

Several events converge this weekend to make this an auspicious occasion. Perhaps you have heard the glad tidings in the news that The Most Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr, presently the bishop in Duluth, Minn. will be the next Archbishop of Cincinnati. From the initial reports, it looks like the Holy Father is sending us a good one. You might also know, most likely from the envelope in your packet of contribution envelopes, that this is World Mission Sunday, the day on which the Church asks us not only to support missionary efforts around the world, but to reflect on the church's primary mission, to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and make disciples of all who will come to Christ. Lastly, this is also Covenant Sunday here at St. Vivian, the day on which we make our own personal commitments to further the mission of the Church through our support of our parish community. As I continue, I believe you will see how these events are converging to make this a great occasion.

Since this is the day on which we bring our covenant letters to church and drop them in the baskets up front as a sign of our commitment to the work God is doing through this parish, I am taking the occasion to introduce the Pastoral Covenant. The Pastoral Covenant is a set of principles, priorities and goals that I and the parish staff have formulated as we have listened prayerfully to our parish mission statement, our parish leadership and the members of our parish. The Pastoral Covenant focuses on six areas of mission or ministry that we either must focus on because they are central to what it means to be Catholic Christians, or because they are priorities for our community.

The first area of the Pastoral Covenant speaks of our community's primary purpose to lead people to God and how the Eucharist is central to achieving this purpose. The goals associated with this area are intended to help us understand this better and to help us pray better as a worshipping community.

In his address for this year's World Mission Sunday, Pope Benedict XVI writes "I would like to invite you to reflect on the continuing urgency to proclaim the Gospel also in our times. The missionary mandate continues to be an absolute priority for all baptized persons who are called to be 'servants and apostles of Christ Jesus' at the beginning of this millennium." This deals directly with the second area of concentration in the Pastoral Covenant, namely, to take seriously our mission to spread the Gospel not only in our words but by our deeds as well. Spreading the Gospel isn't just a matter of saying, shouting or singing words about Jesus. It's about living in such a way that these words are made credible because the proof of their power is in the way we live our lives. The associated goals in this area are aimed at helping us become better disciples so that our witness may become more powerful.

The third area of ministerial focus is one we share with our soon to be Archbishop. Archbishop Schnurr shares our concern that our youth are not remaining connected to the church. As a parish we are taking steps to understand the reasons for these trends and taking steps to change accordingly. We are still very much in the investigation phase, and our goals reflect this.

The fourth area involves our parish's commitment to our parish school and keeping it financially viable and academically strong. The goals in this area focus on keeping our parish school strong and affordable.

The Fifth area of our pastoral plan reflects our commitment to be both good Catholic Christians and good citizens of our world. In this area we reaffirm our commitment to live the social teachings of the Church through such efforts as our St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Amos Project, our twinning relationship with St. Maria Goretti Parish, and through collections such as the one taken today for World Mission Sunday.

The Sixth area of the pastoral plan is one that has grown out of the Grateful Believers program. Good stewardship involves sensible planning. The one goal in this area is to encourage all parish ministries and groups to do responsible planning so that all parts our parish may plan appropriately for the future and thereby be more effective in fulfilling the announced purposes and goals of all our groups and ministries.

Archbishop Schnurr said during a press conference earlier this week that the role of a bishop is to bring people hope. I believe that hope what makes today so auspicious. World Mission Sunday reminds us that as long we and other draw breath in this world, we have a job to tell others through our words and actions about the difference Jesus Christ makes in our lives. Even in such troubled economic times the world still turns, we still breath and Jesus Christ is still Lord of all. The Lord, acting through our Holy Father, is sending us an Archbishop who seems ready to lead this Archdiocese in positive and new directions. And we as a parish and as individuals can see that God still has work for us to do. These are signs of great hope and great possibility. May God bless us by allowing us to move forward as persons, as a parish and as a diocese to do his work and prove ourselves to be citizens of His Kingdom.

Copies of the Pastoral Covenant will be available in next weekend's bulletin, in Quicklets and on the parish website. Thank you for generous response to the needs of our parish though what you have pledged in your covenant letters. Our parish leadership has already pledged over \$100,000 to the more than \$7000,000 we will need for next years operating expenses. Last, but certainly not least, thank you for the privilege of being your pastor.