

Renew My Church: Our Own Discipleship

We have a mission:

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you and know that I am with you always, until the end of the world” (Mt 28:19-20).

This is the Great Commission that Christ gave His apostles. And He gives us this mission today as something to accomplish together. An important element to achieving our mission is understanding what we’re facing today.

In an earlier article, I noted some of the reasons why renewal is needed, not the least of which is a steady decline in faith practices that stretches back decades. There are many issues that people cite as a catalyst for leaving the Church or lapsing in their faith. The pain and suffering of the abuse crisis and failure in leadership amongst some has been reason enough for some to walk away or refrain from (re)entering. There are also the age-old allurements and noon-day devils that cause people to drift away from the faith of their youth. And there are also issues and challenges of a personal nature that only God can see within people’s hearts.

But there are also people that leave the Church not because they reject her teachings or doctrines or even because of the scandals – they leave because they want more than what they’re experiencing. In some way, they doubt that Jesus is present within their own parish. For those of us who know and love and serve our Lord present in the sacraments, this may be difficult to get our minds or hearts around. But it’s a reality for some.

With that in mind, I ask you to consider the following questions: Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? What does it mean to be His disciple? Is there anything holding you back from following Him more closely? Or from introducing others to Him? What is your relationship with the parish community? How do you strengthen the larger Catholic community?

It is important to prayerfully discern our own efforts to renew our faith lives and our active participation in the life of the Church. In order to strengthen our larger Catholic community, there are three mission imperatives that guide the efforts of Renew My Church:

Make Disciples

We must reflect on how each of us invites others into a personal encounter and lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ as disciples in His Church.

Build Community

Our parish and school communities today face a number of obstacles to vitality—the parishioner bases of many parishes are very small; the number of school-aged children in areas has decreased; we have fewer priests; many of our parishes are not sustainable to carry on the mission of the Church; and many parishes and schools have deferred maintenance for many years, resulting in unaffordable capital needs.

We must ensure our communities have enough resources to carry out our mission. But we also recognize resourcing alone does not address all of our challenges. Parish and school communities that are well-resourced and vibrant today still face significant challenges because of the changes in society. That is why we need a spiritual renewal at the foundation of all we do.

