

GO MAKE DISCIPLES

Mission Plan for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney
Summary Version



A Prayer for Renewal

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lessed are you, Father,
who, in your infinite love
sent us your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,
that we may have life, and have it in abundance.

By the power of the Holy Spirit,
renew our Eucharistic communities.

May they be places of encounter
with the living Christ,
centres of evangelisation and outreach
to our community in love and mercy.

Grant us the gifts of faith, hope and love
to be faithful disciples of Jesus and
radiant witnesses to the people of Sydney.

Our Lady, Help of Christians. *Pray for us!*

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelisation.
Pray for us!

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. *Pray for us!*



A Message from Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP

When the remaining disciples saw the Risen Lord on Ascension Mount, Matthew tells us, “they worshipped Him; though some doubted” it was Him:



Then Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the very end of the age’.

Matthew 28:18-20



his ‘great commission’ is given anew to every generation. As Pope Francis affirms, “In our day Jesus’ command to ‘go and make disciples’ echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelisation, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth!’”¹ Like the first disciples some of us are worshippers, some doubters, some a bit of both. Like them, we need to draw close to Jesus if our doubts are to be dispelled. Like them, changed by that encounter and empowered by the Spirit, we can do great things.

Jesus’ parting mandate was not just to ‘go and make disciples’ but also to baptise and teach. By Baptism (and all the sacraments and worship that follow) and by hearing God’s Word (and all the Christian teaching and action that follow), we become witnesses to God’s saving love – poured out in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When I was installed as Archbishop in 2014, I shared something of my dreams for our Church in Sydney:

My hope is for a Church in which the Gospel is preached with joy, the wisdom of our tradition mined with fidelity, the sacraments celebrated with dignity and welcome, and the seminaries, convents and youth groups teeming with new life; a Church in which our parishes, chaplaincies and educational institutions are true centres of the new evangelisation, our laity theologically literate and spiritually well-formed, our outreach to the needy effective and growing, and God glorified above all.

Since then, I’ve witnessed the many strengths of the Church in Sydney: the scale, diversity, piety and zeal of its pastors and people. Despite many difficulties, our parishes and schools have nurtured the faith of hundreds of thousands across the years and continue to do so. There are many causes for hope.

But these past few years have also been very challenging times for the Church in Australia. The unmasking of historical child sexual abuse in the Church occasioned disillusionment, anger and hurt for many. The COVID-19 pandemic, church closures and restrictions on worship have also been keenly felt. In the meantime, I was seriously ill myself and took quite some time to recover. But Passion and Resurrection are the ordinary rhythm of Christian life and, just as I have recovered my

¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 20.



Photo: Courtesy of Donnus Australia

health, so I am confident that our Church in Sydney will come through present trials, humbled, purified and renewed, ready to bear new fruit!

Soon after my installation, I initiated our five-year pastoral planning project entitled 'Parish 2020', with the goal of examining the situation and mission of the Archdiocese, its challenges and opportunities, the spiritual gifts of its people, and the structures that can best support new approaches to evangelisation and renewal of our local communities. This enabled me to hear the voices of clergy, religious and lay faithful, in our deaneries, parishes, migrant communities, schools and agencies. After such sharing of hopes and insights, I am more confident than ever about our Church's future.

I want to thank all those who offered their reflections through conversations, surveys, deanery meetings or in other ways, and to recognise all who contributed to the development of our thinking. *Go Make Disciples*, the Archdiocese of Sydney's Mission Plan, is the fruit of that conversation, research and discernment, and will set our direction and priorities for some years to come. It also offers practical resources for renewal, drawing on examples from the life and ministry of Christ as well as 'best practice' locally and from elsewhere.

As the Church in Sydney, we seek to live out the mission of Jesus Christ in a time of unprecedented change. Sydney's population continues to grow while the way people live, work and worship has changed. Not as many people engage with our parishes or transmit faith and practice to their children as once did. Our culture is less supportive and many now identify as 'no religion'. Some traditional methods of outreach no longer work; others can be rediscovered and reinvigorated. Some of our structures no longer support mission as well as they once did.

Especially in times of great change, we rightly cling to those things that are perennial: one faith, one Lord, one Baptism (Ephesians 4:5). But we need new passion, expressions and methods of evangelisation and community-building in Sydney. Every pastor, every member of the faithful and all our parish communities are called to deep spiritual renewal as disciples, to being better connected with each other, and to reaching out better to others.

Along with our migrant chaplaincies and other Eucharistic communities, our parishes are to be living signs of the proximity of Christ by the proclamation of the Word of God, the sacramental life and the witness of charity, in which the poor and excluded must have a privileged place in the heart of the Church. In an age increasingly marked by marginalisation and isolation, the parish is called to be a living sign of the closeness of Christ, reaching out to the homeless and oppressed.

This call to renewal of life and mission to others must also shape our Catholic educational, healthcare and social service ministries – and everything we do in the name of God's kingdom.

I give thanks to all who have contributed to the 'Parish 2020' phase of our pastoral planning including Bishop Terry Brady and Bishop Richard Umbers, Fr Gerry Gleeson and their committee early on, through Anthony Farley, to Daniel Ang, Elizabeth Arblaster and their team today. I am confident Sydney is ready for this new *Go Make Disciples* phase.

