



**A Ten-Year Mutually Shared Vision
for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas
*A Message from Archbishop Naumann***



**Complete Joy
Growing as disciples of Jesus, Making Disciples for Jesus**

“By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete.” [John 15: 8-11]

I

What is Complete Joy?

Did you ever wonder what Jesus meant when Our Lord told His disciples that His desire was for His joy to be in them and for their joy to be complete? What is this full joy Jesus wants for His disciples?

Who among us does not desire joy? It seems ironic Jesus speaks of joy in the portion of the Gospel in which Our Lord is preparing His disciples for His own imminent death. What is the nature of this joy that even death cannot dampen?

The immediate context for Our Lord’s expression of his desire for the disciples’ joy is His teaching on the vine and the branches. With this image Jesus talks about the necessity for the branches to be connected to the vine both for their own vitality and for their fruitfulness.

II

Living in God

The joy that Jesus desires for His disciples is something quite different from the relentless pursuit of pleasure that our culture encourages. Pope Emeritus Benedict in a message to youth in 2012 spoke about the false happiness promoted by materialism and consumerism. The Holy Father proposed enduring joy can only be found when we are united to God: **“How many people are surrounded by material possessions yet their lives are filled with despair, sadness and emptiness! To have lasting joy we need to live in love and truth. We need to live in God.”**

This is precisely what Jesus meant when He spoke about the essential connection of the branches to the vine. If we are not united to God then enduring joy is impossible. Pope Benedict posed this question to the Church’s young people: **“How often ... do we see that choosing to build our lives apart from God and his will brings disappointment, sadness, and a sense of failure? The experience of sin, which is the refusal to follow God and an affront to his friendship, brings gloom to our hearts.”**

Pope Benedict concluded his message to the World's Youth by challenging them to be witnesses of joy:

“Christianity is sometimes depicted as a way of life that stifles our freedom and goes against our desires for happiness and joy. But this is far from the truth. Christians are men and women who are truly happy because they know that they are not alone. They know that God is always holding them in his hands. It is up to you, young followers of Christ, to show the world that faith brings happiness and joy, which is true, full and enduring.”

III

Greatest Joy: Bringing Another to Encounter Jesus

Our hearts were made for God and He alone can satisfy our deepest longings. Our experience of God's complete, unconditional and faithful love for us revealed in Jesus has the ability to bring incredible joy to us. However, as I ponder our Lord's words in the Gospel, it is apparent there is an essential ingredient to this complete joy that the disciples were not able to experience fully until Our Lord's physical departure from this world.

We have the capacity for a greater joy than even the happiness we receive from experiencing God's love for us. We encounter a new and more complete level of joy, when we allow ourselves to be the human instruments Our Lord uses in bringing His love to others.

Jesus immediately after speaking of this complete joy reminds the disciples of His commandment to love one another as He has loved them. Forecasting the manner of His own death, Jesus counsels His disciples there is no greater love than to lay down your life for another.

One of the ways that we experience this complete joy is by striving to love others as Jesus loved -- to follow Our Lord's path of sacrificial love by laying down our lives for the good of others. Married couples are called to do this for each other. Parents literally lose their life as they knew it as they make huge sacrifices for the well-being of their children. We recognize this complete joy in saints like Mother Teresa and St. Francis, both of whom embraced a life of complete simplicity in order to bring the love of God to the poor

The greatest gift we can give someone is to lead them to Jesus. The ultimate joy comes from helping another encounter Jesus Christ. Pope Francis has challenged every Catholic to become what he terms a *Missionary Disciple*. In the *Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis wrote: **“When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfillment.”** [10]

Remaining connected to the vine is not just for the continued vitality of the branches, but it is also for their fruitfulness. If we are to be a true disciple of Jesus, it is

not enough to just keep the Faith, as difficult as that may seem at times. To be an authentic follower of Jesus, our life must produce good fruit. We must lead others to Jesus and in doing so we will experience the most complete and profound joy possible.

My desire for every Catholic in the Archdiocese is for each of us to taste the complete joy -- the abundant life, Our Lord promises to His disciples. To experience God's love for us and to bring others to know Jesus is a recipe for an abiding joy that no one and nothing can steal from us.

IV

Anniversaries, a Time to Remember and Give Thanks

On January 15, 2015, I observed the 10th anniversary of serving as the Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas. It was 10 years ago this past June 29th that I received the Pallium from Pope Benedict XVI in the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. The Pallium is a liturgical vestment worn over the shoulders on the outside of the Chasuble by a Metropolitan Archbishop symbolizing his solidarity with the Successor of Peter, as well as his pastoral responsibilities for the good of the people in his Archdiocese and Province.

Anniversaries are moments to reflect upon the past and to look forward to the future. From the vantage point of today, I am amazed at how quickly 10 years have passed. I am also filled with gratitude for the many blessings during my first decade as Archbishop.

