

Discussion Questions

Fall Formation Day 2016

Watch the [video](#) of the presentation by Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda

Summary:

During his presentation, Archbishop Hebda directly asked three questions:

1. **Where should direction-setting of the Archdiocese begin: with a pastoral council or with a synod?**
2. When talking about what we need in order to be a credible community, he indicated that one of the marks was the ability of "others to see from the outside how we love one another". His question was, **"How do we become that place?"**
3. Paragraph 28 of the *Joy of Gospel* is to be our litmus test both in the parish and the Archdiocese. **So, how are we doing?**

Excerpt from [The Joy of the Gospel](#)

(Pope Francis (2013). *The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium*. Dublin: Varitas Publications)

28. The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who are the people that live within the boundaries of our parish? What is their home life like? Who makes up their families? What are their top 3 concerns and desires?

2. What is our Worship experience like? What is the average person's experience with God? Do we have a plan of how to provide a personal experience of Christ? What is necessary for growth in the Christian life for the people of our parish? Who is engaging our parishioners in dialogue? What are the expressions of the proclamation of the Gospels? How do I personally proclaim the Gospel in my work? In my family? In the community? Does my Catholic faith intentionally inform my decisions? Identify one of the moments in my life that I can specifically say that my life is better for having chosen to follow the teachings of the Church. Have I ever shared that with another person?
3. What active parish-wide opportunities do we have to service those who are marginalized? Have we identified specific means, as a parish, to live the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, or do we leave it up to a few? How can we better involve others in living these as part of the practice of Catholic identity (even with very limited time constraints)?
4. What does our worship look like? Are we truly worshipping or are there too many other things going on? How do we help the congregation to prepare for worship? How do we develop an intentional path to formation based on our parishes starting point and what we need to cover over the next year, 3 years, and 5 years?
5. What does it mean to be an evangelizer? How do we equip parishioners to more fully realize this aspect of Catholicism? Considering our parishes current ministries, what can we do to ensure that each member understands their opportunities and baptismal promise to evangelize?
6. Are there groups of persons that would encounter an obstacle, either perceived or real, to our community? Which groups? What obstacles? How can we address these? Are their perceptions or misunderstandings that need to be clarified?
7. Are we joyful? How can you tell?
8. Archbishop Hebda identified humility and sensitivity to the needs of others to be among the blessings coming out of our challenges. How have challenges in parish life given way to unexpected blessings?
9. Archbishop Hebda talked about "getting back to the core" out of necessity. What is core to our ministry?
10. Archbishop Hebda spoke to the urgent need to find a way to "retain central unity of discipline and doctrine" recognizing the value of "individual expressions of that unity". What can we do to foster unity while still respecting diversity of expressions?
11. Archbishop Hebda utilized the image of Noah and the Ark. It is important to be able to identify success and gifts from God. It helps to build a sense of mission as opposed to wandering. Keeping this in mind, how will we know when we have found dry land? What will be signs that we are on the way to becoming a credible community?