

Transforming Fire:
A New Pentecost to form Spirit-Filled Evangelizers
A Summary of the Pastoral Letter on Evangelization for the Diocese of Marquette

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On the day I was ordained and installed as the thirteenth Bishop of the Diocese of Marquette, I shared with you my pastoral plan for the diocese when I asked you to ***be a friend of Jesus, make a friend, and introduce your friend to Jesus***. This three-fold approach succinctly summarizes how we evangelize. ***To evangelize means helping people encounter Jesus by sharing the Gospel message so that they make a personal decision to follow Jesus in faith.***

In the pastoral letter, I offer a more detailed vision of our pastoral plan. In this summary, I highlight some of the main points, and I encourage you to read the letter in its entirety, which can be found on the diocesan website: <http://www.dioceseofmarquette.org/bishop/pastoralmessages>

The focus of the pastoral plan is for us ***to allow the Holy Spirit to form each and every one of us into a Spirit-filled evangelizer***, like our first bishop, the Venerable Frederic Baraga. ***Spirit-filled evangelizers are Christians who are transformed by the love of the Holy Spirit and follow the Spirit's lead to share Jesus with others.***

- 1) The first step to be formed into a Spirit-filled evangelizer is for us to encounter Jesus and make a personal decision to follow him in faith. We are to be a friend of Jesus, deepen our relationship with him, strengthen our prayer life and open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I encourage all Catholics in the Diocese of Marquette to do the following:
 - Renew regularly their commitment to follow Jesus.
 - Spend at least 15 minutes in personal prayer each day.
 - Renew their commitment to participate in Mass each weekend and go to confession at least twice a year, preferably more often such as monthly.
 - Participate in formation opportunities available in their parishes and throughout the diocese to deepen their prayer.
 - Offer a voluntary penance for a new Pentecost, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Diocese of Marquette.
 - Pray daily the following prayer for the formation of Spirit-filled evangelizers.

Prayer for the Formation of Spirit-Filled Evangelizers

O Holy Spirit come into my life and my heart. By the fire of your love, transform me and all Catholics throughout Michigan's Upper Peninsula into Spirit-filled evangelizers. I pray that more and more people may come to know the love of Jesus Christ and make a personal decision to follow him. I pray for all the people that I know who are not practicing any faith. Touch their hearts with your love, O Holy Spirit. Work through me so that they may have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and follow him in faith. To you, O Holy Spirit, and to the Father and to the Son, be glory and honor for ever and ever, Amen.

- 2) The second step to be formed into a Spirit-filled evangelizer is to "make a friend" and form a community of love and welcoming parishes. To share Jesus, we must have a relationship of love and trust with others. Spirit-filled evangelizers are so filled with the love of God that they long to share that love with other people in the broader community and in their parish. Welcoming parishes are formed when the priest and the people desire to share the love of Jesus with everyone who walks through the doors of the church or has contact with the parish in any way. The key to sharing God's love with others is to open our hearts to God

and allow him to love us first so that others may encounter God's love through us. Then we need to be mindful that some of our behaviors stand in the way of God's love and need to be changed with the help of God's grace. I offer here some questions to help us all reflect on how we love each other.

Will other people experience the love of God by the way that I treat them? Am I friendly? Am I honest, trustworthy and dependable? Do I listen? Do I make sacrifices for other people? Am I patient? Am I generous? Am I grateful? Am I joyful? Am I fair and just? Am I kind and gentle? When necessary, do I offer fraternal correction lovingly? In my relationships, am I concerned about what I want or what is best for the other person? Do I lose my temper? Do I fall into gossip or jealousy? Do I give of my time, money and possessions to meet the needs of others? Do I give people the benefit of the doubt or am I judgmental? Do I forgive or do I hold a grudge? Do I love and accept other people as they are? At church, does the way I treat those around me help them to experience the love of Jesus? If I see people I do not know, do I introduce myself and ask their names? If someone new comes into the church, do I make them feel at home, that they belong? When I come to Mass, do I pray for the people sitting around me so that they will experience God's love? Do I smile? Am I happy to see families at church and do I thank parents bringing their young children to church, even if they make a little noise? Am I patient when Mass is over, or do I nearly run people over in the parking lot? Do I gossip about the priest and other parishioners, or do I say good things about them?

In this light, I encourage Catholics to do the following:

- Share the love of Jesus with those in need in the broader community.
- Desire to share the love of Jesus with everyone who walks through the doors of the church.
- For those who are married to renew regularly their marriage vows and their commitment to their spouse and children.

3) The third step to be formed into a Spirit-filled evangelizer is to learn how to share Jesus with others. To share Jesus or "introduce our friend to Jesus," we need to learn more about him and grow as his disciple (catechesis). We also need to learn how to share Jesus (formation for mission). ***Sharing our faith with others is an essential element of following Jesus.*** It is not optional. Yet many of us do not know how to share our faith, or feel uncomfortable doing it. One of the best ways for us to share our faith with others is personal witness, that is, when we share with others how Jesus has touched our life like the Samaritan woman did. Personal witness shows that Jesus is alive, that he has risen from the dead and is working in the hearts of people. I encourage all of you to think and pray about how Jesus has touched your life, and how you would share that with someone. Why is Jesus important to you? What difference has Jesus made in your life?

In this light, I encourage all Catholics to do the following:

- Participate in formation opportunities available in their parishes and throughout the diocese to increase their knowledge of their faith and to learn how to share their faith with others.
- Pray for the people that they know who are not practicing any faith and pray for inspiration to share Jesus with them.

With prayers that your hearts be filled with the *Joy of the Gospel* and that you be transformed into Spirit-filled evangelizers, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend John F. Doerfler, STD, JCL
Bishop of Marquette

June 4, 2017
Feast of Pentecost