



September 15,  
2003

About | Contact | Departments | Home Delivery



Get Me

Tidings

Home

News

Viewpoints

Spirituality

Liturgy

Entertainment

Calendar

Sports

Search

## THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

### News

- [Synod implementation begins](#)
- [Gathered and Sent: Synod Initiatives, Priorities, Strategies](#)
- [An introduction to the Synod of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles 2003](#)
- ['The Holy Spirit has enlivened and enlightened our hearts'](#)
- [Archdiocesan Update on Mediation, Child Protection](#)
- [Confucianism: A 'Prelude to Gospel,' says convention speaker](#)
- [Campus ministries still afloat](#)
- [Five named as Cardinal's Award recipients](#)

Friday, September 12, 2003

## An introduction to the Synod of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles 2003

text only version

### Introduction



Jesus' mission is first manifested when he, the beloved son of the Father, is baptized in the Jordan and filled with the Holy Spirit. To prepare for his mission, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to fast, pray and be tested (Matthew 3: 16-17 - 4: 1). Jesus' mission is to announce the time of God's favor, the coming of the Reign of God. Jesus proclaimed the Reign of God as the fulfillment of God's hope, desire, and intention for the world now and to come. In God's Reign, truth, holiness, justice, love and peace will hold sway forever. Jesus established the Church to continue and further this mission. He entrusted this mission to the Church: to proclaim in word and deed the Good News of God's coming among us in Jesus Christ through the gift of the Spirit. This mission is so central to the word and work of Jesus that the Second Vatican Council affirmed and emphasized that "mission" defines the Church. The Church in every dimension of its life and practice exists for mission: to proclaim in word and deed the Reign of God to people in every culture, time and place.

On the Solemnity of the Epiphany, January 6, 2001, Pope John Paul II issued an Apostolic Letter that outlined a pastoral program for the Third Millennium: *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "At the Beginning of the New Millennium." The Pope addressed this Letter to all the faithful: bishops, clergy, religious and lay. In it, the Holy Father affirms that pastoral initiatives are to be developed and adapted to the circumstances of each community. This means that it is in the Local Churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan are to be identified. These will enable the message of Christ to reach people, form communities, so that they may have a deep influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture. "I therefore earnestly exhort the Pastors of particular Churches, with the help of all sectors of God's people, confidently to plan the stages of the journey ahead, harmonizing the choices of each diocesan community with those of neighboring Churches and the universal Church" (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 29). The Synod of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has been undertaken in the spirit of this invitation and challenge: to proclaim in word and deed the mission of Christ and the Spirit.

### Where We Stand

Los Angeles is the largest and fastest growing Archdiocese in the United States of America, with an estimated five million Catholics

COMMUNITY

What do you think?

THE LAST



[Driver's license bill signed](#)

- [Welcoming Cuba's patron to Los Angeles](#)
- [Regional News](#)

#### Viewpoints

- [Original sin: Can there be something to this after all?](#)
- [Pope John who?](#)
- [The laity-hierarchy gap](#)

#### Liturgy

- [We are called to live the cross](#)

#### Spirituality

- [Self-protection? Or food for all?](#)

#### Entertainment

- [Movie Reviews](#)

within its borders. Parishes in the Archdiocese report serving two and a quarter million Catholics directly, roughly half of that population. Moreover, parish reports indicate that the average number of Catholics served is almost eight thousand. However, estimates based on ethnicity as reported by the U.S. Census indicate that the average number of Catholics per parish is close to nineteen thousand. Parishes are making enormous efforts, and many are quite successful, but the challenge remains even greater. Eighty-seven parishes report serving more than ten thousand people. However, the above Census estimates show that one hundred and ten parishes have a population of more than twenty thousand Catholics. Non-participating/inactive Catholics constitute the largest "religious" body in the United States.

This reality alone brings the Church to a crucial juncture with regards to its future, and presents Catholics with the challenge and the opportunity to evangelize. In its initial and most concrete form, *to evangelize* means to proclaim in word and action the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who have never heard it before. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to proclaim our experience of him in our own lives, our families, our places of work, and our neighborhoods.

Like the Church in many countries, there are many baptized persons in the Archdiocese who, for a variety of reasons, are not active in the life of their parishes or Local Church. Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has therefore called for a "new evangelization." This form of evangelization entails proclaiming the Word in word and deed to under-catechized, inactive, and alienated Catholics, striving to reanimate the faith of those who have already discovered the presence of Christ in their lives. Such an understanding of evangelization challenges us to allow Christ to touch the unconverted corners of the lives of those who already have faith in Jesus Christ, beginning with ourselves first of all.