For example, in the past 10 years we have experienced 1) an increase in priestly ordinations; 2) the inauguration of the permanent diaconate; 3) the arrival and flourishing of new religious communities (Apostles of the Interior Life, Community of the Lamb, Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George, Fraternity of the Poor of Jesus Christ, Society of St. Augustine, Sisters of St. Anne); 4) establishment of the School of Faith as a Public Association of the Faithful, assisting with adult faith formation, especially the on-going formation of Catholic School teachers; 5) the Spiritual Mentorship Program training individuals to assist others grow in their prayer life; 6) ***Faith: Love It, Learn it Live it***, the Year of Faith Initiative during which thousands participated in opportunities to deepen their prayer and faith life; 7) increased Marian Devotion (promotion of Marian Consecration and the Family Rosary – the gathering of 25,000 to pray a Global Living Rosary at Royals Stadium); 8) the My House Ministry promoting the Church's beautiful teaching of the Theology of the Body and helping those struggling with pornographic addiction; 9) Living in Love Retreats helping couples strengthen their marriages; 10) the opening of St. James Academy which today has near capacity enrollment; 11) the growth of Parish Retreat Programs (Christ Renews His Parish, Light of the World, etc.); 12) the generosity of the Catholic Community to our Parishes, Call to Share, Catholic Charities, the Catholic Education Foundation, etc.

This is by no means a complete or exhaustive list. It is astounding to reflect upon all that the priests, religious, and laity have accomplished under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. These accomplishments have little or nothing to do with me.

Most of them were already in motion before I arrived in Kansas and were the natural progression of what was already happening.

V

A Time to Look Forward

Aware of how quickly these 10 years have passed and conscious that I have less than 9 years before my 75th birthday (the date upon which every bishop must submit to the Holy Father his resignation), I feel the clock is ticking on my time of service to the people of the Archdiocese.

This prompted me to ask the question: What are the most important initiatives we could undertake in the next decade to build up and strengthen the Church in Northeast Kansas? To answer that question, I assembled a Visioning Team of 11 individuals (priests, religious and laity) to help me articulate a shared vision for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas. After gathering input from listening sessions, focus groups, parish councils, the priests' council, the archdiocesan pastoral council and other advisory bodies, we attempted to discern the key themes and insights from all this information.

VI

The Context for the Vision

The Team, aware that this Vision was not being developed in a vacuum, wanted it to reflect the direction that Pope Francis is giving to the world-wide Catholic community. We also wanted the Vision to build upon the 5 priorities that for the past 10 years I have asked all of our parishes and ministries to use to guide their pastoral activity. These priorities provide a framework for understanding essential dimensions of the Church's mission.

- 1) **Conversion:** At the heart of the Church's ministry is facilitating for its members an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. Central to what it means to be Catholic is the development of a friendship with Jesus through prayer and reflection.
- 2) **Evangelization:** The commission that Jesus gave to the Church was to go and make disciples of all nations. The Church can never be content with itself as it is currently constituted. We must always be guided by a missionary impulse to share the gift of our Faith with others.
- 3) **Catholic Education/Catechesis:** An essential component of the Church's ministry is the education of the next generation of disciples as well as the continuing formation of all of its members.
- 4) **Outreach to Those in Need:** The Church is called to make the love of Jesus real and tangible in the world today, especially to the poor, the vulnerable, and those on the peripheries.
- 5) **A Spirituality of Stewardship:** Catholic spirituality begins with profound gratitude resulting from the realization that everything, including life itself, is God's gift. Thus, the question for every Christian is: What is God calling me to do with all that He has entrusted to me?

The purpose of developing an Archdiocesan Vision for the next 10 years was not to abandon these five pastoral priorities. Each of them encapsulates an essential part of the Church's mission. While continuing to address each of these priorities as part of the necessary work of the Church, the challenge given to the Visioning Team was to discern where to concentrate the limited human and material resources of the Church during the next ten years in order to best strengthen and increase the vitality and vibrancy of the Church in Northeast Kansas.

VII Mutually Shared Vision

The Visioning Team first developed a *Statement of Purpose* for the Archdiocese:

Under Our Heavenly Father's providential care, guided by the Holy Spirit and in humble response to the call of Jesus to go and make missionary disciples, we, the Catholic Church of Northeast Kansas, are committed to embody the life and mission of Jesus through Word, Sacrament and Service so that all God's people in the Archdiocese may hear and encounter the living Christ and the Joy of the Gospel.

There is a great deal of meaning, thought and prayer packed into this concise Statement of Purpose. However, it is still too long for most to commit to memory.

The Visioning Team next created a shorter *Statement of Vision* that incorporated the central meaning of the *Purpose Statement*, but could easily be committed to memory by everyone in the Archdiocese: **The Catholic Church in Northeast Kansas: Growing as Disciples of Jesus; Making Disciples for Jesus.**

Growing as Disciples of Jesus; Making Disciples for Jesus! I ask every member of the Archdiocese to memorize these two phrases. They summarize our identity and mission as Catholics.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus is never a done deal. If we are not growing as a disciple, then we are dying as a disciple. Following Jesus is a life long journey. As the circumstances of our lives change, we have to learn to apply the eternal truths of our Faith to the reality of our present life.

