



Most Rev. James R. Golka
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CHRIST OUR HOPE

Pastoral letter on the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope



Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Colorado Springs
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To the faithful of the Diocese of Colorado Springs:

Peace be with you! I am very happy to share with you my first pastoral letter entitled “Christ Our Hope.” The pastoral letter’s focus on the theme of hope is not only for the celebration of the upcoming Jubilee Year of Hope, but also casts a pastoral vision for the diocese moving forward to encourage us all to be witnesses of hope in our world as we continue to strengthen the mission of the New Evangelization. I ask you to prayerfully read the letter and consider how it can shape your own personal life as a disciple of Jesus as well as the ministry efforts of our parishes for “hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5)

I also encourage you to read this letter with an openness to the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is working in our diocese in many powerful ways. This Jubilee Year of Hope is a great occasion of grace to help us all to grow in humility, unity, and charity to do the work that the Lord has asked of us in this dynamic and challenging time of the Church’s history. May we as “pilgrims of hope” journey together with the same hope and encouragement that St. Paul gave the Church of Ephesus: “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God....” (Eph 4:11-13)

Sincerely in Christ,

+ James R. Golka

Most Reverend James R. Golka
Bishop of Colorado Springs

Pastoral Letter for the Jubilee Year of Hope

Christ Our Hope

Introduction: Christ Our Hope

Christ is our hope. Sixty years after the closing of the Second Vatican Council, which brought about the missionary renewal of the Church to bring the joy and hope¹ of Jesus Christ to the modern world, Pope Francis has called a Jubilee Year of Hope, a hope in Jesus Christ that does not disappoint.²

The Year of Hope continues the work of the New Evangelization inaugurated by the pastoral renewal of Vatican II and particularly implemented by the pontificate of St. John Paul II. In the previous ordinary Jubilee Year celebrating the 2000th anniversary of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, St. John Paul II invited the Church to embrace the new millennium with a deep missionary renewal. At the end of that Jubilee Year, he encouraged the Church to enter the Third Millennium as a missionary Church inspired with hope:

Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work. Did we not celebrate the Jubilee Year in order to refresh our contact with this living source of our hope? Now, the Christ whom we have contemplated and loved bids us to set out once more on our journey: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Mt 28:19) The missionary mandate accompanies us into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope "which does not disappoint." (Rom 5:5)³

Twenty-five years later, this Jubilee Year of Hope encourages us to continue this same mission of the New Evangelization that has been entrusted to us: to more deeply encounter Christ our hope, to recognize his providential presence working in the Church and the

¹ Cf. Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1

² Cf. Pope Francis, *Spes non Confundit*, 1

³ St. John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 58

world, and to respond to his missionary mandate of making disciples of all the nations by being witnesses of joy and hope in the world today.

Discussion Questions for the Introduction

1. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines hope as “the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit” (CCC, No.1817). Why must our hope always rest on Christ? What happens when we place our hope on earthly things — such as people, politics, wealth, power, or pleasure?
2. Is it possible to have joy without hope? Why or why not?
3. The letter to Hebrews tells us that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Heb 11:1) What is the relationship between faith and hope?

Part I: Encountering Christ Our Hope

Pope Francis gives us a clear vision for the Jubilee Year of Hope: “For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the ‘door’ (cf. Jn 10:7.9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as ‘our hope.’” (1 Tim 1:1)⁴ While it is ultimately the Church’s mission and duty to proclaim Christ as our hope and the hope of the world, *our first and primary task is to encounter Jesus Christ in a deeper and more personal way* so that we may be renewed in hope and through personal conversion become more deeply conformed to him. Only when we become fascinated with Christ and allow him to transform our lives are we truly able to be his witnesses of hope. “An encounter with the Lord brings about a profound transformation in all who do not close themselves off from him. The first impulse coming from this transformation is to communicate to others the richness discovered in the experience of the encounter. This does not mean simply teaching what we have come to know but also, like the Samaritan woman, enabling others to encounter Jesus personally: ‘Come and see.’” (Jn 4:29)⁵

Renewal of Our Hope in Christ

St. Augustine says, “But what about you? Hope in the Lord. Those others hope too, but not in the Lord. Their hope is doomed to die, their hope is perishable, fragile, fleeting, transitory and vain. But you, *hope in the Lord.*”⁶ We cannot have true faith in Jesus and be his disciples if we do not have hope in him. Christ alone has the power to redeem us from sin and to give eternal life. Pope Benedict XVI notes in his encyclical *Spe Salvi* that the basis of many of our modern beliefs seek redemption by human means, instead of the Lord. As a result, many perceive faith as “somehow irrelevant,” and this “shapes the present-day crisis of faith which is essentially a crisis of hope.”⁷ The crisis of hope in our time is that our hope is more often in ourselves and not in God. True hope always calls us to look beyond ourselves, and to know that there is One who is infinitely more powerful, wise, loving, and merciful than we are. Hope also invites us to rely on others, those whom God sends into our lives to accompany us in our journey of faith. When we rely only on ourselves, trying to control external events and determine their outcomes, we sin against hope by denying that we are pilgrims whose lives are a journey of faith ultimately in the hands of God.