The window to evangelize vast numbers of both Catholic immigrants and Catholic young people, as well as to undertake the "new evangelization," may not remain open forever. The beginning of this new century offers us a unique opportunity to carry out this "new evangelization" in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. How we respond to this challenge now and in the next few years will have enormous consequences for Catholicism in the United States.

On Holy Thursday of the Jubilee Year 2000, Cardinal Roger Mahony and the priests of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles released a Pastoral Letter on Ministry, *As I Have Done for You*. Aware of the many changes taking place in the Archdiocese, the Archbishop and his priests wrote: "Mere adjustment and small shifts in practice will not suffice. What is called for is a major reorientation in our thinking about ministry as well as in our ministerial practice" (38). At the conclusion of the Pastoral Letter, the Cardinal convoked a Synod for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The Synod was an invitation for the People of God to engage in a process of prayer, dialogue, discernment and decision to meet the needs of the people in the Archdiocese at this time.

In our commitment to meet the ever-changing needs of the people of the Archdiocese and to carry out the work of evangelization as described here, we recognize the efforts of our brothers and sisters outside the Church. Many of them, like us, strive to build a world of truth, holiness, justice, love and peace. It is our gift and task to walk

shoulder to shoulder with all those who seek to advance the Reign of God, regardless of culture, race, language, or creed.

## Shifting Ground

*The Next Generation and the Next?*

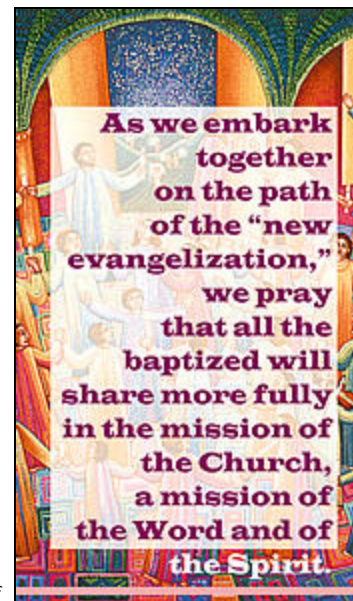
In the process of prayer and dialogue so central to the Synod, parents and grandparents across the Five Pastoral Regions of the Archdiocese consistently expressed their perception that a very large number of our young people are not practicing their faith. They are anxious about their own inability to pass on the faith to the next generation. Even while there are signs that many young Catholics are enthusiastically involved in the life of faith, it is clear that many more are not. The primary educators in the faith are the parents of children, and so we will need to find ways to assist parents to more effectively fulfill this responsibility.

*A Third Wave: Gift and Challenge*

Called to recognize the all-pervasive challenge posed by youth and young adults, we also find ourselves confronted with another major gift and task. We are living amidst the third great wave of immigration in this country. The first and second waves brought immigrants primarily to the shores of the Eastern seaboard in the first two centuries of this nation. The third wave, growing in strength and numbers since 1970, has brought peoples from Mexico, Central America, South America and the Far East to the California shores. We count this as an enormous gift, rich in vitality and diversity. But the gift also brings with it huge challenges, not least of which is that of language, as well as that of reaching out to serve diverse cultures, respecting the other, and deeply appreciating, not merely tolerating, difference and uniqueness. With these changes there has also been the pain involved in the changing composition of existing parishes.

Looking back we see that our Archdiocesan parish structures were built to serve an internal migration from the Eastern and Midwestern United States in the aftermath of the Second World War. Parishes were established to serve between fifteen hundred and two thousand households. Several priests were assigned to each parish, and parish schools were staffed by an abundance of Sisters from many different religious congregations. Today, especially in those parishes in the Archdiocese where immigrants of the third wave have settled, there can be as many as ten or fifteen thousand potential Catholic households. With fewer priests, religious sisters and brothers, many are left wondering: How are we to serve such a number of parishioners in all their cultural

diversity? Recognizing the need for evangelization as well as the "new evangelization" of active and nonparticipating Catholics, can we any longer assume that we will reach them primarily by inviting them to join in our current parish activities and programs?



*Keeping Our Mooring*

Amidst the shifts we have identified we are aware that lay ministries are flourishing in unprecedented numbers. At the same time, vocations to the priesthood and religious life continue to decrease. More deacons are needed to serve the material needs of the Church. We believe that the Church is a communion of Word and Sacrament, but with fewer priests, we run the risk of becoming disconnected from the Eucharist, font and summit of Catholic faith and life.

