



# We ARE the Mission!

*As the Father has sent me, so I send you.*

APRIL 12, 2015

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

### • Acts 4:32-35

*...one heart and one mind; holding everything in common; witnessing powerfully to Jesus' resurrection; no needy person among them...*

### • Psalm 118

*Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his loving mercy endures forever. This is the day the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it!*

### • 1John 5:1-6

*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God. Everyone who loves the Father loves also the one begotten by him. The Spirit is the one that testifies, and the Spirit is truth.*

### • John 20:19-31

*Jesus said to the gathered disciples: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples. These are written that you may come to believe and that through this belief you may have life in his name.*

## The Missionary Enterprise

In his apostolic exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis explains that his own mission of "being in the heart of the people" is not merely something extra or temporary in his life. Rather, he says, it is at the very root of his identity: "I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world." He goes on to remind us that this is true for every one of us. We must "regard ourselves as sealed by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing."

The Holy Father invites us to remember and claim again the source of our conviction and our missionary zeal. He

points us back to any time we have experienced a personal encounter with the saving love of Jesus. "If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love," Francis urges, "we



**Each person's participation in the mission of Christ is rooted in his or her Baptism.**

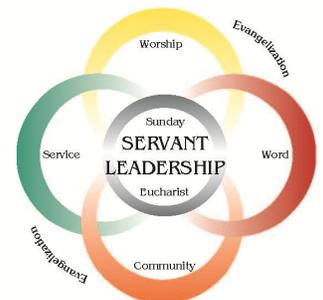
need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts." In this we remember that "with Jesus life becomes richer and that

with him it is easier to find meaning in everything."

This renewed encounter is what enables Christian communities today to live like the one described in the Acts of the Apostles. Moved by the example of Jesus, "we want to enter fully into the fabric of society, sharing the lives of all, listening to their concerns, helping them materially and spiritually in their needs...arm in arm with others, we are committed to building a new world." By doing so, Pope Francis claims, "we will know the missionary joy of sharing life with God's faithful people as we strive to light a fire in the heart of the world."

## Communities that Re-gather the Scattered

When Bishop Bambera began to serve in this capacity for the Diocese of Scranton, he conducted a listening process which led to publishing his vision for this local Church in the Pastoral Letter called *Wounded and Loved: Re-gathering the Scattered*. The message it contains is even more compelling now, five years later: "To support, enliven and direct pastoral life and ministry in parishes that are viable communities committed to evangelization in word, worship, community and service, I challenge all of the faithful to embrace their vocation as the Baptized." Reflecting anew the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and papal teaching since that time, Bishop Bambera's letter poses a picture of a Church that "reflects the common mission of all the baptized, while not negating the special roles of service which some fulfill for others."



**Servant Leadership is the foundation for mission in the Diocese of Scranton.**

(cont. pg. 2)

## Communities that Re-gather the Scattered (cont.)

The future of the Diocese, says the Bishop, “lies in the renewal of parish life, and our hope lies in the generous servant leadership of priests, religious, and laity who, wounded but loved, give themselves to Christ’s good news mission of gathering those scattered from the love of God and the Church.” Our task, Bishop Bambera explains, is to make our parish life new by discovering together how to proclaim the gospel and live

Eucharistic communion in a way that our brothers and sisters in each region of the Diocese can comprehend and be inspired. Embracing this task in recent years has meant concentrating on Parish Pastoral Council development, strategic pastoral planning, and Lay Ecclesial Ministry formation, so that parishes have “the support of appropriate structures which both insure participation in decision-making and facilitate involvement in the ministry

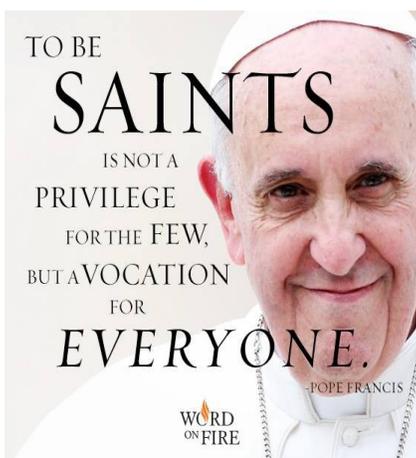
areas of community, word, worship and service.” In this way, as a Diocese and in each individual parish, we strive to align all of our resources, activities and energies with these goals: “to live our faith fully, to share it freely with others, and to transform the world in Christ.” Creatively renewed parish structures, led collaboratively by well formed disciples, will ensure welcoming, growing and life-giving parishes for years to come.



*We, the Catholic community of the Diocese of Scranton, are called through Baptism to imitate the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. In union with our Holy father, the Pope, we proclaim the Gospel faithfully, celebrate the sacraments joyfully, and boldly promote life, justice and peace in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania.*

### Questions for Reflection and Dialogue

- In his homily, Bishop Bambera shared some highlights of these most recent five years in the Church of Scranton (healing, stabilizing parishes; Council development and planning; ministry formation; guidance of Pope Francis). How would you describe the highlights specifically in your parish?
- Along with these highlights, there is a great deal more needed to become communities that re-gather the scattered and live a most vibrant parish life promised by the gospel. What two or three things would you suggest to bring your parish more fully alive?
- What specific ideas do you have for your parish and your family to help identify and nurture those men called to begin preparation as priests?
- In his Pastoral Letter, and again in today’s homily, Bishop stresses that: “Parish leadership challenges all parishioners to recognize and accept responsibility as members of the evangelizing community.” What does this kind of shared responsibility look like? Does it suggest any change in your understanding of what it means to be a “good Catholic?”
- To provide for the pastoral needs in all 120 parishes of the Diocese of Scranton, what kinds of leadership roles do you think could be strengthened and/or developed to foster the “fullest possible collaboration of clergy, religious and laity, men and women in the common mission of the Church?”



### Broadening the Conversation

During the past year, the priests of the Diocese have been studying the current and projected needs for pastoral leadership, as well as various models for how parishes and their leaders can work together to serve these needs. It is very clear that, as more of the long-serving Pastors reach retirement, viable options for partnering parishes and/or creating team approaches to ministry will need to be developed. Bishop Bambera discussed these alternatives in his message today in

all parishes. This Spring he will also participate in Regional dialogues with Pastors and their designated parish representatives, in order to review and discuss the material presented today. In these gatherings, each parish will have the chance to offer their input regarding the progress being made so far in realizing our stated Diocesan Mission, and the best ways to move forward. Feel free to share your thoughts with your Pastor or Parish Pastoral Council members.