At the root of hope is trust. Christ our hope is often depicted as an anchor, symbolizing the reality that no matter what comes our way — whether it be trials, disappointment, failures, or suffering — we are firmly anchored to Christ, and he never moves away from us. To have hope in God, we must first trust him and know God has a specific plan for each of us. We

⁴ *Spes non Confundit*, 1

⁵ St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, 68

⁶ Exposition 1 of Ps. 36, Sec. 4

⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 17

must know that the drama of our lives that is unfolding daily is guided by God's providential love. This will not only lead to hope in God, but also to our true happiness and peace. "Our great drama is this: Man does not have confidence in God. Hence, he looks in every possible place to extricate himself from his own resources and renders himself terribly unhappy in the process rather than abandon himself into the tender and saving hands of his Father in heaven."⁸ Each day should start with a hopeful entrustment to God and a surrendering to his loving plan for each of us.

The Renewal of Our Minds and Hearts in Christ

This hope and trust in Jesus can only be strengthened and sustained when we personally encounter him and allow our minds and hearts to be renewed by his truth and grace. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Rom 12:2) Only Jesus fully reveals the merciful love of God and also reveals the truth about the human person, which gives meaning to our lives. "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light."⁹ The current crisis in both the world and even in some places in the Church is that we have lost our story, the story of God's loving plan of salvation. Strengthening our hope in Christ in order to share that hope with others involves *re-acquiring a biblical worldview* through prayerful reading and study of Sacred Scripture, ongoing catechesis and formation, and education in the witness and wisdom of the saints who have gone before us in heroically living the Catholic faith. This conversion of mind and heart will help us to *see, think, and act like Jesus* and to be his disciples and witnesses in the world.¹⁰

May this Year of Hope be a time for our parishes to *recommit to ongoing and life-long catechesis and formation* so that we are "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." (1 Pt 3:15) This encounter with Christ through catechesis and ongoing formation is essential for the New Evangelization to take root. "The new evangelization in which the whole continent is engaged means that faith cannot be taken for granted but must be explicitly proposed in all its breadth and richness. This is the principal objective of catechesis, which, by its very nature, is an essential aspect of the new evangelization. 'Catechesis is a process of formation in faith, hope and charity; it shapes the mind and touches the heart, leading the person to embrace Christ fully and completely. It introduces the believer more fully into the experience of the Christian life, which involves the liturgical celebration of the mystery of the Redemption and the Christian service of others.'"¹¹

⁸ Fr. Jacques Philippe, *Searching for and Maintaining Peace* pg. 26

⁹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22

¹⁰ Cf. St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 20

¹¹ *Ecclesia in America*, 69

Our Gaze Fixed upon Christ in Prayer

In order to be witnesses of hope, we need to be people of deep prayer and to contemplate the face of Christ. St. John Paul II reminds us that, “Our witness, however, would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first contemplated his face.”¹² *The Church of hope must be a Church of prayer.* Jesus tells us that we need to abide in him through prayer if we are to bear fruit: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (Jn 15:5) Two key points arise from these words of Jesus. First, only in prayer can we be fruitful in doing the Lord’s work. Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, without prayer, we can literally do nothing in the spiritual life. Without prayer, we become untethered from our anchor of hope. Only prayer can take our gaze away from the things of this world that do not satisfy and allow us to hope in the fullness of life that only comes from God alone. “Prayer can truly change your life. For it turns your attention away from yourself and directs your mind and your heart toward the Lord. If we only look at ourselves, with our limitations and sins, we quickly give way to sadness and discouragement. But if we keep our eyes fixed on the Lord, then our hearts are filled with hope, our minds are washed with the light of truth, and we come to know the fullness of the Gospel with all its promise and life.”¹³

The Eucharist Is the Sacrament of Hope

“Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Mt 28:20) Jesus promised that he would always be with us in the heart of the Church. This promise is fulfilled most profoundly in the Holy Eucharist, which is the *Sacrament of Hope* because Jesus is always with us, feeding and nourishing us on our journey to heaven. Jesus is always waiting for us in the Eucharist and inviting us to a personal encounter with him so that we can have fullness of life with him now and for all eternity. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* encourages us: “The Church knows that the Lord comes even now in his Eucharist and that he is there in our midst. However, his presence is veiled. Therefore we celebrate the Eucharist ‘awaiting the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ,’ asking ‘to share in your glory when every tear will be wiped away. On that day we shall see you, our God, as you are. We shall become like you and praise you forever through Christ our Lord.’”¹⁴