To be a disciple of Jesus, each one of us is called to make disciples for Jesus. Initially, we might feel intimidated or threatened by the challenge of leading others to Jesus. Yet, if we fail to embrace this part of Christian discipleship, we are depriving ourselves of experiencing the complete joy that Our Lord desires for each of us.

VIII Key Initiatives

How do we make this Vision not just an idea or a theory, but a reality? To respond to this question, I am asking our parishes and ministries to concentrate resources over the next 18-24 months to implement three Key Initiatives.

Narrowing the focus to three Key Initiatives was difficult, but essential in order to make the implementation of the Vision achievable. Our three Key Initiatives are:

- 1) **Build a Culture of Evangelization Across the Archdiocese;**
- 2) **Strengthen the Vocation of Marriage and Family Life;**
- 3) **Cultivate Relationships by Engaging in the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.**

Each of the Key Initiatives has 2-3 goals with specific dates for their accomplishment during the next 2 years. The Key Initiatives will then be revisited and may be continued with new goals or replaced with another Key Initiative.

IX

Growing as Disciples of Jesus; Making Disciples for Jesus

I was delighted that in all the input the Visioning Team received from all our consultations, the over-riding priority was Evangelization. Frankly, I do not believe that if we had done a similar process 10 years ago we would have had this result.

This is the fruit of the teaching of our recent Popes beginning with Pope Paul VI through to Pope Francis. The Successors of Peter have been reminding us for decades how central Evangelization is to the work of the Church.

The goals under **Building a Culture of Evangelization** call for equipping a significant number of individuals to be Missionary Disciples and to help parishes become evangelizing communities.

For the vast majority of us the context for our growth as Disciples of Jesus is within family life. Similarly, some of the most important efforts for making disciples best occur within the family. Marriage is the foundation of the family. With all the confusion about the very nature of marriage and all the stresses placed on married couples, we as a Church need to invest more in helping couples deepen their love and strengthen their relationships.

At the baptism of children, parents accept the responsibility for being the first and primary teachers of their children in the practice of the Faith. Yet many parents feel ill equipped for this important responsibility. Under our second Key Initiative –**Strengthen the Vocation of Marriage and Family Life**, we want to develop a plan to better equip and assist parents in their crucial role in forming their children in the Faith.

The third Key Initiative, **Cultivate Relationships by Engaging in the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy**, is focused on helping individuals and parish communities discover Christ in the midst of our efforts to bring His love to others. This initiative was inspired in large part by Pope Francis. The implementation of this Key Initiative will offer opportunities for the joy of communicating the love of Jesus to others in very real and practical ways.

At the archdiocesan level, we will be asking all of our agencies and ministries to discern how they can contribute to the implementation of these Key Initiatives. We will also reallocate existing resources and attempt to raise additional resources to help implement this Vision.

However, for this Vision to have its desired impact much will have to happen at the parish level. I am asking all pastors, in consultation with their parish councils and finance councils, to develop a plan on how to implement this Vision in the unique circumstances of their local community.

X

Abundant Life and Complete Joy

During my first 10 years as Archbishop, some of the best things that happened were completely unplanned and unanticipated. During the next 10 years, I want to remain flexible and open to recognizing more surprises from the Holy Spirit. At the same time, to be good stewards of God's gifts, I am convinced of the importance of planning and strategizing how best to build up God's Kingdom in America's Heartland.

There are many reasons for Catholics in the United States today to feel discouraged and even defeated, e.g. the Court's redefinition of marriage, the large number of children being born out of wedlock, 1 million plus abortions annually, the harvesting and selling of tissue and organs from aborted babies, the alarming number of women and children living in poverty, our broken immigration system, etc.

However, discouragement and despair are fruits of the Devil, not the Holy Spirit. Jesus is inviting each of us to join Him for a great adventure. Our Lord wants us to participate in the liberating and life-giving ministry He inaugurated. Jesus invites us to experience the joy of helping to build the Kingdom of God in this time and place.

The first disciples had no material resources and had been given a seemingly impossible mission to go and make disciples of all nations. Yet, armed only with their experience of Our Lord's love and the Holy Spirit, in a relatively short time they transformed a pagan world. It is that same Holy Spirit who is eager to empower us to change an increasingly secularized culture.

Jesus did not promise His disciples an easy life. However, He did promise that He would be with them until the end of time. Jesus wants each of us in the unique circumstances of our lives to bring the comfort of His love and the joy of His Gospel to many others

I am excited about the implementation of this Vision over the next 10 years. I believe that the Holy Spirit is calling us to be much more intentional in sharing the gift of our Catholic Faith with others. Jesus wants to use us to help many others to encounter Him and experience His love.

At the same time, Our Lord desires for us to experience right now, not just in the hereafter, the *Abundant Life* promised to His disciples. The *Complete Joy*, that Jesus promises, is a natural fruit of our striving to become better and more faithful disciples by leading others to Jesus. Let us embark on this adventure together encouraging each other to grow as Disciples of Jesus, while seeking to make Disciples for Jesus.

Given on the 4th day of August, 2015
The Feast of St. John Vianney, Priest
Co-Patron of the Archdiocese



Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann
Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas



Chancellor