With great faith in the future of our Archdiocese, I invite you to read, pray and reflect on this Archdiocesan Mission Plan. We need your faith and discernment, your courage and gifts as the Church in Sydney seeks to live the Great Commission in this twenty-first century. Like those first Christians emerging from the dark times of Holy Week, we hear the Easter Jesus saying to us: *go make disciples!*

Yours hopefully in Christ

Most Rev. Anthony Fisher OP
Archbishop of Sydney



Introduction to Our Archdiocesan Mission Plan



As we look to the future, our Church is called to place the encounter with Jesus Christ anew at the heart of our life, our structures and our ways of doing things. It is from this living encounter with the Lord that all genuine renewal in the Church becomes possible and the mission of evangelisation finds its source and inspiration. As Pope Francis shares,

“It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelisation unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known Him, not the same thing to walk with Him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear His word as not to know it, and not the same thing to contemplate Him, to worship Him, to find our peace in Him, as not to”.²

When we have encountered Christ and made a personal and conscious decision to follow Him, we become missionaries in the midst of the Church. We “boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast”.³

It is for this deepening discipleship and widening outreach that our Archdiocesan Mission Plan, *Go Make Disciples* has been prepared, drawing from these past years of discussion and discernment of the ‘Parish 2020’ process. You can find the full version of the plan at www.gomakedisciples.org.au

A Vision for Parish Life

For most Catholics, the parish is the primary context in which the Gospel is proclaimed, the sacraments are celebrated and the ministry of charity is exercised. *Go Make Disciples* represents an opportunity to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Archdiocese of Sydney in fresh, creative and faith-filled ways. It is a call to transform the culture of our communities by faithfulness to Jesus’ command to “go, make disciples” so that our parishes become outposts of the Great Commission, making disciples who bear fruit for God (Romans 7:4).

A disciple is one who has encountered Jesus personally in the midst of the Church, who has surrendered his or her life to His way, and has made the decision to live by His teaching in all aspects of life. A disciple is intentional and active, committed to the lifelong process of learning from Jesus and, inflamed by this encounter, to sharing His way, truth and life with others for the sake of the world.

As observed by Sherry Weddell, “[t]he presence of a significant number of disciples changes everything: a parish’s spiritual tone, energy level, attendance, bottom line, and what parishioners ask of their leaders. Disciples pray with passion. Disciples worship. Disciples give lavishly. Disciples love the Church and serve her with energy and joy. Disciples hunger to learn more about their faith. Disciples fill every formation class in a parish or diocese. Disciples manifest charisms and discern vocations. They clamour to discern God’s call because they long to live it. Disciples evangelise because they have really good news to share. Disciples share their faith with their children. Disciples care about the poor and about issues of justice. Disciples take risks for the Kingdom of God”.⁴

It is this vision of fruitful discipleship that *Go Make Disciples* has been designed to support. We honour and celebrate the rich faith and good works that are already present and active in our parishes, and at the same time hear the Gospel’s call to ongoing conversion and constant spiritual renewal. It is this renewal of culture for discipleship and mission to which all parishes and communities of the Archdiocese are invited.

² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 266.

³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 24.

⁴ Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, 80-81.





The Pastoral Reality

Every parishioner in the Archdiocese of Sydney wants our parishes to be vital, growing and teeming with life. There is much to celebrate in our local Eucharistic communities – the commitment of our clergy and the thousands who regularly gather around God’s Word and sacraments, various forms of pastoral care and outreach, and the living faith that makes these communities a true spiritual home.

While many of our parishes and communities are flourishing, others face shrinking and ageing congregations. Those who remain are rightly concerned about the long-term viability and life of their parish in the light of these realities.

We live in a time of unprecedented change as Sydney’s population continues to grow while the way people live, work and worship has changed. Patterns of immigration have shifted and families and households have also changed. Change is evident in the impact of technology on the ways in which people connect with one another, the increasing secularisation of culture and the hostility of sections of the media, academy and lawmakers towards religion. Indeed, in the most recent census almost a third of Australians identified as having ‘no religion’.⁵ This is a great change from just fifty years ago when less than one percent of people did not adhere to any religious faith.⁶

There has also been a shift within the Catholic community itself. Between 2011 and 2016, five per cent of Catholics ceased attending Mass in the Sydney Archdiocese; almost one thousand people each year. Decline was especially marked among Catholics aged 30-49 years (7.7%), a period in many people’s lives when they are having families and when the faith is introduced to the next generation. We are also aware of the absence of many younger adults from our congregations. Meanwhile, more and more pastoral responsibilities fall on the shoulders of priests and parish staff as they experience a shrinking and ageing pool of volunteers. Financial resources may also be stretched.

At www.gomakedisciples.org.au you will find a comprehensive overview of the realities we face as the Church in Sydney and the opportunities that lie ahead.

The Catholic Church has a rich tradition in Australia, with its earliest roots in our Archdiocese of Sydney. However, much has changed in the past 200 years, most significantly in the last fifty years. As we dedicate ourselves to the mission of Christ in Sydney, there is much to do if we are to ensure the bountiful Church we inherited remains equally bountiful for those who come after us.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Census* 2016.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Census* 1966.

Five Foundations

In faithfulness to Jesus Christ, *Go Make Disciples* sets out five foundations for spiritual renewal which help us build fruitful communities of missionary discipleship. These foundations present opportunities for every community to build a culture of holiness and mission.

