to be deepened with catechesis. Catechists themselves need to be evangelized in an ongoing way as well. And they need to remain vigilant to build on initial acts of evangelization with a catechesis that is appropriate for each person at that stage of his or her faith journey.”*<sup>9</sup>

Prayerful reflection upon the mind of Pope Francis, the call of *Joy of the Gospel*, and the mandate from *Living as Missionary Disciples* reveals obvious implications for us in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux. Specifically, there are obvious implications for anyone ministering within what we know as “C.C.D.” However, before we discuss these implications, let me remind us of the history of what we have come to know as C.C.D.

The letters “C.C.D.” initialize the words “Confraternity of Christian Doctrine”. The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine was established 1562 for the purpose of giving religious instruction. Leading into the 16th century, the Apostle’s Creed and the Lord’s Prayer formed the general basis of religious instruction. Catholics had to know them by heart, and parish priests were exhorted to explain them on Sundays and festivals.

Of course, we all know that the 16th century was marked with two major historical movements: the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter Reformation. It was at the Council of Trent that the Church took steps to intentionally answer questions posed by the Reformation, as well as to establish structures to catechize the faithful in the Truths of the Faith. It was there, flowing from the grace of the Council of Trent, that C.C.D. – the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine – was born.

It is important to note two specific things regarding C.C.D. Number one: C.C.D. was established as a direct response *to the needs of the day*. The Holy Father, and the Bishops with him, recognized that the Church was facing a crisis. In response to the signs of the times, the Holy Spirit led the Church to adapt – to change – and thus respond to what was needed. Number two: C.C.D. was established for a very

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<sup>9</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis Worksheets*, Introduction pg. iv

specific purpose: intellectual formation. The needs of the day stemmed from the confusion introduced by the Protestant Reformation. C.C.D. was a response from the Church to intellectual formation, for this is where the needs were.

C.C.D. is a 16th century initiative. However, 16th century structures, if they are still structured as they were at their origin, may not be relevant to 21<sup>st</sup> century problems. I again echo the words of Pope Francis:

*“Youth ministry, as traditionally organized, has also suffered the impact of social changes. Young people often fail to find responses to their concerns, needs, problems and hurts in the usual structures.”*<sup>10</sup>

*“Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way.’ I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization.”*<sup>11</sup>

Yes, there is an urgency. Today we must re-envision how we minister to young people. We can call it whatever we want. We can still call it C.C.D. We can still call it the youth group. We call it whatever we want. I am not as concerned with what we *call* the ministry as I am with what we *do in* the ministry. What we do – what we must do – is form disciples. Again, the U.S. Bishop urge us:

*“This is clearly a time of immense possibilities for the Catholic Church in the United States as new directions for evangelization, catechesis, and missionary activity have been identified within the process of discipleship formation.”*<sup>12</sup>

There are three specific aspects of a renewed vision for C.C.D. that I would like to emphasize. Number one ... we must form the whole person, not merely the mind. When C.C.D. was established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century it had as its aim a specific call to intellectual formation. While we must have solid

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<sup>10</sup> *Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 105

<sup>11</sup> *Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 33

<sup>12</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis Worksheets*, Introduction pg. i

intellectual formation, we must also admit that *there is an urgency* for more. I repeat, we *do* need and must have solid intellectual formation. I do not want catechesis that lacks the fullness of Truth, or formation that is not comprehensive. What I *am* saying is that only merely lecturing or presenting theological concepts is proving to no longer work. The Holy Father is urging us to more. The U.S. Bishops are urging us to more. I, as your Bishop, am urging us to more. As we present authentic theological content, we must present this Truth in such a way that it is connected to the real lives of the students.

Number two, the aim of C.C.D. is living in a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ, not merely the transmission of theological content. In other words, the goal of C.C.D. cannot be “we covered the material.” Instead, the goal of C.C.D. must be “we presented the material AND the students themselves made connections between the material and their relationship with God.” Again, the U.S. Bishop urge us:

*“Before we take another step, we must acknowledge that we cannot talk about catechesis without talking about evangelization.”*<sup>13</sup>

Number three, we must become experts in the *students* as well as the *content*. In the formation of a young person, it is vitally important that we not merely know the *content*, but that we know the *student*. To get to know the student means we are intentional about doing so. We must become more familiar with what they experience on a day to day basis. We must become intentionally aware of where each student truly finds themselves on their journey of faith. We must start from this awareness in order to then help each young person take the next step in their relationship with God.