In the Eucharist we also *encounter the victorious Christ* and experience here and now the hope of our future glory of everlasting life with him in heaven. “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.” (Jn 6:54) When we participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we are already sharing in Christ’s victory over sin and death—*this victory is not a future event but is happening here and now.* “[I]t is

¹² *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 16

¹³ St. John Paul II, *Meeting with Youth*, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1987

¹⁴ CCC, 1404

also true that, especially in the liturgy of the Eucharist, they give us a real foretaste of the eschatological fulfilment for which every human being and all creation are destined (cf. Rom 8:19ff.). Man is created for that true and eternal happiness which only God's love can give...Even though we remain 'aliens and exiles' in this world (1 Pt 2:11), through faith we already share in the fullness of risen life."¹⁵ The Year of Hope, coinciding with the National Eucharistic Revival, provides an excellent opportunity to encounter Jesus more deeply in the Eucharist, particularly through inspiring liturgical catechesis, reverent celebrations of the liturgy, and especially through encouraging Eucharistic adoration in our parishes.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation Renews our Hope

We also experience hope through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we personally encounter the merciful love of Christ. *The confessional is God's healing room* where he not only forgives us of our sins, but as the Divine Physician, heals the wounds of our hearts and restores us to fullness of life. *What great hope we have in this great sacrament of mercy!* "The sacrament of Reconciliation is not only a magnificent spiritual gift, but also a decisive, essential and fundamental step on our journey of faith. There, we allow the Lord to erase our sins, to heal our hearts, to raise us up, to embrace us and to reveal to us his tender and compassionate countenance. There is no better way to know God than to let him reconcile us to himself (cf. 2 Cor 5:20) and savor his forgiveness."¹⁶ I strongly encourage all our parishes and schools to make the Sacrament of Reconciliation available to the faithful as much as possible, as well as providing solid catechesis about the sacrament so it can be received with great faith, hope, and fruitfulness.

Hope in the Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit

The Year of Hope also invites us to more readily encounter the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that is working in Church, in the world, and through us. "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever." (Jn 14:15) This same Holy Spirit promised by Christ and powerfully sent on Pentecost is still present and active in the Church today. "The Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission."¹⁷ Therefore, we must open our hearts more deeply to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and to the grace and gifts that he gives to us through our Baptism and Confirmation. By doing so, we will be confident in Christ's victory and proclaim the joy and hope of Christ to the world.

Restoring the Initiative to God

Finally, we need to turn to prayer and with faith and hope ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in our Christian life. God has a plan and a purpose for our lives, our families, and our

¹⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 30

¹⁶ *Spes non Confundit*, 23

¹⁷ St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 21

ministries and apostolates, and we need to more readily discern and know his plans. Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, in a retreat for the United States bishops in 2019, explained the importance of *restoring the power and initiative to God* through prayer and discernment. “We need to ‘restore the power to God’: the power of deciding, the initiative, the freedom to intervene at whatever moment in the life of the Church. In other words, we need to put our trust back in God, not in ourselves. The Church is not a rowboat driven by the strength and skill of the arms of those who are in it; instead it is a sailboat driven by the wind that blows it along ‘from above.’ No one knows ‘where it comes from or where it goes’ (Jn 3:8) — but the wind is caught by the ‘sail’ of prayer.”¹⁸ In this Year of Hope, I invite the entire Diocese of Colorado Springs to join me in offering in prayer our diocese, parishes, apostolates, and families so that the Holy Spirit will reveal more clearly to us his plan and how he desires to use all of us to bring Christ’s hope and joy to the world.