- 1 Evangelisation
- 2 Leadership
- 3 Community
- 4 Formation
- 5 Worship

In the New Testament, we see that these five foundations are central to Jesus' life and mission to proclaim the Good News, and our faithful continuation of that mission today must be built upon the rock of His life and mission. During the 'Parish 2020' consultations, various expressions of these foundations were cited as central mission priorities. As well, from best practice and research we know that while every parish and community is distinct in its history, gifts and resources, these five foundations are essential for building healthy and disciple-making parishes. Just as there are systems in our physical bodies that are essential to our health and growth, and which work together to this end, so are there foundations that build up the body of the Church and allow us to carry forward Christ's mission with vitality.

In the full version of *Go Make Disciples* available at www.gomakedisciples.org.au, you will find a four (4) step process which your parish or community can undertake to **reflect** upon the place of each foundation in the life of Jesus and in your community, **review** how that foundation is being expressed in the actions and priorities of your parish or other community, **discern and decide** how God might be calling your community to strengthen that foundation, and **take action** with the help of the support and resources outlined in the Mission Plan.

As part of this process, your parish or other Eucharistic community will be able to consider a list of strategies to strengthen these foundations for mission. These recommended strategies for parish renewal, shared in summary in this document and in full online at www.gomakedisciples.org.au, represent the wisdom of communities in Sydney gathered through the past years of consultation with clergy, deaneries and parishioners, as well as research into best practices for evangelisation here in Australia and overseas.

This process can be led by your priest or others in your community, on a parish retreat day or a series of reflections days. Your parish can also enter into this process by attending a *Parishes for Mission* day, which will be offered regionally and online by the Parish Renewal Team of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation (see back cover for contact details).



Christ the Saviour (Pantokrator)
PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/PUBLIC DOMAIN



“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.

Matthew 28:19-20

Foundation 1: Evangelisation

The difficulty many parishes can face in seeking to grow in the mission of Christ is determining where to begin. A starting point, echoed in the feedback shared by our deaneries and communities, is a renewed focus upon evangelisation.

The word ‘evangelisation’ comes from the Greek *euangelion* which means “good news”. Jesus gave witness to the purpose for which He was sent: His mission was the proclamation of God’s love to all people in fulfilment of God’s promises, “‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor’... Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:16-21).⁷

Creating a parish that is committed to building a culture of evangelisation – a parish committed to cooperating with the Holy Spirit to call and form disciples as Jesus invites us to – is a foundation of our identity as communities of faith. In faithfulness to Jesus, we are called to do for others as Jesus did for the Samaritan woman in John’s Gospel: to go beyond our borders, communities and places of comfort to people who are hurting and are thirsting but do not always know what they need. We invite all those who seek goodness, friendship, healing and hope to an encounter with Jesus, as it is He who reveals their true identity as a beloved son or daughter of God.

Evangelisation is a natural expression of our own discipleship in Christ. Pope Benedict XVI explained it this way: “[d]iscipleship and mission are like the two sides of a single coin: when the disciple is in love with Christ, he cannot stop proclaiming to the world that only in Him do we find salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). In effect, the disciple knows that without Christ there is no light, no hope, no love, no future”.⁸

Parishes as Centres of Evangelisation

In the parish community, there are at least three ways in which we evangelise. Firstly, we share beyond the parish with those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have refused Him. Secondly, we share the Good News with infrequent church attenders, encouraging them anew to a deeper relationship and fresh engagement with Jesus and with the life of His body, the Church. Thirdly, we share the Good News in ordinary pastoral ministry to inflame the hearts of the faithful.⁹

⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 6.

⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Address at the Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean*, Aparecida, 13 May 2007.

⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 14; Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Closing of the Synod on the New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Faith*, 28 October 2012.



Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well
by Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller, circa 1818.
PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/PUBLIC DOMAIN

At the heart of this task of evangelisation is a **culture of invitation** in the parish, the **faith-filled witness** of intentional disciples and the **proclamation of the *kerygma*** or the **‘Great Story of Jesus’**, that is, His life, death and resurrection as the revelation of God’s saving love and mercy.

We share the Good News through **words and deeds**. The Church has a long tradition of sharing the Gospel through proclamation and faith-filled initiatives. We share the Good News through works of mercy and through active engagement with all that shapes the human family including the environment, the economy, politics and our common social life. Both are essential: our words express the reason for our hope (1 Peter 3:15) and our deeds are the way we ‘walk the talk’ in our love of God and neighbour.

In the desire to share this Good News and develop a culture of outreach in our parishes and chaplaincies, **intercessory prayer** is also essential. In intercessory prayer, we look not to our own interests but to those of others, especially people whom we desire to know Christ more deeply.¹⁰ Most importantly, through prayer we recognise, invite and trust the Holy Spirit as the principal agent of evangelisation and the one who gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Practical Strategies

In the full version of *Go Make Disciples*, you will find a number of key strategies to strengthen the foundation of evangelisation in your parish and actions to implement each strategy. Some of these strategies are provided below:

- Provide a Discipleship Pathway
- Make the *Kerygma* Central
- Support Evangelisation with Intercessory Prayer
- Provide Formation in Evangelisation
- Give Witness to Discipleship
- Create a Culture of Invitation
- Evangelise those who do not Know Christ
- Evangelise the Baptised
- Build Relationships in the Wider Community
- Collaborate as Parishes and Schools
- Evangelise through the Preparation for and Celebration of the Sacraments
- Evangelise Young People
- Evangelise through Catholic Social Teaching and Works of Mercy
- Improve Communications for Evangelisation

Visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au for specific actions, resources and support to bring these opportunities to life in your parish, chaplaincy or other Eucharistic community.

¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2634-2636.





The gifts He gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”.

Ephesians 4:11-12

Foundation 2: Leadership

Leadership is foundational in our continuation of Jesus’ mission today and an essential part of the cultural change required if parishes are to be renewed and become centres of missionary discipleship. Leadership for mission involves the ability to influence, serve and move people toward an embrace of Jesus’ Great Commission to make disciples and to the work of building God’s Kingdom.

Leadership was central to the ministry of Jesus. Amidst the teeming crowds seeking out His help, Jesus still took the time to gather a group of leaders around Him: forming, correcting and inspiring them, calling them into deeper discipleship, helping them to understand what impeded their leadership, and creating a culture of leadership as service. Jesus expressed compassion for people who did not have leaders (Mark 6:34), was critical of those who exercised their leadership without a spirit of service (Matthew 20:25), who failed to use their position to lead people to God (Matthew 23:4-13; Luke 11:52) or who used their power to serve their own status (Matthew 23:6-7).

To encounter Christ and become His disciple means to be given a mission to lead others to Him. This pattern in Scripture is unmistakable: those who experience a profound encounter with God are then given a mission to lead others to God. St Peter encounters Jesus in the miraculous catch and is called to follow Him and become a “fisher of men” (Matthew 4:19). Likewise, St Paul has a blinding encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus and is then called into God’s service in such a profound way that he proclaims “[w]oe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Leaders in parish life are called to **discern and present a compelling vision** of how the parish can cooperate with the Holy Spirit to continue Jesus’ mission today and call others to bring that vision to life.

Leaders will also **recognise, call forward and enable the expression of various gifts or charisms** given by the Holy Spirit in the community of faith, as well as the many natural talents, God-given gifts and experience of parishioners. Just as Jesus develops and builds up the twelve disciples, leaders of mission seek to identify and equip other leaders in the Christian community who serve the Gospel.

The grace of discipleship is not merely a gift for ourselves. It is given to us to be shared with others through our participation in God’s mission, to reconcile the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). Leadership is for every disciple.

A further call of leadership is to **make concrete plans to bring the vision of the parish to reality**. Parish leaders consult, prayerfully discern, and decide on priorities, make plans and draw together diverse gifts toward the accomplishment of the parish vision. Mission-oriented communities that seek to broaden and deepen their outreach require leaders who work together in a spirit of co-responsibility and mutuality.

The washing of the feet of Christ after the Last Supper by Anonymous (Italian painter), beginning of 18th century. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/PUBLIC DOMAIN

Forms of Leadership

There are many forms of leadership in our Eucharistic communities. These forms of leadership do not compete with one another, for each operates within its proper sphere and, united by the Spirit, they work together to build up the Body of Christ.

The **priest** is responsible for the oversight, pastoral care and pastoral planning of one or more parishes. He leads the parish or faith community, teaches the Catholic faith, sanctifies through the sacraments and other rites of the Church and, in union with the **bishop**, builds up the communion of the Church. Practically speaking, the priest leads the pastoral planning of the community and, with his lay collaborators, identifies and implements the priorities of mission in the local area. With the authority of their bishop, **deacons** assist in preaching the Gospel, assisting at Mass, in pastoral governance, and in carrying out the service of charity.

There is also the leadership of **lay men and women**, and sometimes **consecrated men and women**, who serve alongside their pastor in parish ministries, some of whom coordinate the service of others. All the baptised who seek to incarnate the Gospel in their lives, relationships and wider community exercise a form of Christian leadership through the authority of a holy life of discipleship which witnesses to Christ and leads others to Him.

Today, lay people also lead and help direct many parish pastoral works (e.g. Parish Pastoral Councils, Parish Finance Committees, choirs, St Vincent de Paul Society conferences, prayer groups, catechetics, sacramental preparation), as well as Catholic preschools, schools and universities, hospitals and healthcare facilities, welfare services and much else besides.

St Paul reminds us that no one person has all the gifts that are needed for the flourishing of the Christian community, but that there are **many parts that contribute to the growth of the whole body** (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Therefore, a leadership team can be a critical support to both clergy and lay leaders. Building a leadership team models Jesus' own ministry, brings others into the dignity of the service for which they were made, and enriches the parish and beyond with the many talents, vocations and charisms that God has gifted to His people.

Practical Strategies

In the full version of *Go Make Disciples*, you will find a number of key strategies to strengthen the foundation of leadership in your parish and actions to implement each strategy. Some of these strategies are provided below:

- Create a Parish Vision and Plan
- Provide Formation for Leaders
- Discern Charisms and Natural Gifts
- Engage the Parish Pastoral Council
- Engage the Parish Finance Committee
- Callings to Leadership: Vocation
- Encourage Collaboration between Leaders
- Develop New Leaders
- Grow Leadership in Social Justice and Works of Mercy
- Develop Youth Leadership

Visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au for specific actions, resources and support to bring these opportunities to life in your parish, chaplaincy or other Eucharistic community.





Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul”.

Acts 4:32

Foundation 3: Community

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As seen in the life and ministry of Jesus, the disciples are called to live and grow within a community. It is from this living communion of faith that they are sent into the wider world, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ through their words and deeds.

