



We, the Catholic faithful, lay, consecrated, and ordained of the Diocese of Sioux Falls, under the pastoral leadership of our shepherd, Bishop DeGrood, and in response to the Holy Father's invitation to Missionary Discipleship as a way of being and living, resolve both as individuals and as faith communities to continually increase our understanding and pursuit of *Lifelong Catholic Missionary Discipleship Through God's Love*.

As Pope Francis writes:

"In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be

actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love." (*"Joy of the Gospel"* n. 120)

Mindful that our current reality, reflected in both local and societal trends, impact all of us, we commit to greater reflection, prayer, visioning, and action with the hope that doing so will renew our spiritual lives and develop structures and resourcing that enables and promotes Missionary Discipleship as a way of life.

We humbly acknowledge cultural trends of our day and the influences they have had on society in the context of our moral duty to serve the common good. These trends lend firmness to our resolve for change and purpose to our commitment to change:

- We have experienced the end to the era of Christendom. As a result, it takes intentional and sustained effort to grow in relationship with God and to live more fully our Catholic faith as individuals and communities. For those who go along with the current culture, they will tend to drift further from Christ and the Church.
- Our greatest decline over the past decade is in the reception of the sacraments and full engagement in liturgy, as well as Catholic school education and faith formation. We acknowledge that this decline is not solely caused by community demographics and population changes.
- While the number of priests available for ministry has declined, we are not currently in a crisis. We nonetheless acknowledge our need to organize our parish structures in ways that provide stability.
- The Covid-19 pandemic, and our national response to it, has increased our isolation. Too, dissatisfaction with our leaders and other factors have also caused our separation from each other and our families.

But our current reality is not our destiny. And so, as Catholics seeking heaven, relying on the grace of God, and confident in His desire for the same, we resolve to disrupt these trends.

We humbly acknowledge our need 1) to grow as Missionary Disciples and 2) to fashion a stable and responsible structure of parishes, schools, ministries, and services that, together, support and energize our living out of the baptismal call we have received. We accept our calling to live as active, engaged, and invested Missionary Disciples rather than isolated and passive recipients of the sacraments. We seek to be a vibrant church of Missionary Disciples, comprised of happy, healthy, holy, and hardworking faithful, clergy, consecrated, and lay, who together are igniting the passion and trusting in the promise of the Catholic faith.

What does the daily life of a Missionary Disciple look, feel, and sound like? How can we with great love support one another in our development together? We humbly acknowledge our need for clarity, mutual encouragement, shared commitments, and accountability as we take up the journey of Missionary Discipleship.

The next page provides some descriptions, resources, and tools for your review, reflection, and engagement.

Common Practices of Missionary Disciples

1. Daily prayer and personal reflection on God's Word
2. Consistent reception of the sacraments and active participation in Mass, on Sundays and Holy Days.
3. Increasing experiences of healing, formation, conversion, and unity in Jesus Christ through the Eucharist
4. Engaging in good health habits and limiting/avoiding unhealthy habits
5. Increasing personal awareness of the areas of unique giftedness I have received from God and my goodness
6. Engaging in a balanced life of work and leisure, adopting personal limits on "screen time"
7. Responsible management of my finances and simplicity of lifestyle
8. Engaging in positive and life-giving relationships with my family and friends; placing faith at the center of them
9. Active and prioritized fellowship with others in my parish and community
10. Active in at least one area of service in my parish and/or community
11. Increasing comfort with my personal faith story and willingness to share it with others
12. Engaging with 2 or more people about my and their faith journey; inviting others to become Missionary Disciples

Characteristics of parish life that support the development of and promote living as Missionary Disciples:

- Pastors and priests are living witnesses as they model and mentor a Missionary Discipleship life.
- Cultivating Missionary Discipleship is the core ministry focus of the parish; it is not a project or program; resourcing reflects this priority.
- Parish structures and practices are organized to accompany, encourage, and support parishioners in their personal faith journey.
- Parishioners of all ages are equipped to serve as the primary source and evidence of Missionary Discipleship in the parish and community; their witness and expression of being Catholic inspires others.
- Parishioners, leadership, and staff support are empowered to maximize the time available for the priest's primary role as a sacramental and pastoral leader by minimizing the time spent on daily administration tasks involving finances, personnel, and facilities.

Typical Benefits of developing a life of Missionary Discipleship are profound and include:

- Authentic living for all people, all of whom experience true meaning, purpose, adventure, fulfillment, security, clarity, and challenge.
- A heightened realization of the innate goodness we receive from God and a greater awareness of God's grace, which stands in contrast to the negative messages and images society shows us.
- Developing one's theological imagination of a deeper and personal life animated by the Gospel.
- The lived experience of bringing Catholics who may have disengaged, but not left, back into the practice of the faith.
- Disrupting the decades of increasing generational disconnection and disrespect. Inspiring a robust reconnection of generations within the parish family in relationships, stories, gifts, belonging, and respect.

Let's start the journey and development of living as Missionary Disciples today!