

DISCIPLES ON THE WAY

AN INVITATION



*A Missionary Journey into the New Evangelization
for the Diocese of Green Bay*

The Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL
Bishop of Green Bay

Fall 2014 - Fall 2020

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*A Missionary Journey into the
New Evangelization for the Diocese of Green Bay*

*An Invitation to Priests, Deacons, Religious,
Pastoral Leaders and to all the Faithful*

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My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Over the past year, our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has given us a very clear example of what it means to live what is called The New Evangelization. “Re-proposing Jesus Christ” by living our daily lives following Christ, is what it means to live out the new evangelization. It also means reintroducing others to Christ, especially to people we know; our family members, friends, and others with whom we work, recreate, and share life.

As your Diocesan bishop, I have been focusing my time in prayer and contemplation, trying to discern the best approach for the Diocese of Green Bay in implementing this new invitation from the Church. After much time and reflection, and with gratitude to the Lord for what I have learned through my involvement on the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), I would like to invite everyone to a journey; a journey of deepening our prayer life, of learning to be better disciples ourselves and of making disciples of others for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

“Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.”

(Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium #127)

Pope Francis is urging all of us to reach out; to be deeply rooted in prayer by developing an intimate friendship with Jesus Christ. He asks us to share the fruits of the spiritual intimacy we have with Jesus with everyone in our lives, so others see the joy of Christ shining forth in us. Joy comes from living a life fully rooted in Christ so that *“it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* Galatians 2:20

Hopefully those who know us will be able to identify us as Christians and as Catholics by the beautiful phrase from the Scriptures: *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* John 13:34-35

The Pastoral Letter and the New Evangelization

In 2011, I published a pastoral letter, entitled “Parishes: Called to be Holy, Fully Engaged and Fully Alive,” which was a reflection of a diocesan process we used to ascertain from the people of God, the needs and desires of their hearts. The pastoral letter also asked how we, as a Diocese, might respond to these needs and desires. I am very proud of all of you in pastoral leadership as more and more people are responding to this letter. This letter will continue to guide our ministry efforts through 2016 and beyond. Within the framework of this letter, we are well positioned in the diocese to assimilate the Pope’s new direction for the Church.



OUR JOURNEY: DISCIPLES ON THE WAY

This process will be called “**Disciples on the WAY.**” In the story of the Road to Emmaus, in St. John’s Gospel, the disciples came to understand who the stranger was who was walking with them as he explained the meaning of the Word and as they broke bread together. We are now on the way of the *New Evangelization*, learning from Our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Church what it means to be a disciple. It is a six-year journey of prayer, preaching, teaching and growing in faith, that will help us not necessarily to **do** more, but to **be** more; to be **more like Jesus** in all aspects of our lives, work and ministries.

“Our hope is not in a program or a philosophy but in the person of Jesus Christ who comforts those who are burdened.”

(Disciples Called to Witness - USCCB)





“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive decision.”

(Pope Benedict XVI)

The diocesan journey is divided into three emphases over the coming six years:

FORMATION IN PRAYER AND HOLINESS (2014 - 16)

FORMATION IN DISCIPLESHIP (2016 – 18)

FORMATION IN MISSION (2018 - 20)

Enclosed you will find a “mission map” which will guide our journey into the *New Evangelization*. This is a map to help guide and direct us as we initiate this call to live the Holy Gospel more deeply and to share it with others; especially over the next six years. It will teach us to reach out in confidence with the Good News of the Gospel and to share it with others. It will also provide several thematic keys that will help us especially in our teaching, preaching and processes. We all know that life is not lived only on the temporal or linear level, but hopefully this “mission map” will serve as a framework and a formation curriculum for the six-year journey.

PHASE I: FORMATION IN PRAYER AND HOLINESS

The first two years, (2014 – 2016) will be called “Formation in Prayer and Holiness.” I want us all to focus very clearly on the call to renew our prayer lives by establishing and deepening our relationship with Jesus Christ and His Holy Church. This will mean spending more time as individuals and as families coming to love the **Sunday Mass** which is the heart of our life as Catholic Christians. It will also mean praying for anyone among our families, our friends and our parishioners who have drifted away from the regular practice of the Catholic faith, and praying for their return to regular nourishment at the table of God’s Word and the table of the Eucharist.

I will be preparing a Pastoral Reflection for the first two years which will concentrate on the call to prayer and holiness. It will mean helping our parishes, our schools, our prayer groups, and our ministries to be transformed into real schools of prayer over the next two years. In other words, we will continue doing many of the things we are already doing, discontinue some of the things we are currently doing, and re-enforce all of our activities and dispositions by focusing on our prayer lives, answering the call to holiness. We will deepen our own prayerful journey with our Lord and also teach others how to pray.





PHASE II: FORMATION IN DISCIPLESHIP

The second phase is called “Formation in Discipleship” (2016– 2018). Since the *Synod of the Bishops on the New Evangelization*, many discipleship training and formation processes and programs have emerged. In our own diocese, we have a newly created department called the department of *new evangelization*. In that department are the offices of adult faith formation, campus ministry, young adult formation and the office of new evangelization. This department will help all of us learn what it truly means to be disciples as well as how to make new disciples in our Church.

Christ is calling each of us to deepen our prayer lives and the most intimate way to experience this encounter is in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. This encounter in the Eucharist overflows in love and leads us to turn to Him in our daily prayers. The culmination of our daily prayers finds its highest expression in the celebration of Sunday Mass. As such, much of the focus for our primary efforts will be on those of us who are already coming to Sunday Mass as we work to deepen our prayer lives and learn how to ask others to come to Church with us. This will also mean inviting others to ask Jesus into their lives in a much deeper way. We will learn how to become more comfortable with spreading the Good News to others including our families and friends. We will especially focus on those who may have drifted away from the regular practice of the Catholic faith.