Discipleship and community are inextricably connected for while discipleship of the Lord begins and continues with a personal and intimate encounter with Him, it is never individualistic or private. Accordingly, our Catholic faith places a strong emphasis on communion in worship, beliefs and Christian action, on the communion of saints that is the Church on earth and in heaven, and on the spiritual, human, pastoral and intellectual benefits of doing things together.

The importance of community for our human flourishing and spiritual life is unmistakable. We all have a basic human need for community and it is essential for every other good – for our personal relationships and families, for the care of our health and the vulnerable, for education in truth, formation in morality, and for the transmission and integral development of life itself.

What is more, many people in today’s world crave community. The isolation and social disconnection many have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions have only intensified this deep longing.

In His ministry, Jesus expresses His desire and concern for the unity of human society. In His farewell discourse He prays “that [we] may all be one” (John 17:21). The common life for which Jesus prays here is not merely a collection of individuals but a **true communion marked by charity**: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

In Christ as one body, the disciples are called by Jesus to be united as agents of justice and reconciliation, in communion with one another as witnesses of healing and hope, and of one mind and heart as preachers of God’s mercy and love in the midst of a scattered and divided world.

This witness to a communion of persons includes the **‘domestic church’**, our families, which are more important than ever before as a home of faith. As Pope Francis describes, the parish is a ‘family of families’ and the renewal of family life is a precious gift for the Church in our time and for society as a whole.¹¹ The parish is also a **‘community of communities’**, gifted with various groups of belonging shaped by ethnicity, culture, spirituality, needs and capacities. Each group is to be encouraged and enabled to contribute their particular gifts to the vitality of the parish as a whole.¹²

¹¹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* 202.

¹² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 28.



When we experience the joy of being in Christ together as a parish, migrant chaplaincy or other Eucharistic community, it **deepens our spiritual commitment to evangelisation**, that is, to sharing that joy of belonging in Christ with others. Community, then, is central to the gift of discipleship and the responsibility of evangelisation. It encourages us to deepen the experience of communion for those who belong to the parish as well as those who do not yet know that their home is with us.

We know that a sure sign of a healthy community is that we want others to become a part of our communion and other people want to become a part of us, experiencing our parishes as places of welcome and growth.

As we experience change in the way people live, work and worship in Sydney, we must call upon and cooperate with the Holy Spirit as the agent of authentic renewal in our parishes. As communities of the baptised, **our parishes are enriched by different charisms** given by the Spirit that renew and build up the Church. These gifts are given not for 'safekeeping' but to be channelled into an evangelising mission that ensures the community reaches out to others with creativity and boldness.

As we aspire to widen our outreach, we are called to **re-envision the borders of our communities** not as spaces where identities and relationships end but rather as spaces where we can continue to grow through encounter and outreach with one another. We are being called to build up local communities of care where our parishes and schools, early childhood centres, aged care facilities and other centres of pastoral life work together to make disciples and advance the Kingdom of God in our midst. We are also called to recognise and respond to new mission territories, such as the 'digital continent' where many people experience relationship and community, seek out groups of belonging, search for answers to their questions, and are waiting to encounter Jesus Christ.

Practical Strategies

In the full version of *Go Make Disciples*, you will find a number of key strategies to strengthen the foundation of community in your parish and actions to implement each strategy. Some of these strategies are provided below:

- Offer a Welcoming Liturgy
- Identify and Follow-up Newcomers
- Create Welcoming Resources
- Build Community Through a Common Commitment to Justice
- Welcome and Support Migrants and Refugees
- Minister to the Homebound
- Care for Children and Families
- Care for the Suffering and Vulnerable
- Welcome and Support People with Disabilities and Special Needs
- Build Community for Young People
- Build the Relationship between Parishes and Schools
- Engage with the Wider Community
- Fundraise for Community Needs

Visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au for specific actions, resources and support to bring these opportunities to life in your parish, chaplaincy or other Eucharistic community.





Christ in the House of Martha and Mary
by Johannes Vermeer, between circa 1654 and circa 1656.
PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/PUBLIC DOMAIN



Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you”.

1 Peter 3:15

Foundation 4: Formation

In the Scriptures we see in the life of Jesus that the formation of His followers to grow in discipleship and enter into His mission is central. Through His words and deeds Jesus teaches His disciples how to interpret Scripture (Luke 24:25-27), how to pray (Matthew 6:5-14) and to be attentive to the interior life (Mark 7:14-23). He also teaches His Apostles vigilance in the spiritual life (Matthew 24:42-44; Mark 13:33; Luke 12:40), about the moral life (Matthew 5:21-29), the importance of forgiveness (Mark 11:25), and how to respond pastorally in mission (Mark 2:15-17; Matthew 9:10).

Our conscious decision to place the Great Commission of Jesus at the centre of our parishes’ identity and action means discerning and enacting new ways to provide Christian formation that will enable our communities and parishioners to grow in Christ as missionary disciples.