**Anchor of Hope**

As the Synod of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles began, the Church throughout the United States began to reel from the crisis brought on by the scandal of sexual abuse. The response of the People of God to the crisis has been a source of the deepest hope as well as the occasion for the most profound apology and plea for forgiveness and reconciliation. We recognize the presence of sin in the Church but we also believe that the Church is the bearer of God's grace. We came to the Synod with a profound appreciation of the fact that the majority of Catholic people have remained firm in their faith, resolute in hope, ardent in charity and faithful to the Church. The People of God are living proof of the Second Vatican Council's teaching: We, laity, religious and clergy are the Church.

**Evangelization:  
A New Way of Doing Things**

During the Synod process our people have spoken and their voices have been heard. What have they said? Above all they stressed the need for evangelization:

*To announce in word and deed the Good News of the Lord,*

*The time of God's favor,*

*The transformation of the world,*

*And the coming of the Reign of God -- when truth, holiness,*

*justice, love and peace will prevail.*

Evangelization is at the heart of the Church's mission; it is everyone's vocation, not only of missionaries, whether ordained, religious or lay. Evangelization belongs to all those who have been given a share in the Church's mission through their Christian initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and sharing in the Eucharist.

Pope John Paul II defines the "new evangelization" as the proclamation of the Good News not only to those who have never heard the Gospel message, but in a particular way to those who no longer participate in the Church's life. He also includes each and every one of us in this "new evangelization" so that the light of the Gospel may reach the dark corners of our lives as well.

As disciples of Jesus we are called to share the Good News, the person who is Jesus Christ, with many people: our families, youth and young adults, and those who seem to be marginalized from the

life of the Church for whatever reason. We are called to share our experience of what it means to have a relationship with Christ. The Good News of the Reign of God "is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but is before all else a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth" (*Redemptoris missio*, 18).

We must admit in all humility that we do not really know how to share the Good News effectively. Cardinal Mahony and the priests of the Archdiocese conclude their Pastoral Letter on Ministry, *As I Have Done for You*, by calling us to recognize that we are on a journey, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, moving toward a future as yet unknown. And so we must learn as we walk together. Here is the question: How can the Synod bring about "a major reorientation in our thinking about ministry as well as in our ministerial practice" so that we can take up the task of evangelization?

We cannot look solely to the past for answers to questions we now face. The Church in the United States grew by leaps and bounds, principally by immigration from Eastern and Western Europe. These immigrants found in the Church a refuge, a source of support and pride in the face of many hostile forces. The catechetical efforts of the Church in the United States have been enormously fruitful. But until now our catechesis has been focused upon those already in the Church. At this time we find it necessary to reach out, to testify in word and deed, not just or even primarily to strangers, but to family, to friends, to our own children. How are we to stand up and face this challenge?

#### *Wellsprings Within*

Year by year, season by season, the People of God hear the Word through cycles of Scripture readings proclaimed during the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Those who participate in the Liturgy every Sunday and sometimes every day, experience the love of the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit who is present and active in their lives. Because they participate in the Mass every Sunday, their belief in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Word, and the community gathered in faith at the Lord's Table, remains firm. Yet, many seem to lack confidence in their knowledge of the Christian faith and their ability to articulate their experience of Christ Crucified and Risen. One of the greatest challenges before us, therefore, is that of empowering people to speak of their relationship with a loving and saving God through their experiences with the Scriptures, Sacraments, and community, so they may become bearers of God's love to others. As we embark together on the path of the "new evangelization" we pray that all the baptized will share more fully in the mission of the Church, a mission of the Word and of the Spirit.

*The Word is God's love seen, touched, and heard. The Spirit is God's love dwelling in the human heart -- a love that is creative, a love that gives life, a love that unites us as children of a loving Father. Everyone in the Church -- member for member -- has a share in the mission of Word and Spirit, called to make God's love seen, touched, and heard, to live from a never-ending source of love that creates life, binds what is broken, unites each and every one in our families, neighborhoods, communities, parishes: This, in fact, is a new way of doing things.*

As the Synod progressed, the words of *As I Have Done for You* (38)

echoed: "Mere adjustment and small shifts in practice will not suffice. What is called for is a major reorientation in our thinking about ministry as well as our ministerial practice." The Pastoral Initiatives, Priorities and Strategies endorsed by the Synod propose a new way of doing things because the fundamental mission of evangelization has been given a new expression for today. The Synod is not celebrated in view of yet more programs. Instead, the Pastoral Initiatives, Priorities and Strategies were chosen in view of meeting the challenges of our times in the communion of the Spirit, rooted in a fresh encounter with Christ (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, 3). They are in service of a new way of doing things, imbued by the spirit of the "new evangelization," a whole way of living that is new in its expression, its methods and its zeal.

Through the implementation of the Synod decisions, we will begin afresh to live as children of God who together form a living sign, an icon, of God's love for the world.