Therefore, there are three specific aspects of a renewed vision for C.C.D. We must form the whole person, not merely the mind. We must foster a living in a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ, not merely the transmit theological content. We must become experts in the students. And, we must do so now. *There is an urgency.*

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<sup>13</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis Worksheets*, Introduction pg. iii

As Fr. Mark Toups reviewed with you last month, we must grow in our understanding of the *process* of forming disciples. If forming disciples is “what” we do in C.C.D. must become familiar with “how” we do it. There is a *process* for forming disciples and we must become experts in the *process*. We must all grow in our ability to meet our young people exactly where they are and be confident in determining what their own personal next step with God might be. Then we must accompany them through a process – a clearly articulated process. The process of disciple formation is articulated simply in five words: Connect ... encounter ... conversion ... grow ... mission. Very quickly, I would like to briefly comment on each of these.

*Connect.* This initial movement within formation is for a young person to “connect” with people committed to their growth. “Connect” has particular implications for our youth. I believe our youth particularly suffer today from a lack of real connection. Today’s youth are growing up in a world where people may know a lot of “information” about them as can be read on Facebook, Twitter, or dozens of other social media apps. However, few people really “*know*” them. Young people today not only deeply long for true friendships, connections and a sense of belonging with their peers, but they also long for this with *adults*. We must seek to help young people connect not only with their peers *but also with adults* who are invested in their well-being and willing to journey with them through their faith journey.

Sometimes the journey of accompaniment with a young person can be a slow process that takes much patience and love. We must learn how to accompany young people with steadiness, compassion, and perseverance. For some, we will need to take time to build a foundation of trust before they will be ready to seek a deeper encounter with Christ. For others, who have already come to know the love of God deeply and are desiring to grow in holiness, we must help them to grow in these deeper ways. No matter where a young person is, this element of “connect” facilitates accompaniment which is necessary for all other pieces of the process of formation.

*Encounter.* Pope Francis is merely the latest to speak of the centrality of encounter with God as the energy that fuels the formation process. Our ministry with today’s youth must lead them Jesus, to a personal *encounter* with Jesus Christ.

*Conversion.* To stay in relationship with God requires conversion. Formation must help our young people orient their life, with Jesus at the center. As we accompany our youth we teach them to say “no” so that they are able to say “yes” more fully to God.

*Grow.* Formation must help today’s youth mature as disciples by learning more about the Truths of the Church, by participating in the Sacraments, by learning out how to pray and live a life of virtue.

*Mission.* Finally, we must help our young people learn about the spiritual gifts God has given; discovering their “charisms” and learning how to respond to God’s call in their life.

To succeed in response to God’s call we must embrace a new vision for C.C.D. As has already been stated previously, Pope Francis has said: “I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, there are practical implications to a new vision for C.C.D. Today, I would like to highlight five adjustments that are necessary if we are to respond to God’s call.

First, we must rethink what kind of team works with C.C.D. In order to move forward with a reformed model of youth formation, we will need to re-think the kind of team works with our youth. What is needed are young adults, adults and even our elderly, who have the capacity and desire to be *in relationship* with our young people. We need teams of adults who are willing to take the time to be involved in the lives of our youth: not merely concerned with what they are doing when they come to us on a Monday night, but rather taking the time to know the day to day victories, challenges and concerns that happen in the life of each young person. We cannot attempt to present the Gospel in a way that is relevant and applicable to the lives of our young people if we ourselves are not familiar with the lives of our young people. In many ways, I am reminded of Saint Paul, who would study the ways of life, the habits, and even the idols of the communities to which he was sent. Only then, in love, was he able to present to them the life-giving message of Jesus Christ. Another important element we must consider is our need for adults who are willing to live as disciples themselves. The U.S. Bishop’s remind us:

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<sup>14</sup> *Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 33

*“Catechists themselves need to be evangelized in an ongoing way as well.”*<sup>15</sup> We need men and women who are willing to grow in their own faith journey and are able to give witness to what God is doing in *their* lives. We need men and women who are willing to pass along what they have been given to grow in relationship. Now please note well. I need you to us trust God’s desire to *provide* each of our parishes with adults who are able to walk with our young people. I ask you to begin to pray for this. As Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 9 verse 37: “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few, so ask the master of the harvest to send out more laborers for the harvest.” We must ask, and we must trust He will respond.