The process of evangelisation is rarely instantaneous or momentary but more often a gradual and lifelong process of conversion to Jesus Christ as a disciple on mission. To be a disciple is to be a learner who sits at the feet of Jesus, grows in faith and understanding over time, and is sent to witness and convey to others the truth of God’s love in Christ: “Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

The *kerygma* or ‘Great Story of Jesus’ is at the heart of Christian formation, as we see in the *Acts of the Apostles* (for example, Acts 10:34-43). This is the proclamation of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection as the revelation of God’s saving love and mercy. Pope Francis notes, “We must not think that in catechesis the *kerygma* gives way to a supposedly more ‘solid’ formation. Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful, and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the *kerygma*”.¹³

This formation in the Gospel also takes place **in the context of Christian community**, as we are accompanied by others on the journey with Christ, formed by ongoing encounters with Christ in His Word and sacraments, shaped by the witness and testimony of others, enriched by a life of prayer and daily spiritual practices, and by living Jesus’ mission in service to the needy.

Jesus spent a great deal of time forming the people who followed Him: discussing moral and social issues; teaching them how to pray; explaining the disciples’ duties to God and ‘Caesar’; instructing them on how to be in community together, how to serve people on the margins and witness to the mercy of God, to challenge social structures and to relate to people outside their community; healing disciples of their own wounds; and offering His friendship.

There are four kinds of formation Christian disciples need: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral.

¹³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 165.

Human formation helps the disciple grow into a mature adult who has the virtues necessary to live his or her life to the full. Human formation can involve engaging psychology, habits and the virtues. These are important for discipleship and evangelisation as virtuous lives lead to holiness which draws others to its source, Jesus Christ.

Spiritual formation helps the disciple to enter into the apprenticeship of prayer in which he or she experiences true personal conversation with God, and introduces the disciple to traditions that can deepen this encounter such as retreats and pilgrimages. This spiritual nourishment is essential to the mission of evangelisation for, “to proclaim fruitfully the Word of the Gospel one is first asked to have a profound experience of God”.¹⁴

Intellectual formation develops the faculty of reason that complements the gift of faith: they are “like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth”.¹⁵ Catechesis and intellectual formation are essential in the Christian life including the study of Scripture and tradition, growing knowledge of Catholic theology, and drawing also on other disciplines including philosophy, literature and the arts. It can deepen and enhance the disciple’s encounter with Jesus in Word and sacrament, deepen his or her discipleship, and provide further resources when discipleship becomes demanding. When evangelising, reasonable explanations can remove intellectual barriers to people encountering Christ, as well as dispelling fallacies about the Catholic faith.

Pastoral formation is about how the disciple carries out the particular evangelising mission to which he or she is called, building up the body of Christ. Pastoral formation helps the disciple become adept in engaging others and inviting them into an encounter with Jesus through persuasive communication, sensitivity to the other, and insights into the dynamics of conversion.

If conversion is a process and not instantaneous, then communities seeking to ‘make disciples’ can benefit from putting clear steps in place for people to walk and follow, **a path of discipleship through which people can grow**. As shared in the full version of *Go Make Disciples*, a ‘discipleship pathway’ identifies how we are seeking to provide opportunities that can help people to move through a process of spiritual conversion and maturity in our community. Formation is an important part of this pathway.

Practical Strategies

In the full version of *Go Make Disciples*, you will find a number of key strategies to strengthen the foundation of formation in your parish and actions to implement each strategy. Some of these are strategies are provided below:

- Establish a Small Group Culture
- Provide Opportunities for the Four Kinds of Formation
- Provide Formation on Marriage, Parenting and Family Life
- Engage with Communities of Formation
- Provide Formation for Catechumens
- Offer Formation for Youth and Children

Visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au for specific actions, resources and support to bring these opportunities to life in your parish, chaplaincy or other Eucharistic community.

¹⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Ubicumque et Semper*, 21 September 2010.

¹⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* 1.



While they were eating, He took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it He broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body’. Then He took the cup, and after giving thanks He gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God’.”

Mark 14:22-25

Foundation 5: Worship



Worship is the primary purpose of the Church, the source and summit of all else the Church does. Worship is also foundational for parishes seeking to be faithful to Jesus’ mission, for in worship we do as Jesus invited His disciples to do: give praise to the Father by the Son in the Holy Spirit and entrust our lives to God’s care. Our conscious decision to place the Great Commission, the command to ‘make disciples’, at the heart of our identity and action means discerning and enacting new ways to strengthen our worship of God.

The Great Commission given by Jesus as He ascended to the Father was four-fold in its mandate to the Church: to evangelise so as to make disciples (“go out to all the world preaching the Gospel”, “go and make disciples of all nations”); to sacramentalise that discipleship (“baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”); to catechise those disciples (“teach them to obey everything I commanded you”); and to memorialise His presence with us (“remember that I am with you always...”) (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:18-20). In this, we see the intimate connection between the initial disciple-making encounter with the Lord, the sacraments which follow upon this, and the further teaching that is elicited by these encounters.

Worship, both public and private, is intimately connected with our love for God and also what is right and just to give to Him because of His ‘worth’. Indeed ‘worth-ship’ is the ancient root of ‘worship’. In worship, we encounter the Lord who is “always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations”¹⁶; in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the Blessed Sacrament, in the Word proclaimed and in the priest. Christ is always present “when the Church prays and sings”.¹⁷ We also encounter Christ in the personal worship we carry out in the ‘secret’ of our “private room” (Matthew 6:6).

As our primary act of worship, the celebration of the Eucharist brings us into an encounter with Christ who, in His Great Commission, promised to be with us always. The Eucharist draws us into the mission of evangelisation as we are sent forth from the Mass to bring Christ to the world and invite others to encounter Jesus, and so experience the fullness of communion with Him and His Church.