¹⁸ Raniero Cantalamessa, *Shepherds and Fishermen*, pg. 15

Part I Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be fascinated by Christ? When and where have I encountered him in my life? How can I develop or deepen my ability to see him and to be aware of his presence? Why is prayer so important in the spiritual life, and how can I cultivate a habit of prayer?
2. Do I see God as trustworthy? What has happened when I have placed my trust in God? How might the virtue of humility help me to grow in trust?
3. In the book *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission*, the authors state that “the new evangelization aims at the renewal of the mind, because it recognizes that people’s minds have been barraged by a daily onslaught of false gospels, leading to confusion and distraction away from invisible realities to concerns solely of this world ... The great apostolic task of our time is to gain a genuine conversion of mind and vision” (66, 69). What is conversion and do I consider it a lifelong process or a single event? What do Scripture and the Church say about conversion, and what role do prayer and the sacraments play? What areas of my life might God be asking me to give to him for conversion and/or healing?
4. In the Eucharist, we experience hope — both the Real Presence of Christ here and now, as well as the anticipation of future glory. How does the Eucharist sustain our hope? How can we prepare to receive Our Lord in hope?
5. Jesus told St. Faustina that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a “tribunal of mercy.” When we approach the Lord in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we come to him acknowledging our guilt and knowing that we will receive forgiveness, mercy, and love. He rejoices in our repentance and the fact that we are turning to him once more. If we started thinking of confession as a “tribunal of mercy” instead of a place of judgement, how might this help us see the Sacrament of Reconciliation as hopeful? How long has it been since my last confession? Have I considered receiving this sacrament on a regular basis?
6. The Church is often depicted as a “boat” on the waves of life as we journey toward heaven. Cardinal Cantalamessa uses the image of the Church not as a “rowboat,” but a “sailboat” blown by the breath of the Holy Spirit. What do I think about this imagery? How can I better listen to the Holy Spirit? How do I see the gifts (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord) and fruits (charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity) of the Holy Spirit playing out in my life?

Part II: Reasons for Hope Today

One of the great tactics of the devil today is to tempt us to discouragement and despair. Not only do we see discouragement and despair rampant in our culture, but even many in the Church can be discouraged at the state of our current affairs. However, in reading the signs of the times and attuning to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the world, *this is not a time of discouragement, but a time of great hope and missionary zeal.* St. John Paul II understood this clearly and encouraged us that, “this is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is the time to preach it from the rooftops. Do not be afraid to break out of comfortable and routine modes of living, in order to take up the challenge of making Christ known in the modern ‘metropolis.’”¹⁹ Therefore, in this Year of Hope, we are encouraged by *many reasons for hope today.*

The Church Has Been Prepared for These Times

One of the great signs of our times is the *presence and power of the Holy Spirit that has prepared the Church for these times.* Many view the Church as “behind the times” or struggling to meet current pastoral crises, but the Holy Spirit has prepared and renewed the Church in a powerful and decisive way to meet the challenges of our day. “In our times, the Church after Vatican II in a renewed outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost has come to a more lively awareness of her missionary nature and has listened again to the voice of her Lord who sends her forth into the world as ‘the universal sacrament of salvation.’”²⁰ Vatican II was the greatest intervention of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church since the Council of Trent. Just as the Holy Spirit prepared the Church after the Council of Trent for the renewal of the Counter-Reformation, the Holy Spirit has, through Vatican II, renewed the Church in her mission to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our post-Christian and secular culture through a New Evangelization. For this New Evangelization to fully flourish, *the true teaching and spirit of Vatican II must be rediscovered.*

The Year of Hope is a providential moment to read again the documents of Vatican II and receive from them the vision and blueprint for the New Evangelization and the call to missionary discipleship. The New Evangelization and its mission and implementation cannot be known apart from the missionary renewal brought about by Vatican II. St. John Paul II reminds us of the importance of the Council for our time: “With the passing of the years, the Council documents have lost nothing of their value or brilliance. They need to be read correctly, to be widely known and taken to heart as important and normative texts of the Magisterium, within the Church's Tradition...I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.”²¹

¹⁹ 8th World Youth Day, Mass at the Cherry Creek State Park of Denver, August 15, 1993

²⁰ St. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 2

²¹ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 57

I encourage all the faithful of the diocese, through prayerful reading and study, to rediscover the beautiful and inspiring teachings of Vatican II through which the Holy Spirit has brought about a new and fresh outpouring of the spirit of Pentecost for a New Evangelization. May our diocese be an answer and a witness to the prayer of Pope Benedict XVI: “Let us implore from God the grace of a new Pentecost for the Church in America. May tongues of fire, combining burning love of God and neighbor with zeal for the spread of the Christ’s Kingdom, descend on all present!”²²

We Were Born for These Times

The renewal of Vatican II made it clear that *every person in the Church has a part to play in the mission of the New Evangelization*. This means that we can have great hope in the fact that each of us was born in this time, in this place, and with a particular purpose to bring the hope of Christ into the world. If we open our hearts to God and ask him, he will reveal to us the plan and purpose that he has for our lives. “God could have chosen us to be alive at some other time in history, but in his providence and love he has destined us to be alive now...and he has equipped us with gifts — both natural and supernatural — for this time.”²³ God has a specific plan for each of us to fulfill here and now to help him accomplish his mission of salvation. St. John Henry Newman reminds us of this in a beautiful prayer: “God knows me and calls me by my name...God has created me to do him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission — Somehow I am necessary for His purposes...I have a part in this great work...”²⁴

The New Mission of the Laity

One of the great fruits and signs of hope that came from the renewal of Vatican II was a new and vibrant mission of the laity to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the ordinary places of our secular culture. As the Council teaches, “The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself. Moreover, by the sacraments, especially holy Eucharist, that charity toward God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished. Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth.”²⁵ This personal call of the Lord to every layperson in the Church is a great sign of hope, as well as a call for all lay people “to give a glad, generous, and prompt response to the impulse of the Holy Spirit and to the voice of Christ, who is giving them an especially urgent invitation at this moment. Young people should feel that this call is directed to them in particular, and they should respond to it

²² Homily at St. Patrick Cathedral, New York City, April 19, 2008

²³ Acts XXIX, *Re-Imagining What a Catholic Parish Could Be*

²⁴ Cardinal John Henry Newman, “Some Definite Service” from *Meditations and Devotions*.

²⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 33

eagerly and magnanimously.”²⁶ In this Year of Hope, I strongly encourage all lay people, especially young people, *to take up this call to be Christ’s witnesses wherever he leads you, especially in marriage and family life.* Yours is a witness that is indispensable to the mission of the New Evangelization and the building up of a civilization life and love.

The Fields Are Ripe for the Harvest

Today we again hear the voice of Jesus, “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are ripe for the harvest.” (Jn 4:35) Another great sign of hope today is a growing spiritual hunger in the world. As the absence of God in the fabric of society increases, modern men and women are becoming increasingly hungry for him. This is because the human person is wired for God, and we are restless and anxious without him, for “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”²⁷ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms this truth when it teaches that “the desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.”²⁸ Although we are living in a secular and growingly irreligious culture, *modern men and women are searching for the ultimate meaning of life which can only be found in Jesus Christ.* “The world which, paradoxically, despite innumerable signs of the denial of God, is nevertheless searching for Him in unexpected ways and painfully experiencing the need of Him- the world is calling for evangelizers to speak to it of a God whom the evangelists themselves should know and be familiar with as if they could see the invisible.”²⁹

Men and women of today are not much different than the woman of Samaria that Jesus encountered at the well — searching for the One who can give them living water and the ultimate meaning of life. (Cf. John 4:1-39) “There is no man or woman who, in one’s life, would not find oneself like the woman of Samaria beside a well with an empty bucket, with the hope of finding the fulfillment of the heart’s most profound desire, that which alone could give full meaning to life... Like Jesus at the well of Sychar, the Church also feels the need to sit beside today’s men and women. She wants to render the Lord present in their lives so that they can encounter him because his Spirit alone is the water that gives true and eternal life.”³⁰ Therefore, *this is truly our Catholic moment* and what the Church has been prepared for by the Holy Spirit— *to bear witness to Jesus Christ as the answer to the ultimate meaning of life and to the pressing questions that men and women of our day are asking.*

²⁶ *Christifideles Laici*, 2

²⁷ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.1.

²⁸ CCC, 27

²⁹ St. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 76

³⁰ *Message to the People of God*, XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 7-28 October 2012

The Digital Age and the New Evangelization

Finally, in God's providence, the New Evangelization has come about at the dawn of the digital age that allows the Church to proclaim the Gospel literally to the ends of the earth. Just as the Roman Empire's infrastructure, such as roads and a postal system, made it possible for St. Paul and the early Christians to spread the Gospel throughout the ancient world, *the digital age allows the Church to proclaim the Gospel in ways never before imagined*. These new ways of evangelization and catechesis must be embraced and used with maximum impact in the New Evangelization. As Vatican II instructed: "It is, therefore, an inherent right of the Church to have at its disposal and to employ any of these media insofar as they are necessary or useful for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of souls. It is the duty of Pastors to instruct and guide the faithful so that they, with the help of these same media, may further the salvation and perfection of themselves and of the entire human family. In addition, the laity especially must strive to instill a human and Christian spirit into these media, so that they may fully measure up to the great expectations of mankind and to God's design."³¹ As pastors, catechists, parents, and evangelists, *we must embrace the providential gift of digital media* and fully leverage its possibilities for spreading the Gospel and being Christ's witnesses "to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