Second, we must move forward with an emphasis on *bearing fruit*. The U.S. Bishops have urged us:

*“The parish must be concerned with bearing fruit throughout the discipleship process. This shift in focus ensures that attention is directed toward pruning what is ineffective so that new life and fruit can occur. Throughout Scripture, the metaphor of fruit is used many different times and in many ways in reference to mission. Jesus commands the disciples to “go and bear fruit that will remain” (John 15:16).”*<sup>16</sup>

This emphasis on bearing fruit is also our emphasis as we move forward. In other words, we must begin to assess all of our efforts based on whether or not we see good fruit in our own lives and in the lives of our young people. We must make an honest and on-going assessment of every aspect of our C.C.D. program and ask: What is bearing long lasting fruit? What is not bearing fruit? Last month, Fr. Mark Toups reviewed with you the nine characteristics of a mature disciple. These nine characteristics are in a sense, the result of a life lived in communion with Christ. We must commit to this focus of bearing fruit. In fact, all of us must ask this question. “Is there fruit in *my* life?” “*Am I* growing as a missionary disciple?” I, your Bishop, must ask this of myself. You must ask this. Your team of adult volunteers must ask this. And, we must begin to ask the questions: Do we see good fruit in the lives of our young people?

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<sup>15</sup> *Living as Missionary Disciples*, Introduction Pg. iv.

<sup>16</sup> *Living as Missionary Disciples*, Pg. 21

Are they growing as disciples of Jesus Christ? Is what we are spending our time and energy on bearing fruit?

Third, I predict that you will eventually feel the tension of *time*. In other words, what do we spend our time on: content or discussion? The model of C.C.D. most of us have been used to was one that focused on content alone, with the entire time of our C.C.D. sessions spent presenting content. To simply present content without the material making an impact, or being seen as relevant, will not bear fruit. We must evaluate the way in which we present the content. We need time to *connect* with the youth, meeting them “where they are”, making a space for their questions and for discussion. This will all *take up time* within our meeting with them. We will need time to help them learn how to express themselves and have a conversation with each other and adults. To take time to teach them the disciplines necessary to make Jesus a part of their daily life, will take time. We will need time “on Monday night” for this to happen. There will be a tension there between the *content* and the *time* needed for other essential components of youth formation. This is a tension worth pressing into. It will be good for us to ask: who is getting our “time”. In other words, are we giving all the time to the content, or are we leaving *adequate* space within C.C.D. for application and discussion?

Fourth, we may need to “shrink the classroom.” There will be a need for us to reduce the size of our classes in order to have more individual attention to our youth. We will need a smaller ratio of young people to adult volunteers. This will allow us to build better relationships with the young people and meet their individual needs more accurately.

Fifth, we will need a different pedagogy and different classroom resources. We are continuing our research to identify the best resources available to assist you with implementing this vision for formation. This *will* be coming to you. *I promise you, you are not alone. I reiterate ... we are in this together. We will help you with resources.* However, I need you to first understand the “why” of this new vision, which I have outlined today and for which was highlighted over your past two meetings as well. This is where we all need to be *right now*. Resources *are* coming. However, if we do not understand *why* we are

heading where we are headed, then the practical resources will not be able to aid us in the best way possible.

I have great trust in our ability to work *together* and creatively discover new ways of engaging and forming our youth. I want to offer you my sincere thanks for the time and energy, the hope and resources that you bring to our efforts to catechize our young people. You offer the very precious gift of your time in this effort, and I am truly grateful to you for this priceless gift that you give to the Church and our youth. I know that the Lord in his love will reward you for your generosity.

In conclusion, let me offer a few words of encouragement. I know that the task we face is a daunting one. However, we never face any challenge alone. I am confident that God will supply us with the assistance of the Holy Spirit as we proceed forward – together – assisting one another, and assisted by the Holy Spirit. Thank you.