PHASE III: FORMATION IN MISSION

The third phase is called, “Formation in Mission” (2018 – 2020). During this phase, we will strive to grow in our call to be missionaries. We will assist all those who have increased and ramped up their level of discipleship to reach out further beyond the boundaries to people they may not be familiar with. We will find ways to witness and share the Good News of the Holy Gospel; especially by engaging more actively in the corporal and spiritual Works of Mercy.

In our Diocese we have many Christians who are actively engaged in the corporal works of mercy - feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, taking care of the sick and dying, and reaching out to those on the margins. I ask that we always ensure that our works of charity are centered on Christ and His Church. Jesus is the source of this charity and should be made visible through these acts of love. As the Church, we reach out in love and in the love of Jesus to those who have less than we do, not just with material goods, but also with spiritual goods by introducing them to Christ. I’m asking you to help them to come to a more prayerful life, personally and as families, and, God willing, as active members in the Church. As Pope Francis reminds us, *“the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessings, his word, the celebration of the sacraments, and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith.”* (Evangelií Gaudium, #200)



A NEW PENTECOST

We dedicate this entire six-year period to the Holy Spirit. He is really the one that is going to lead this journey of the Diocese of Green Bay for the next six years. This map will provide us a timeline of goals to emphasize during our efforts to welcome the Holy Spirit more fully into the life of the Church and into the life of each one of us. In essence, we are really praying for a new Pentecost. What a new Pentecost means, is that we are asking for the Holy Spirit to manifest Himself more and more so that we become truly alive in our faith. We want to shine as a light in the midst of darkness, and truly to be salt for the world by the quality of our witness and the sacrifices we make for the sake of Jesus, for the Gospel and for the Church.

I invite each and every one of you to journey as the body of Christ with your Pastor or Pastoral Leader and with your fellow parishioners in living out this “mission map” as a *“Disciple on the WAY.”* I ask you to join me in the spirit of Christ and in this new moment in the Church’s history by reaching out more deeply by giving yourselves to the Lord for His purposes. In the words of Pope Francis, *“I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.”* (*Evangelii Gaudium* #33)

Once we give our life to the Lord, we have to continue giving. Every day we may have the tendency to pull back some gift that we've given. And yet, if we give Him our lives as totally and completely as we can each and every day, he will use them bountifully to bring many blessings and to save many souls!

"Disciples on the WAY" is all about winning souls for Jesus Christ and being an instrument in his work of salvation for our world today. The promises of this world are attractive, but only as a shiny darkness that deceives and never delivers on its promises.



PREPARING FOR OUR JOURNEY, TOGETHER



AN INVITATION TO EVANGELIZATION

In the late 1600s, French missionaries brought the Catholic faith to this part of the world. Since then, the faith has grown and taken root in a beautiful way. In 2018, we will mark the 150th anniversary of the Diocese of Green Bay. In looking forward to marking that special anniversary, we are grateful for the call of Pope Francis to recommit to our efforts at evangelization.

With this in mind we entrust our work to Our Lady of Good Help who herself had a simple message: ***“Teach them their catechism, how to sign themselves with the sign of the Cross, and how to approach the sacraments; that is what I wish you to do. Go and fear nothing. I will help you.”***

We ask Our Lady of Good Help to be the patroness of our efforts in the new evangelization for the Diocese of Green Bay. *“Through her many titles, often linked to her shrines, Mary shares the history of each people which has received the Gospel and she becomes a part of their historic identity.”* (Evangelii Gaudium #286)

“We ask the Mother of the living Gospel to intercede that this invitation to a new phase of evangelization will be accepted by the entire ecclesial community. Today we look to her and ask her to help us proclaim the message of salvation to all and to enable new disciples to become evangelizers in turn.”

(Evangelii Gaudium #287)

I invite you today to enter in fully now with the diocese and with the parishes over the next six years; to truly become holy, engaged in Christ and in the Church and alive in the Mission of Evangelization. We will officially begin our journey this coming Fall 2014 and I will write a pastoral reflection that will set a more precise course for the first two years of immersion in prayer.

May our journey, outlined in this mission map, help us on our way. May it renew our relationship to Christ in our prayer, may it help to form us into disciples, and may it deepen our sense of mission that we know is so vital for the faith to continue to grow and flourish. As we have been praying, so we continue to pray: “Lord, make us holy, fully engaged and fully alive.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Ricken". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

The Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL
Bishop of Green Bay





BISHOP DAVID L. RICKEN

David Laurin Ricken was born Nov. 9, 1952, to George William “Bill” and Bertha (Davis) Ricken in Dodge City, Kansas. He has an older brother, Mark, and a younger sister, Carol. He was ordained a priest on Sept. 12, 1980, and on Jan. 6, 2000, he was ordained to the episcopacy for the Diocese of Cheyenne at the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. Pope Benedict XVI named Bishop Ricken the twelfth bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay on July 9, 2008.

Bishop Ricken is a member of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis. He is presently a member of the Bishops’ Advisory Council for the Institute for Priestly Formation and the Catholic Mutual Relief Society.

Since childhood, Bishop Ricken has held a particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary as well as to St. Francis of Assisi. He enjoys teaching the basics and leading people to reflect more deeply upon the beauty of the Catholic faith, especially through contemplative prayer and the Prayer of the Heart.

MISSION MAP

DISCIPLES ON THE WAY

A MISSIONARY JOURNEY INTO THE NEW EVANGELIZATION



PRE-JOURNEY QUESTIONS?

Department of New Evangelization
Diocese of Green Bay
disciplesontheway@gbdioc.org
920-272-8270

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2014 - 2020



Diocese of
Green Bay