

Congress XIII Day of Reflection

CALLED TO ACTION



Write the Vision

A PROPHETIC CALL TO THRIVE

NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS

Catholic Diocese of Cleveland
Office of Black Catholic Ministries

October 2022-Moving Forward



Overview

On Saturday, 29 October 2022, the Office of Black Catholic Ministries of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland held a Day of Reflection for the 13th National Black Catholic Congress at the Center for Pastoral Leadership in Wickliffe, Ohio. The Day of Reflection is held every five years in preparation for the upcoming National Black Catholic Congress, which will take place on July 20-23, 2023 in National Harbor, MD. The theme is "Write the Vision: A Prophetic Call to Thrive." Seventy-one participants represented 12 parishes and organizations from across the diocese.

The Day of Reflection was divided into three parts:

- **Leaning In.** This was an opportunity to pray and unpack the Scripture from Habakkuk (2:2-4), which is the scriptural basis for the theme.
- **Leaning Out.** Our guest presenter, Fr. James Watson, OFM Cap, offered a reflection on what it means to be on mission as prophetic people.
- **Writing our Vision.** The purpose of this last session was to unpack the day's discussion and identify emerging actions as pastoral concerns.

During the table conversations, we followed the same process used during the synodal listening sessions in our diocese known as Spiritual Conversations. This practice is taken from the Ignatian tradition. It is part of a communal discernment process and provides a way for groups of people to listen to God by listening to one another. It is a way for us to listen for the voice of the Spirit. We ended the day with a commissioning prayer and blessing.

The following is a synthesis of the fruits of our time together – praying, listening and discerning what the Holy Spirit is calling us to do as prophets on mission. The emerging actions identified will guide Black Catholic Ministries in our diocese and contribute to the five-year pastoral plan that will be developed by the National Black Catholic Congress.





Our Collective Spiritual Wisdom

NOW THAT WE HAVE LISTENED TO GOD'S
VOICE AND EACH OTHER, WHAT SPIRITUAL
WISDOM OR STIRRINGS DID YOU HEAR
DURING THIS DAY OF REFLECTION?

WAIT FOR THE LORD

Waiting gives us the opportunity to seek clarity. We must slow down and ask for the Lord's guidance through prayer, especially the Scriptures. By listening carefully and attentively to the word of God, we will come to know His plans for us and act accordingly, in confidence and with courage.

Patiently waiting on the Lord is difficult, but it is also a sign of faith. Our faith tells us we can do all things through Christ. Our accomplishments can be seen throughout our history - working together as a community to move further and accomplish more. Walking together with one another, side by side, not in front of or behind one another.

When we act impulsively, search for quick answers, or move without a clear vision, we can complicate things unnecessarily. We must be steadfast to His plan. God will remove all barriers and blessings will come in God's time. Hold on to faith.

DISCERN THE VOICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

When we take the time to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit, we allow ourselves to be guided by God's wisdom. There are three steps to the discernment process: pray, listen and act.

Pray. Personal prayer is an essential part of our relationship with God. By communicating freely with God through prayer, we come to understand and accept what God is calling us to do as individuals and as a community. Reading the Scriptures is an important part of our prayer life. We need to immerse ourselves more in God's Word, seeking His wisdom as we experience the ups and downs of life.

Listen. As we pray, we must also listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This means sitting quietly with the Lord. The Holy Spirit also speaks to us through one another when we pray together, openly discuss the needs in our communities, and carefully consider what we are being called to do.

Act. The final step of the discernment process is action. Once we understand what the Spirit is calling us to do, we must respond. We can choose to take action or to do nothing. It may be hard at times to follow Jesus, but He walks with us. No matter what happens, we will not be disappointed. There is nothing to fear. God is guiding us.

GO FORTH AND SHARE THE GOOD NEWS

Through our baptism, we have been called to be missionary disciples and share the Good News of Jesus Christ with everyone we encounter. The best way to engage others in this mission is to clearly and passionately share our vision. Together we are stronger. Our world is divided but, as Christians, we need to find common ground and use our gifts to build the Kingdom of God.

Missionary disciples are known by their words and actions. Don't wait for someone else to step up. Share the story of God's faithfulness in your own life. Be a living witness of God's love. Be more like Jesus. Live a life reflective of the wisdom that comes from God. Get involved in your parish community and go out into the neighborhood to evangelize. We don't exist for ourselves.

Ministry with children and youth is a pastoral priority area. We need to reignite the calling among adults in our communities to serve and mentor the youth. We need to engage young people in ministries and build up community. By bringing in the children, we can bring their parents.



Our Prophetic Call to Action

AS A RESULT OF THOSE SPIRITUAL STIRRINGS,
WE WERE LED TO IDENTIFY THESE ACTION ITEMS
AS PASTORAL CONCERNS TO BE ON MISSION
AS OUR "PROPHETIC CALL TO THRIVE."

PASTORAL PLANNING

- Continue to meet with leaders from the Black Catholic community to pray, listen and discern a collaborative vision for ministries.
- Revive Church in the City partnerships between city and suburban parishes including pulpit exchange, parish school collaboration, prayer partners, service projects, youth activities, St. Vincent de Paul breakfast.
- Increase opportunities for joint activities: Revivals, days of reflections, retreats, conferences, Confirmation preparation, youth ministry, community service projects, etc.
- Schedule at least one joint parish pastoral council meeting each year.

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

- Increase outreach to young people by reigniting youth groups, boy scouts, young adult group, etc.
- Invite young people to serve on parish pastoral council and other parish ministries.
- Support families and enable parents to be primary teachers of the faith.
- Invite young people to offer social media trainings for adults in the parish.
- Donate books for children and youth.

SPIRITUALITY

- Cultivate a personal prayer and spiritual life, including devotional practices outside of Mass such as praying the rosary, novenas, etc.
- Provide opportunities to learn about our Catholic faith, Scripture, the saints and Black Catholic history.
- Provide more gathered adult formation opportunities such as days of reflection and retreats.

LEADERSHIP

- Provide opportunities for community members to discern their spiritual gifts and take a more active role in the parish.
- Enhance diversity and inclusion efforts of priestly vocations, diaconate and lay ecclesial ministry programs.
- Create a synodal process for identifying, supporting, and raising up Black Catholic leaders in all areas of Church leadership with active support from the diocese.
- Re-establish the diocesan Black Catholic Advisory Board.
- Strengthen viability of the Knights and Ladies Auxiliary of Peter Claver.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Engage more adults in the work of evangelization through personal invitation. Encourage parishioners to invite at least one person each week to worship on Sunday.
- Be a visible witness to the neighborhood, especially children and families, through social activities, opportunities for prayer, and works of service.
- Foster a culture of encounter in our parish communities.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- Extend an invitation every Friday during announcements to students to join the parish for Sunday Mass. Encourage students to bring their parents, friends, and other family members.
- Invite members of the parish to visit classrooms on a regular basis.
- Organize occasional gatherings with parish and school staff.

COMMUNICATION

- Utilize social media, website, parish bulletins and newsletters to tell our story and proclaim the Gospel.
- Improve communication between parishes and the diocese, and between parishes and the Black Catholic Community.

FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP

- Encourage participation in the electoral process: host a voter registration drive, encourage voting, etc.



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