³¹ *Inter Mirifica*, 3

Part II Discussion Questions

1. It seems counterintuitive to say that the emptiness of the secular world provides a great context for hope, but why might this be the case? Why should we find hope in dark times? Why does the devil tempt us through discouragement and despair? Why might this be a particularly effective tactic? How can we combat discouragement and despair? What tools does the Church provide to help us in this battle?
2. How might God have prepared the Church for these times? Are there any particular saints or Catholic figures from the past century who could have played a role in this?
3. How do I see the Holy Spirit's guidance at work in my parish? In the diocese? In the Church as a whole?
4. Vatican II can be a contentious topic in many Catholic circles. Have I read the Council documents? If so, did reading the documents change my understanding of the Council? Why or why not?
5. Fr. Timothy Gallagher defines discernment of spirits as "the process by which we seek to distinguish between different kinds of spiritual stirrings in our hearts, identifying those that are of God and those that are not, in order to accept the former and to reject the latter." (*The Discernment of Spirits*, 3). How can I foster spiritual discernment in my life so that I can know God's plan for me and the mission he is calling me to? What attitudes and habits do I need to cultivate? Am I creating enough space to listen to the movements of God in my heart?
6. Where are the places that only I can go to bring the light of Christ? What virtues and skills can I develop to become a better witness?
7. Media can be a powerful tool for evangelization, but it can also be a powerful weapon of evil. Am I acting responsibly and virtuously in my use of media? How is my use of media helping or hindering my salvation and the salvation of others? Do I take advantage of the many good Catholic resources that are available to help myself and my family grow closer to God and to know our faith better?

Part III: Witnesses of Hope

Through encountering Christ and reading the signs of hope in our time, *the Jubilee Year of Hope is ultimately ordered towards being witnesses of hope*. Our world is crying and as our culture moves further away from God, we lose sight of the true meaning of life and what it means to be a human person. “When God is forgotten, however, the creature itself grows unintelligible.”³² Therefore, we are called to be witnesses of hope: bringing the hope of Jesus Christ into a hopeless world. “With our gaze fixed on Christ, strengthened by hope that does not disappoint, let us journey together along the paths of the new millennium: *Rise let us be on our way!*”³³ With this mission of hope before us, I would like to share the following pastoral priorities in the Diocese of Colorado Springs.

The Call to Missionary Discipleship

To be a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ, necessarily means to be on mission. Through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, we are conformed to Christ and sealed in the power of the Holy Spirit to be disciples who share in Christ’s very own salvific mission. “The participation of the lay faithful in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King finds its source in the anointing of Baptism, its further development in Confirmation and its realization and dynamic sustenance in the Holy Eucharist. It is a participation given to each member of the lay faithful individually, in as much as each is one of the many who form the one Body of the Lord: in fact, Jesus showers his gifts upon the Church which is his Body and his Spouse. In such a way individuals are sharers in the threefold mission of Christ in virtue of their being members of the Church, as St. Peter clearly teaches, when he defines the baptized as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.’” (1 Pt 2:9)³⁴

This sharing in Christ’s three-fold mission is at the heart of being a missionary disciple. Through our sharing in Christ’s baptismal priesthood, we sanctify the world through worship, prayer, and our own transformation to be like Christ through the grace of liturgy and the sacraments. By sharing in the prophetic mission of Christ, we are to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through teaching, evangelization, and the witness of our holy lives. We participate in Christ’s kingship by building up the Kingdom of God through being stewards of God’s grace and gifts and through Christian service, especially the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Being a missionary disciple is not an option only for the few, *but a personal call of the Lord for all who are baptized*. As Pope Francis powerfully reminds us: “The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need

³² *Gaudium et Spes*, 36

³³ St. John Paul II, *Rise Let Us Be on Our Way*, pg. ix

³⁴ *Christifideles Laici*, 14

much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’, but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples.’”³⁵ The call to missionary discipleship is the *overarching pastoral priority in the Diocese of Colorado Springs* and should be at the heart of all of our educational, catechetical, and pastoral endeavors.

Renewing the Mission of Married and Family Life

“The welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church.”³⁶ The family is the domestic Church and the vital cell of society. *Therefore, the direction of both the Church and society goes by the family.* Healthy families mean a healthy Church and society. Therefore, the pastoral care of marriage and the family is a pastoral priority in the Diocese of Colorado Springs. Pastoral care and accompaniment in marriage and family life must extend beyond marriage preparation to include newly married couples and couples in all stages of parenting and family life. Special attention should also be given to mental health assistance for families to address the multiple challenges that face marriages and families today. The family is also “the sanctuary of life”³⁷ in which the human person is welcomed and accepted. The pastoral care of the family is ordered towards building up a civilization of life and love.

Marriages and families need our prayers and support. I ask the faithful of the Diocese to pray for marriages and families that they may have the courage and strength to be a witness of Christ’s love for his Church in our world today. When we see families with children at Mass, encourage them and welcome them, as these families are the future of the Church and are the first seminaries for all vocations. Marriage and family life should be strengthened by ongoing formation and catechesis so couples can better know and live out their vocation of life and love.