It is primarily by the witness of our lives, our actions, words and way of life that the Christ we encounter in the sacred mysteries becomes present to others, as the gift of the very presence, love and outreach of God.

Indeed, active and intentional discipleship is the soil in which the Eucharist bears its intended fruit, as shared by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church: it must be preceded by evangelisation, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the

¹⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7.

¹⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7.

faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity”.¹⁸ It is when we have been evangelised and moved to the personal, conscious and active decision to follow Jesus in the midst of the Church that the grace of the sacraments is received most fruitfully and the abundant charisms, vocations and gifts that God seeks to bring about in us become manifest in our individual lives and in the life of our parishes and communities.

The **invitation, beauty and solemnity of the liturgy** form an integral part of our evangelising mission as Pope Francis declares, “Evangelisation with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelises and is herself evangelised through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelisation and the source of her renewed self-giving”.¹⁹ For this reason the **‘homilies, hymns and hospitality’** in the celebration of the Eucharist are critical to the engagement of the liturgical assembly and the transformative encounter with Christ at the heart of the Mass.

Sacred music in the form of Gregorian chant, sacred polyphony, sacred music for organ and popular sacred music has an evangelising power when it “adds delight to prayer, fosters unity of minds, or confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites”.²⁰

Preaching is fundamental to the mission of the Church as it is by the faithful proclamation and teaching of the Word of God that Christ becomes known. In the Liturgy of the Word, and especially the homily, the faithful are exhorted to receive God’s Word and put it into practice.

The **welcoming and hospitality of a parish**, including in its liturgy, communicates and embodies the presence, love and reconciliation of Christ who reaches out to all people.

In the richness of our Catholic tradition, our worship of God also includes the preparation to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist through the **Sacrament of Penance**, the regular practice of **Eucharistic Adoration**, and **forms of personal and communal prayer** including devotions that raise our hearts and minds to God.

Practical Strategies

In the full version of *Go Make Disciples*, you will find a number of key strategies to strengthen the foundation of worship in your parish and actions to implement each strategy. Some of these strategies are provided below:

- Provide Formation for Volunteers in Liturgical Ministries
- Provide Beautiful, Inspiring and Appropriate Sacred Music
- Offer More and Varied Opportunities for Worship
- Invest Time in Preparing for Feast Days
- Provide Formation in Worship
- Provide Liturgical Resources
- Create a Culture of Hospitality

Visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au for specific actions, resources and support to bring these opportunities to life in your parish, chaplaincy or other Eucharistic community.

¹⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1072.

¹⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 24.

²⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 112; Second Vatican Council, *Musicam Sacram* 4.

Structural Renewal for Mission

In order to support our parishes in carrying out the mission of Jesus now and in the years ahead, we must review together the pastoral life and structures of our communities as we seek to make disciples in a time of unprecedented change in Sydney. Like Christians of every generation, we are called to spiritual revitalisation and to new ways of organising ourselves for God's mission. In our Archdiocese, the 'new wine' of *spiritual renewal* and 'new wineskins' of *structural renewal* must work together if we are to foster flourishing Eucharistic communities that evangelise, that is, call and form disciples.

We recognise that if we only change the structures of our parishes, without spiritual renewal, the decline of vulnerable communities may continue apace, only on a larger scale. However, without revisiting our structures – the way we are organised for God's mission – some parishes may lack the people and resources for sustainable and effective missionary outreach or indeed to be viable in the future, with the consequence that some people will be denied outreach from the Church.

The goal of structural and spiritual renewal is to ensure that our communities are faithful to the person and mission of Jesus, truly mission-oriented and better connected with one another, sustainably resourced to reach out to those yet to hear the message of the Gospel, and plan to be there for generations to come.

Gifts for Mission

Of God's many gifts for His mission of evangelisation, there are at least three gifts of parish life that ought to shape our structures for mission:

1. The primary wealth of our Eucharistic communities is the **communities** themselves and the gifts of our people, clergy, religious and lay men and women: their lives, natural talents, charisms, vocations, faith, experience and time. The community's participation in the sacramental life of the parish and in the provision of pastoral care and outreach is essential to the life of the parish and its capacity to undertake mission in the wider community. The gathering of a parish, migrant chaplaincy or ecclesial movement is a spiritual gift for the world as people pray in common, witness to and draw others into the Christian life.
2. Another vital gift for mission is the **temporal resources** that parishioners past and present have contributed to our parish communities. These temporal resources include the property and buildings, savings, income and other financial resources of the parish. These resources support pastoral care and missionary initiative, the training and employment of essential staff, maintenance of adequate facilities for the present and future generations, material support for our priests and seminarians, and financial support for the wider life of the Church and apostolates to those in need.
3. A third gift essential to mission is our **personnel**, that is the clergy, paid staff and regular volunteers who support them. Each parish and Eucharistic community gathers around their priest who serves as the community's pastoral leader. Some communities are also blessed with a deacon who builds up the community in a number of ways including through the preaching of the Gospel and the ministry of charity. Paid staff include parish secretaries, pastoral associates, bookkeepers, cleaners, housekeepers, and other staff who not only perform essential tasks for the life and mission of the parish but enable our priests to undertake the essential pastoral ministry for which they are ordained. Regular volunteers include the lay leaders of many parish groups and ministries. These clergy, staff and volunteers are integral to the life and mission of our communities.

