

# Celebrating Lay Apostolate History

## in the Diocese of Pittsburgh

Gathered Fragments - Special Feature - 2017

### REVITALIZING PARISHES THROUGH EFFECTIVE MINISTRIES

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Early on the morning of Saturday, June 17, 2017, more than eighty leaders of Lay Apostolates from throughout the Diocese of Pittsburgh gathered to pray the liturgy and bring the words of the first reading, 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 into reality: “For Christ’s love compels us...those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” Leaders of Lay Apostolates are coming together, more and more, to support each other and grow ministry opportunities because “revitalizing parishes through effective ministries” aren’t just words to the *On Mission for the Church Alive!* prayer, they are truly the clarion call for missionary disciples of our Lord. Leaders prayed and listened as Very Rev. Joseph M. Mele, Episcopal Vicar for Leadership Development and Evangelization, implored them to remember this: “The better we develop together as servant leaders with the Heart of Christ, the more we will lead them to encounter Christ.” Encountering Christ is at the heart of the resurgence of gatherings of leaders of Lay Apostolates in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. As *On Mission for the Church Alive!* drives us all deeper into prayer and further into outreach, leaders of Lay Apostolates are responding to the rallying cry of our Bishop: “Be a friend. Be a friend of Jesus. Make friends for Jesus.”

Throughout the morning, leaders were asked to share stories and moments of conversion, transformation, and mercy which stand out in their ministry experiences. As the room filled with laughter, and some tears, the presence of Christ and the joy of the Gospel were present. Leaders were asked to join together in a one-month period of discernment as the Secretariat hopes to charter a central leadership team serving all Lay Apostolates. Leaders are taking very seriously the words of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (v. 20). The potential for leadership is everywhere, and

being *On Mission for the Church Alive!* calls us to step forward and invite others to join us.

Just a month later, these leaders gathered again, in prayer and discernment about the needs and opportunities existing in our local Church. Remarkably, the network is building up strong relationships spanning vastly different groups such as the Catholic Medical Association, *Pax Christi*, and the Ladies of Claver, which are actively engaging with evangelization groups like Emmaus and *Cursillo*. These kinds of relationships are important as the Diocese of Pittsburgh embarks on a new chapter, as *On Mission for the Church Alive!* is creating opportunities for lay organizations, apostolates, and movements to bring the vision of Bishop Zubik into reality as lay men and women take seriously their call to faith and offer themselves as ambassadors for Christ.

**A Lay Apostolate is composed of laypeople and consecrated religious who exercise a ministry within the Catholic Church. These organizations cooperate with ecclesiastical authorities. They operate “under direction of her pastors” but are not members of the official Church hierarchy nor in Holy Orders. Some examples are the Ladies of Charity and the Holy Name Society. The Secretariat for Leadership Development and Evangelization of the Diocese of Pittsburgh exists to serve both clergy and laity. It is our belief that Lay Apostolates contribute greatly to the Church Alive!**

Organizing the network of Lay Apostolates is an important part of the work of the Secretariat for Leadership Development and Evangelization. As calling forth a Central Leadership Team of some of these leaders and acting in representation and service to the network takes shape, members of the team will consider the best ways to meet the current needs of the Lay Apostolates in conjunction with the diocesan vision for evangelization. Identifying a framework for vetting and growing membership in Lay Apostolates allows for every parish, every pastor, and every member of the Church of Pittsburgh to have access to concrete ways to practice the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy through these apostolates.

Through the guidance of the Vicar for Leadership Development and Evangelization, Very Reverend Joseph M. Mele, and the vision of Director of Evangelization, Dr. Michel Therrien, and leaders of Lay Apostolates – in collaboration with the network and Central Leadership Team – new horizons in the Diocese of Pittsburgh will become one of the most exciting parts of *On Mission for the Church Alive!* I can’t wait for you to meet the good and faithful people who are stewarding their gifts for the sake of Christ.

“FOR CHRIST’S LOVE COMPELS US...THOSE WHO LIVE SHOULD NO LONGER LIVE FOR THEMSELVES BUT FOR HIM WHO DIED FOR THEM AND WAS RAISED AGAIN.”