Strengthening and Encouraging our Clergy, Religious and Consecrated Life

As the Bishop of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, one of my main pastoral priorities has also been helping our priests and deacons to be holy, healthy, and joyful. Our clergy need our constant prayers and support so that they can be exceptional witnesses of Christ and joyful dispensers of the mysteries of Christ. *I encourage the people of the diocese to intentionally pray for the priests and deacons who serve in your parish.*

Priests serve as dispensers and stewards of the mysteries of God. (1 Cor 4:1) Priests are to be men who daily offer sacrifice in union with our Great High Priest, striving always to be worthy ministers of the Sacred Mysteries by *celebrating the rites of the Church in*

³⁵ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120

³⁶ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 31

³⁷ St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 11

faithfulness to the liturgical books and in a spirit of humble, joyful service. On the day of their ordination, the bishop presented them with the gifts of bread and wine, uttering these powerful words: “Understand what you will do, imitate what you will celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord’s Cross.” St. John Vianney, the patron of parish priests, says, “The priest is not a priest for himself; he does not give himself absolution; he does not administer the Sacraments to himself. He is not for himself; he is for you.”

Our deacons minister to us as Christ the Servant. They generously offer a service to the Word (proclaiming the Gospel and delivering homilies), the Altar (assisting during Mass), and to Divine Charity (their service in the world). “The spirituality of service is a spirituality of the whole Church, insofar as the whole Church, in the same way as Mary, is the ‘handmaid of the Lord’ (Lk 1:28), at the service of the salvation of the world. And so that the whole Church may better live out this spirituality of service, the Lord gives her a living and personal sign of his very being as servant . . . In fact, with sacred ordination, he is constituted a living icon of Christ the servant within the Church.”³⁸ It must also be mentioned the important and integral role that deacons’ wives play in supporting their husbands’ ministry.

Women religious, or nuns, play a significant and multifaceted role in the life of the Catholic Church. They are women who have chosen to live a consecrated life in community, giving themselves completely to God and following vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The women religious in our diocese continue to be essential in the spreading of the Gospel, the care of the vulnerable, and the formation of new generations of faithful. Their role in the Catholic Church is one of both service and deep spiritual commitment, with a mission to live out the Gospel through prayer, action and witness. We are blessed by their presence.

The Diocese of Colorado Springs also supports women who live the vocation of consecrated virginity. Consecrated virgins witness for us a vocation of total dedication to Christ by living in perpetual virginity and celibacy. In their mystical betrothal to Christ, they are an image of the Church as the Bride of Christ. They are a powerful witness of the Kingdom of God, setting aside everything in service of Christ.

I invite all the faithful of the Diocese to join me in strengthening and encouraging our clergy, religious and those in the consecrated life. This can be done in many ways: pray for them, affirm and appreciate them, assist their needs by joining in the ministry of your parish and faith community, foster a spirit of unity, promote religious vocations, support their ongoing formation, stand by them during difficult times, and attend to their health. By being prayerful, understanding and active participants in the life of the local Church, Catholics can be a great source of support to these important people.

³⁸ *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*, 1

Revitalizing our Catholic Schools

Our diocesan Catholic schools continue to be at the heart of the diocese's efforts of evangelization, education and the formation of missionary disciples. The renewal and revitalization of our Catholic schools to meet the needs of our time continues to be a pastoral priority in the Diocese of Colorado Springs. This echoes the call of St. John Paul II to promote Catholic education as an essential aspect of the renewal of the Church in America: "A special effort should be made to strengthen the Catholic identity of schools, whose specific character is based on an educational vision having its origin in the person of Christ and its roots in the teachings of the Gospel. Catholic schools must seek not only to impart a quality education from the technical and professional standpoint, but also and above all provide for the integral formation of the human person. Given the importance of the work done by Catholic educators, I join the Synod Fathers in gratefully encouraging all those devoted to teaching in Catholic schools — priests, consecrated men and women and committed lay people — 'to persevere in their most important mission'".³⁹ Through the recent Meitler study and a new strategic plan for our diocesan schools, we continue to ensure that Catholic education in the diocese remains a vibrant part of the mission of the New Evangelization.

Assisting Our Parishes to be Beacons of Light

For the New Evangelization to be effective in bringing the hope and joy of Jesus Christ to our modern world, *our parishes need to be centers of evangelization and missionary discipleship*. The spiritual culture of the parish must be constantly renewed in two fundamental directions. The first is a renewal that is internally focused on personal conversion and transformation to become like Christ. The second is a renewal of being outwardly committed to sharing in the mission of Christ and the evangelization of the culture and community within which the parish exists. This is a great challenge for parishes today that requires a commitment for a renewal of vision and mission. "Today in America as elsewhere in the world the parish is facing certain difficulties in fulfilling its mission. 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.' This principle implies that '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, open to pastoral projects which go beyond the individual parish, and alert to the world in which they live'".⁴⁰

It is also important to recognize the Hispanic community in our parishes and the rich cultural and spiritual contribution that they bring to the renewal of parish life. The United

³⁹ *Ecclesia in America*, 71

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 41

States Bishops have affirmed that, “At this moment of grace we recognize the Hispanic community among us as a blessing from God.”⁴¹ The Hispanic community continues to grow and currently accounts for one-third of Catholics in our diocese and its members play an important role in the mission of the New Evangelization to which we are all called at this moment of history.