Stewardship of Our Gifts for Mission

In its commitment to evangelisation, *Go Make Disciples* is concerned with the potential and capacity of our parishes to undertake the mission of Jesus now and into the future. During the 'Parish 2020' process, data was assembled which included an examination of the access that parishes have to these three essential resources for mission now and in the years to come.



While some of our parishes were found to be reasonably resourced in these gifts for mission, it is clear that a number of parishes lack the resources they need to grow their pastoral life, to try new things, and take on new commitments that support outreach. All gifts from God need to be managed well and used wisely. No one wants a parish to be improperly focused on resources, yet proper attention must be given to the stewardship of them because mission needs people and resources to carry out God's work.

It is important to recognise that our current structures can inhibit access to gifts and resources necessary for evangelisation: a thriving community, temporal resources and necessary personnel. In such cases, we need to be open to new structures to carry out our unchanging mission in Christ.

Part of the work of *Go Make Disciples* is to assist parishes that are lacking resources for growth and outreach, so they can enter more fully into the mission to which Christ calls them. Rather than wait until their resources become so depleted that a change in pastoral life or direction is no longer possible, some parishes would be wise to act now while they still have the resources to make pro-active changes for their future.

From January 2021, the Archdiocese will examine approximately ten (10) 'parishes under consideration' which are characterised by significant and ongoing decline in community participation, a lack of access to temporal resources for mission, insufficient personnel for growth and outreach, or form a natural unit with another community. This review process will involve the appointed parish priest or administrator who, as the primary pastoral planner of the parish, is responsible for stewardship of the local community of faith. The review process will include:

- briefings of the priests and parishioners on the situation of the parish
- a pastoral self-assessment process undertaken by the parish community
- consultation with the community on its vision and the discernment of possible solutions and opportunities for renewal, including renewed structures for mission
- consultation with regional bishops, the Council of Deans, the Council of Priests and other advisers of the Archbishop
- the support of the Parish Renewal Team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation, the agencies of the Archdiocese and specialists in parish finance, property and canon law.

In the Archbishop's desire for all communities of Sydney to be better connected in mission, and with the responsibility to ensure the renewal of parishes for generations to come, at least **five principal arrangements** will be considered in the years ahead according to the needs and situation of individual parishes:

- The collaboration of parishes
- The twinning or clustering of parishes
- The amalgamation of parishes
- Changes to parish boundaries
- The establishment of new parishes in areas of growth

It is important to note that no decision by the Archbishop has yet been made regarding the twinning or merging of parishes, pending the process of parish assessment and discernment outlined in the full version of *Go Make Disciples* available at www.gomakedisciples.org.au.

With the desire for renewed fidelity to the mission of Jesus Christ in each of our Eucharistic communities, the increased collaboration of parishes within the Archdiocese and new parish structures in some cases will open new possibilities for the Gospel. The 'new wine' of spiritual revitalisation and the 'new wineskins' of structural renewal promise to inaugurate a new chapter for evangelisation in Sydney.



SYDNEY ||| CENTRE *for*
EVANGELISATION

Established by Archbishop Fisher OP in 2020, the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation dedicates itself to the support of parishes, migrant chaplaincies and other Eucharistic communities in their fidelity to the person and mission of Jesus Christ. Charged with the development and implementation of our Archdiocesan Mission Plan, *Go Make Disciples*, our teams work together with the priests, parishes and communities of Sydney, with the conviction that the encounter with Jesus Christ changes lives.

The work of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation is exercised through the following teams:

The Parish Renewal Team supports parishes that are seeking to renew their communities as places of encounter with the living Christ and centres of evangelisation and outreach in love and mercy. The team does this principally by providing practical support for parishes and other Eucharistic communities seeking to engage strategies for spiritual and structural renewal outlined in this Archdiocesan Mission Plan, *Go Make Disciples*. For support, contact the team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330.

Sydney Catholic Youth serves the commission of Christ to “go make disciples” with young people of the Archdiocese, walking with them toward an ever-deeper encounter with Jesus in the midst of the Church for the transformation of the world. For support, contact the team at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or (02) 9307 8152.

Life, Marriage and Family provides parish-based marriage and family support, supporting, guiding and building up a culture of life, marriage and family within parishes, migrant chaplaincies and deaneries. For support, contact the team at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9307 8480.

Communications and News Media promotes the message of the Gospel through sharing the value and good works of the Catholic Church, inviting an awareness of and relationship with Christ and His Church. For support, contact the team at michael.kenny@sydneycatholic.org or 0438 046 406.

Digital and Design creatively responds to the call to invite people into an encounter with Jesus, embracing traditional and digital media to ensure this Good News reaches the People of God and the wider community. For support, contact the team at creative@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5327.

The Catholic Weekly serves the Church by disseminating news, information and stories to inform and assist the daily lives of Catholics, their families and parish and migrant communities. For support, contact the team at peter.rosengren@catholicweekly.com.au or (02) 9390 5327.

The Mustard Seed Bookshop stocks a range of resources that support all aspects of evangelisation. Explore their resources for your parish in the ‘Parish Renewal’ section on the bookshop website at www.mustardseed.org.au or in-store at 133 Liverpool Street, Sydney. Contact the team at bookshop@mustardseed.org.au or (02) 9307 8350.