## A Blessed Communion

As members of the Body of Christ we are deeply related to one another: parents and children, young adults and grandparents, parishioners and priests, brothers and sisters in community, members of parishes across the Archdiocese, a Local Church related to other Local Churches in the United States and throughout the world. We deepen these relationships when we cultivate and nourish them through generosity and service for the Reign of God now and to come. Thus, our relationship, our communion, with God, Father, Son and Spirit grows stronger.

As we deepen our communion in the Spirit we become a living icon of the Trinity. The Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the source of all the other mysteries of Christian faith, the light that enlightens them (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 234). The doctrine of the Trinity reminds us that the divine persons are who and what they are because of their relations: Father, Son and Spirit. We also know that this God is for us, with us and in us. This basic insight leads us to a profound understanding of ourselves as a communion of persons.

### *Divine and Human: Persons in Relation*

The doctrine of the Trinity reveals to us that the Trinitarian persons are both different from, yet altogether equal to, one another. There is difference of persons but there is no greater or lesser. We are a Body called to holiness and to support the full flourishing of each member. And so we reject any differentiation or ordering in the Church that would make one person or ministry intrinsically less essential or more essential than any other (1Cor 12). The sacrament of baptism establishes the ground for this ecclesial communion. It introduces us into a community based on new relationships. As daughters and sons of the God who is life, light and love, we are sisters and brothers to one another (Jn 1:12-13). It is within this relationship of the baptized that we share the gifts of faith, hope and love as well as the responsibility to proclaim in word and deed the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world.

Within the Church, all relationships are to be built on mutuality, reciprocity and interdependence. The Spirit of God is present and active within the various relations that make up the Church --

relationships among bishops, laity and priests, between Local Church and Universal Church, as well as among those of other Christian churches. We recognize ourselves as a community called to holiness and defined by a quality of interaction rooted in the relational life of God. But just as God is a God for us, so is the Church for others. The Church in all its members is for mission. At the heart of the divine life there is the act of "sending," of "being sent." Jesus Christ is the One Sent: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (Jn 20: 21).

## More Than Mere Maintenance: Mission

The Church, in all its members, is for MISSION. It must be admitted that far too often our energy goes into maintaining structures rather than into fulfilling mission. Our concern for collaboration must be more than preoccupation with working together on joint Church projects. We are called to become more fully the Church, a people sent by the One Sent to be a light to the nations, a beacon of hope and joy to the people, all the people, in our own time and place.

Through prayer, dialogue, discernment, and decision at the heart of the Synod, six Pastoral Initiatives emerged above all others. These will give shape to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles as we seek to live in the communion of the Spirit, able to respond to the changing needs of the people in the Archdiocese. Our mission is to those who:

---are not evangelized and to those Catholics who are inactive or alienated from the Church;

---to the vast numbers of people who have come to our shores;

---to the vast number of those Catholics who no longer claim Church affiliation;

---to youth and young adults;

---to ourselves, who are still in need of conversion to the Gospel;

---and to the generations that will succeed us.

The response of the Synod delegates to the pastoral challenges of the Archdiocese indicates a deep desire to seek new ways to evangelize that go beyond the present structures. The Pastoral Initiatives, together with Priorities and Strategies for implementation can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Mission is central to the Church's life -- to announce in word and deed the Good News of Christ through the presence and power of the Spirit.
- 2) Where Church structures do not aid in the fulfillment of its mission, they are to be renewed or new ones established.
- 3) For effective participation in the mission of the Church, ongoing



formation is needed at every stage of life.

**4)** Trained leaders are needed -- lay, consecrated persons, and ordained, so that the Word will be proclaimed and inactive Catholics and non-Catholics, as well as those Catholics who are active, will hear the Good News.

**5)** In the sacramental life of the Church, above all in the Eucharist, the identity and mission of the Body of Christ is expressed and impressed, and the Church comes to full stature in Christ.

**6)** Strengthened by Word and Sacrament(s), the Church becomes a sign of communion and justice in and for the world -- its mission.

The Synod chose six Pastoral Initiatives, nine Pastoral Priorities, and 14 Pastoral Strategies for implementation. As the first Pastoral Initiative, *Evangelization and "The New Evangelization"* is the governing concern, the central focus, of the Archdiocesan Synod and its implementation. This means, quite concretely, that *Evangelization and "The New Evangelization"* is the gauge for all judgments and decisions involved in the other five Pastoral Initiatives.

go to the top  
of the page

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Spirituality](#) | [Sports](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Liturgy](#) | [Viewpoints](#)  
[About](#) | [Contact](#) | [Departments](#) | [Home Delivery](#)

copyright The Tidings Corporation ©2003  
Contact us at: [info@the-tidings.com](mailto:info@the-tidings.com)