Therefore, it is a pastoral priority of the diocese to provide ongoing formation and training to diocesan and parish staffs to help renew this authentic vision for the parish. In addition, parish staffs are more than just a staff, but are a community of disciples united in Christ to accomplish his mission in a unique way. The parish staff is called to have a spirituality of communion and collaboration so that they may bear fruit in the work of building up missionary disciples for the New Evangelization.

⁴¹ USCCB, *The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment*, 1984

Part III Discussion Questions

1. Why do we need God in order to understand what it means to be a human person? How do we see a flawed understanding of personhood playing out in the world today? What is the relationship between hope and understanding who God created us to be?
2. The word *disciple* comes from the Latin word “*discipulus*,” meaning “student.” Keeping this in mind, what is discipleship? Why is it impossible to be a disciple without evangelizing others? How am I living out my baptismal calling to missionary discipleship?
3. Why are healthy and holy marriages and families a sign of hope for the world? How is missionary discipleship lived out in the context of marriage and family life? How can I support the vocation of marriage, whether in my own life or the lives of others?
4. What is the relationship between hope and vocations to the priesthood or consecrated life? Have I tried to get to know my priest or religious sisters I have encountered? How can I help the young people I know to hear and respond to God’s call? What is one practical thing I could do to support vocations?
5. What is Catholic education and how does it relate to hope? Why might it be important in contributing to the renewal of the Church? Am I willing to make sacrifices to promote Catholic education or to ensure that my children or grandchildren receive a Catholic education?
6. Have I ever thought about the parish as more than just the place I attend Mass — as a “home base” where Christian community is formed and from which we go out on mission to the world? What concrete steps could I take to help my parish fulfill this mission?

Conclusion

So let us “rise and be on our way”. With great confidence we entrust this Year of Hope and the mission of the New Evangelization in the Diocese of Colorado Springs to the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially to Our Lady of Guadalupe who is the Patroness of our Diocese:

*O Virgin of Guadalupe, Mother of the Americas, grant to our homes the grace of loving and respecting life in its beginnings, with the same love with which you conceived in your womb the life of the Son of God. Blessed Virgin Mary, protect our families so that they may always be united and bless the upbringing of our children. Our hope, look upon us with pity, teach us to go continually to Jesus, and if we fall help us to rise again and return to Him through the confession of our faults and our sins in the Sacrament of Penance, which gives peace to the soul. We beg you to grant us a great love of all the holy Sacraments, which are, as it were, the signs that your Son left us on earth. Thus, Most Holy Mother, with the peace of God in our consciences, with our hearts free from evil and hatred, we will be able to bring to all true joy and peace, which come to us from your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.*⁴²

Given at the Chancery of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, December 12, 2024, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Diocese.

+James R. Golka
Bishop of Colorado Springs

(Scripture citations taken from the English Standard Version, Catholic Edition)

⁴² Prayer of St. John Paul II to Our Lady of Guadalupe

Concluding Discussion Questions

“The Church in an apostolic time needs to have the same confidence [as the Apostles] in the power and goodness of the message she bears, in its life-changing potency, in the Church’s power of regeneration and growth. In a particular way, those in positions of influence and authority need to be convinced that Christ is the answer to every human ill, the solution to every human problem, the only hope for a dying race. They need to be convinced of the bad news: that the human race has by its own rebellion brought a curse upon itself and has sold itself into slavery to the prince of darkness, and there is nothing we can do under our own power to save ourselves. At the same time, they need to be equally convinced of the Good News: that God in his mercy has come among us to set us free from our sins and from slavery to the devil, and for those who turn to their true allegiance, the nightmare of life apart from God can be transformed into a dawn of eternal hope. They need to know, from their own experience, that obedience to the Gospel is perfect freedom, that holiness leads to happiness, that a world without God is a desolate wasteland, and that new life in Christ transforms darkness into light.” (*From Christendom to Apostolic Mission*, pg. 37)

1. As a Christian worldview dwindles in our world, we find ourselves in a time very similar to that in which the Apostles lived. This means that we need to cast a vision very different than the world’s: an authentically Catholic and sacramental vision. Am I convicted that God loves me and that living life in union with Christ is the only way to find hope and happiness? How can my vision be purified so that I can see my life, the Church, and the world with eyes of hope?
2. Do I believe that I was born for these times? Why or why not?
3. As this Year of Hope commences, where do I see God calling me to grow in hope and to bring hope to others? What practical steps can I take to grow closer to the Lord? How can I come to know my gifts, talents, charisms, and mission?