



## Seven Signs of a Vibrant, Evangelizing Parish

### 1. Eucharist and sacraments are at the center of vibrant parish life

- Are young families bringing their children to be baptized? What is your parish doing to encourage and support families with newly baptized children (or children who are not yet baptized)?
- Are Sunday Masses at your parish well-attended or are there empty seats that should be filled? What is your parish doing to promote faithful observance of the Lord's Day?
- Do those who attend weekend liturgies participate actively? What is your parish doing to invite and facilitate "full, conscious and active participation" in the Sunday Eucharist?
- How does your parish promote eucharistic adoration, reception of the sacrament of Penance, vocations, marriage and family life, care for the sick and dying, and ministry to all who have special needs?

### 2. Vibrant parishes are schools of prayer and spirituality

- Is the Sunday Eucharist the heart of your parish's life and ministry? Do you and your fellow parishioners take seriously your obligation to keep the Lord's Day holy and to participate actively in Sunday Mass?
- What additional opportunities for prayer and devotion does your parish offer? The Liturgy of the Hours? Prayer groups? Eucharistic adoration? Are these well-attended?
- Does your parish offer opportunities for silent prayer and for spiritual formation — retreats, days of recollection, parish missions, spiritual direction? How often is the sacrament of Penance available to you?
- Do you learn about the saints and about the various forms of spirituality that were lived by the saints and their followers throughout the ages (the Benedictines, Franciscans and Jesuits) as well as saints closer to our own time (St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, St. Damien of Molokai, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, Blessed John Paul II)?

### 3. Vibrant parishes hand on the faith to future generations

- Is lifelong faith formation a priority for your parish? How are you handing on our Catholic faith to adults, young adults, youth and children?
- If you have a Catholic school, is it growing — in its Catholic identity, enrollment and financial health? How is faith in God proclaimed in everything your school does? Would a stranger entering your school for the first time see immediately that your school is grounded in a supernatural vision? What images mark your school as Catholic? How do they help remind students, teachers, staff, parents and visitors that our true home is in heaven?
- How does your school help students, and all members of the school community, grow in intimacy with Jesus Christ and, through Him, in service to others?
- What opportunities for catechesis and religious formation do you provide to elementary and secondary students who do not attend Catholic schools?

### 4. Vibrant parishes reach out to others beyond parish boundaries

- Does your parish invite (or challenge) its parishioners to look to the needs of others — both within and outside your parish boundaries?
- Is social justice integral to the life of your parish community?
- As a parish, are you open to new ways of recognizing the face of Jesus in the poor and socially outcast?

### 5. Vibrant parishes are filled with the Holy Spirit; they evangelize in Jesus' name

- Is your parish welcoming, hospitable and committed to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others?
- Can you identify members of your family, friends or fellow parishioners who no longer practice their faith? Are you praying for them? Have you invited them to come to Mass with you? If they came back, would they feel welcome? Is there more that we can do to encourage our absent sisters and brothers to come home?
- Are there signs that the Holy Spirit is at work in your parish? How are members of your parish collaborating



with God's grace to evangelize — to proclaim the Good News and introduce others to the person of Jesus Christ?

**6. Vibrant parishes have collaborative leaders and exercise good stewardship**

- Are your leaders collaborative — exercising their responsibilities as a form of service — or do the same people do everything year in, year out? How do members of your parish express their thanksgiving to God — as individuals and as a parish community? Do your eucharistic celebrations (the greatest prayer of thanksgiving we have) carry over into parishioners' daily lives?
- How generous are you as individuals, families and parish communities? Do you give the minimum necessary to get by (putting "your fair share" in the weekly collection)? Or are you like the Good Samaritan who opened his purse to care for a stranger? Or the prodigal son's father who killed the fatted calf and rejoiced at his irresponsible son's return? Or the widow who Jesus tells us gave "everything she had?"
- Do your parishioners know that their gifts of time and talent are as welcome as their financial gifts?
- Is your parish accountable for the management and use of all its human, physical and financial resources?

**7. Vibrant parishes transform parishioners' lives, making a real difference in daily life**

- If you were not able to receive the Body and Blood of Christ at least once a week, would you lose intimate contact with Him? Would your friendship with Christ diminish significantly? If your parish didn't exist, would you still pray regularly? Would you seek out other opportunities to grow in your spiritual life?
- Would parishioners continue to learn about the teachings of the Church — or would they settle for what they already know (or think they know) about the Catholic way of life?
- If your parish didn't exist, would your parishioners participate in the Church's social ministries or would they be content with minding their own business? Would they search out opportunities to support the Church's worldwide missionary efforts? Without your parish, would your parishioners share their faith with others — in small groups or one-on-one? Or would they keep it to themselves? Would they be generous stewards? Or would they be more likely to be selfish and keep their gifts of time, talent and money to themselves?
- Without your parish, how would parishioners' lives be different? Would they simply fill the void with other activities — Sunday brunch, jogging or reading the newspaper (online) — or would there be a noticeable void in their lives?