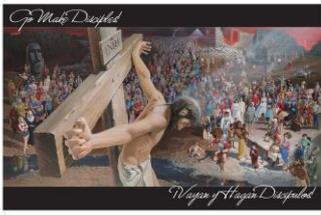


## [En Español](#)



January 21, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I was in seminary in New Orleans when I saw a painting for the first time. I was drawn to it. It spoke to me of how expansive is Christ's call. In fact, I named it the *People of God*. Only later was I informed that the original name was *John 3:16*. All of humanity – the beautiful and the broken – are drawn to Christ. This painting now hangs in the Hospitality Room in our Parish Center. It is the first thing people see when they walk in. This is intentional. Why? Because we exist to proclaim Christ.

This painting came alive for me at our Good Friday Liturgy last year. I was sitting in the presider's chair and was able to see our whole community come up to kiss and venerate the cross. What a wonderful diversity we have here! I could not help but think of the *People of God*. Our parish reflected its very character.

I saw people from across the street and from across the world, from India and Germany, from Ireland and Venezuela, all kiss the cross. I saw a man in a wheelchair and a woman mourning the loss of her husband kiss the cross. I saw a man who is in Alcoholics Anonymous and a woman struggling with domestic violence kiss the cross.

The moment that moved me most involved a young Mexican woman who was holding her nephew while demonstrating how to kiss the cross. As they were standing in line approaching the cross, she showed him how to kiss the cross by kissing him; then, he kissed her and they both kissed the cross. He learned to kiss by being kissed.

We are God's people and we know how to kiss, to love, *because God first kissed us, first loved us*. His most powerful expression of that love is his son, Jesus Christ. *People of God* is a roadmap showing us how we are to treat one another if we are to be his disciples.

I invite you to study the faces in the *People of God*. Some of these faces would be easier to kiss than others. However, Christ calls us to love the human being that is behind each face. By doing so, we are transformed.

With this transformation in mind, I feel strongly that now is the time to plan for our future. Over the past nine months, a team of dedicated parishioners who represent the diversity of our community has been working closely with me and the Catholic Leadership Institute to envision where we hope to be in three years. This plan has been prayerfully discerned and identified from all that we heard at the multiple listening sessions. Careful consideration was given to all data received and studied throughout this nine-month process, along with team members' own experience as active parishioners in our community.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Priority team of Sallie Ahlert, George Calhoun, Brad Forshee, Toni Frioux, Anne Harp, Rita Ille, Annie Lombardo, Michelle Pico, Fred Rice and Deacon Jeff Willard for their service. Together, they have worked very hard to put together a plan that I am confident will both challenge and motivate us as we intentionally look to the future with hope!

Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, a people perish." I would add, "Where there is a vision, a people PARISH." All of us thrive on knowing where we are going. We all need clarity to stay motivated and joyful

about the work that has been entrusted to us. As a community of faith, that work is to proclaim Jesus Christ, who is the savior of the world!

I have enclosed a postcard-sized copy of the *People of God* as a small gift. On its reverse is a synopsis of our Parish Priority Plan for your quick reference. I hope you will keep this postcard somewhere it can be seen – on a refrigerator or perhaps in a place where you spend time in quiet contemplation and prayer. Also below is a more detailed outlining of our plan’s unifying statement, sacred purpose, core values, and goals that the Parish Priority team has prayerfully discerned with your help and that of the Catholic Leadership Institute.

- The vision for St. Joseph’s future during the next three years will take its inspiration from our *Unifying Statement: Go Make Disciples!*
- *Our Sacred Purpose* or why we exist as a parish: **St. Joseph Catholic Church in Norman, Oklahoma, exists to proclaim Jesus Christ, who is the Savior of the world. Jesus invites us into relationship with Him, to become His disciples, and to continue His mission.**
- *Our Core Values* are: **Hospitality, Reverence and Charity.**

Over the coming three years we feel that it is essential for us to invest needed resources, both human and financial, into achieving three key priorities. Our priorities are:

- 1. New Evangelization** As we focus on this priority we will:
  - A. Form a leadership team by July 1, 2015, to plan and implement the New Evangelization.
  - B. Enhance and enrich liturgical services by identifying a liturgical coordinator by March 1, 2015.
- 2. Hispanic Ministry** As we focus on this priority we will:
  - A. Increase integration among our diverse community by convening multicultural leaders by May 1, 2015, for the purpose of developing a unifying strategy.
  - B. Establish an additional Sunday Spanish Mass by July 5, 2015.
- 3. Missionary Outreach** As we focus on this priority we will:
  - A. Identify and engage in mission trip opportunities for adults by August 1, 2015.
  - B. Identify opportunities to serve people in need in the Norman community through input from an Advisory Board formed by October 1, 2015.

By paying special attention to these three areas, while also maintaining all the other good things that are already happening at the parish, I have no doubt that we will grow in our discipleship.

Pope Francis continues to challenge us in the way he is leading the Universal Church. In the *Joy of the Gospel*, he speaks directly to our three priorities:

**New Evangelization:** “The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized.” (120)

**Hispanic Ministry:** “The People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture.” (115)

**Missionary Outreach:** “This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor.” (198)

My dear parishioners, my heart is with you at St. Joseph. Being your pastor and shepherd brings me profound joy. We are in this together! As Pope Francis says, “We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God’s face.” (244).

Please pray for me and I will continue to pray for you, keeping our gaze on God's face as we Go Make Disciples!

Keep Hope Alive,  
Fr. Boeckman