

before that, the People of God in Southern Illinois have known, witnessed, and marveled at the power and work of the Holy Spirit as followers of Christ. We have survived, have grown, and have thrived because of the Spirit's presence. And today is no different.



Servants on Christ's Mission

It could have been no accident that Archbishop Michael McGovern, then Bishop of Belleville and now Archbishop of Omaha, promulgated his Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of Belleville,

Servants on Christ's Mission, on Pentecost Sunday, 2024. As you recall, in that plan, he boldly identified four fundamental priorities for the Diocese:

1. Youth and Young Adult Initiative
2. Family Life
3. Faith Formation
4. Revitalizing Parish Life and Ministry: Growing God's Family.

Under each priority, after broad consultation in the diocese, he articulated goals. These priorities of our diocesan Church



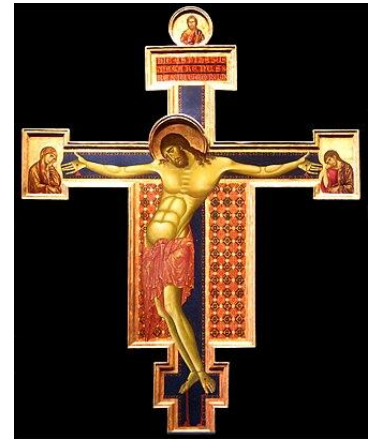
are not novel or outrageously progressive. However, they are the foundations of life in the Church in our day.

As I take up the work as Shepherd of this local Church as the tenth bishop, along with the ninth bishop before me, I envision the bold and beautiful fruits of parishes, partnerships, and communities who place these areas of ministry as our focus in the years ahead, fueled by the

presence of the Holy Spirit, and nourished by Word and Sacrament in the Eucharist.

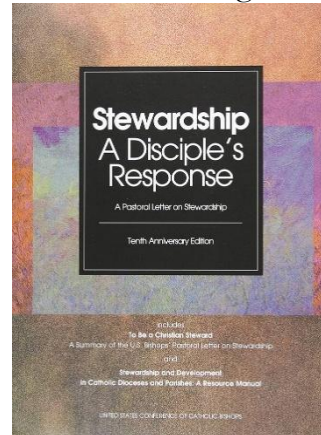
What is our Mission?

If we are to be credible witnesses of the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus our Lord, then we must each count ourselves, not merely in word, but in



action, **disciples** of the One who claims us and calls us. If we want young people in the Church, families thriving in the Church, well-formed believers in the Church, parishes marked by vitality, strength, service, and hope, then we must begin by counting ourselves, each one of us, as those **called** by Jesus to a particular way of life, **summoned** by Jesus to Him regularly, as daily students **taught** by the Master, as disciples who, with Jesus, **eagerly** hear the cry of the poor and answer that cry.

Nearly a quarter-century ago, the United States Bishops taught the faithful the answer to this question: if I am a disciple of Jesus, called, summoned, taught, and eager, then what? In



2002, in the Pastoral Letter entitled, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, our US Bishops taught the importance of hearing the call and making the intentional choice to follow Jesus. They reminded us that Jesus' way is not always our

first inclination, and that living as stewards, Christian disciples have extremely important work to do.