



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
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Dear Brothers:

On this feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Eucharistic Revival and source of joy and hope, we are reminded of our call to seek opportunities that draw us closer to Jesus in the Eucharist, deepen our faith, and enable us to share Him with others.

Since assuming my new role as Vicar for Parish Mission and Vitality, I have been praying about how best to serve the needs of our parishes and archdiocesan ministries as it relates to a vibrancy transformation. One ideal that has become apparent is that it is time to consider a new "way" for ministry that will help transform the culture of our communities.

Archbishop Rozanski recently shared, "We've been using the wrong metrics to measure vibrancy." Rather than considering hard facts and objective data to measure our "success," it is time to introduce a new, synodal, mission-oriented approach that requires intentional accompaniment, not intensive programming. We are looking for the fruit of a spirituality of synodality and mission, not "busyness." To truly shift culture in our local Church, we are looking to share a common vision and discuss our common experiences. This is not a quick fix....it is a shift of mode. Experts say that building this path can take up to three to five years of discernment and implementation.

The best path towards this new way of ministry is anything but another program. Disciples make disciples. We do not need a program for everything, but we do need someone for everyone. We are looking to build the muscle for a synodal, mission-oriented mode of ministry that is rooted in listening and discernment. To assist you and your parishes in this discernment process, we are proposing "The Way: A Journey Towards Renewal and Vitality." The goal is to guide each parish or ministry in formulating a clear vision rooted in evangelization, motivating you to explore diverse approaches in creating a path of discipleship.

This process will be built upon the following principles which will be accompanied with ongoing training and resource development:

Vision and Leadership
Listening and Building Community
Discernment
Evangelization
Communion of Care

This experience is non-linear and consists of various levels of engagement. My team, in partnership with many thought partners across the archdiocese, are creating a wide variety of resources and formation opportunities in these five core areas for those who desire to go deeper.

In addition, we are also looking to partner with six parishes for a more immersive accompaniment to enhance your parish vibrancy. We are looking for parishes that have a heart for discernment, a readiness for change, an eagerness to try new things, and desire a call for conversion. In addition, we would require a certain level of stability, availability, and commitment for such a partnership to be fruitful.

Please take to prayer the idea of being a pilot parish in this first cohort for "The Way." This would require you to identify a core set of staff and/or lay leaders within your parish to minister alongside you and have the ability to prioritize ongoing formation and development opportunities. In the end, our goal is to help your parish form disciples through an intentional, formational experience.

To mark the beginning of this discernment experience, the archdiocese will share a new vision document on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul - January 25, 2024. Upon hearing from the archbishop about his vision for the future, we will soon follow this with a progressive build out of recommended resources and formation opportunities throughout the year. In conjunction with this launch, we aim to begin our close accompaniment with the first cohort of six parishes.

You will learn more about this from your Pastoral Ministry Coordinators in the coming weeks, likely at your next deanery meetings. In the meantime, if you have any questions or feel called to participate in a deeper way, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly.

I pray you have a blessed Advent and a very Merry Christmas!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Chris Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Fr. Chris Martin
Vicar for Parish Mission and Vitality