

# Convocation of Parish Leaders

## Introduction & History



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*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”*

- Matthew 28:18-20

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While evangelization has always been at the heart of the life and mission of the Church, there has been an increasing focus on and renewed sense of urgency surrounding it over the past fifty years. A brief glance at the statistics is enough to realize our culture is changing. Statistics aside, we all have parishioners whose friends or family members have either left or gradually drifted away from the practice of the Catholic Faith. However, there is also a growing hope and renewed evangelical focus, which gained momentum with Pope St. John Paul II in the New Evangelization and has continued through the pontificates of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. The Holy Father has called all in the Church to a “missionary conversion” and to be a Church which is “permanently in a state of mission” (EG 25).

### **Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America**

Last summer the United States Bishops along with Catholic leaders from around the country, gathered in a historic meeting called the Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America. The bishops and their delegates reflected on key points of Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation on evangelization, *Evangelii Gaudium*. Speakers delved into the social and religious ‘landscape’ of our nation. Breakout sessions highlighted the peripheries and how to identify and reach them. Finally, each delegation had the opportunity to discuss and to ask the question, ‘What could missionary discipleship look like within our parishes and diocese?’

### **Convocation of Parish Leaders**

In order to more fully explore that question, the Dioceses of Crookston and Fargo are co-hosting a similar event at the regional level called the Convocation of Parish Leaders on *November 30-December 1, 2018*. Bishops Folda and Hoepfner are inviting pastors and their delegates to delve into the Church’s teachings on evangelization, missionary discipleship, and how to be a mission-oriented parish that seeks the lost and strives to be Jesus’ mercy and love in a world marred by wounds. This event will equip participants in basic evangelization skills and will provide networking opportunities, as well as times of prayer and the celebration of Mass. Overall, the convocation will begin to equip attendees to go forth and engage their communities with the hope and joy of the Gospel.

# Aim of the Convocation of Parish Leaders

## *Evangelizing Missionary Disciples*

The convocation tagline *Evangelizing Missionary Disciples* can be interpreted in two different ways. First, as missionary disciples, we each need to be continually ‘evangelized’ in the sense that we are all called to continuing conversion. As Jesus’ disciples, we are invited to meet with him in prayer and study, which transform our lives so that we grow “to think like Him, to judge like Him, to act in conformity with His commandments, and to hope as He invites us to” (CT 20).

By participating in the Convocation of Parish Leaders, delegates will have the opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ through the keynote talks, breakout sessions, and opportunities for prayer throughout the event.

The second way of interpreting *Evangelizing Missionary Disciples* is that we are also sent out in order to evangelize, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, with others. We receive the gift of faith and then share that gift of faith with others.

## **What do we hope to accomplish through the Convocation for Parish Leaders?**

The convocation will offer parish leaders the opportunity to reflect on key questions and begin to discuss what a culture of missionary discipleship could look like in their parishes and the steps to take to bring it to fruition. The convocation is not an end in itself; it is a tool to build off for continued discussions and planning among parish leadership.

There are two levels of aims for the convocation: for individual participants and for parishes as a whole but both levels will follow the same flow:

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### *Flow and Aim of the Convocation Process*



## ***Understand***

### **Key Concepts**

Throughout the Convocation of Parish Leaders preparation period, the event, and follow-up process, participants will be introduced to and/or will grow in understanding of the following concepts.

- Evangelization, New Evangelization
- Kerygma (The Gospel message. The Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ.)
- Discipleship, Missionary Discipleship
- The purpose/mission of the parish, ‘Maintenance vs. Mission’
- The mission of the baptized, confirmed Catholic
- Role of prayer in the life of a missionary disciple (exp: Lectio Divina, Liturgy of the Hours, Acknowledge/Relate/Receive/Respond (ARRR), Eucharistic Adoration, Music/Praise, etc.)

Individual Level	Parish Level
To understand that, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to ongoing conversion and a deepening life of prayer.	To analyze the current parish, diocesan, and cultural 'landscape' asking, "How do we meet the needs of the people <i>in</i> our parishes and how to reach those <i>outside</i> of our parishes?"
To examine and understand the mission each person has to evangelize and what is meant by evangelization.	To understand the mission of the parish, in particular the difference between a maintenance vs. mission mentality.
To understand that discipleship and evangelization, through baptism, are inherently pillars of the lived experience of being a Catholic.	To understand that missionary discipleship is more of a parish culture or identity rather than a program.

***Practice***

The breakout sessions will be oriented around the themes of discipleship and evangelization. Participants will learn about various methods of prayer and evangelization, and then will have the opportunity to practice what they have learned. For example, delegates will learn how to share the basic Gospel message, the kerygma, particularly in the context of their testimony.

Local speakers from both dioceses will lead the breakout sessions and will include diocesan staff, clergy, lay parish leaders, former missionaries, and other key leaders in our region.

***Plan***

**Networking & Brainstorming**

At the convocation, participants will have the opportunity to meet delegates from other parishes across both dioceses. One of the benefits of having the convocation between two dioceses is to expand the delegates' understanding of the Church. It is often easy to think of 'Church' as one's particular parish. However, by meeting people from across the dioceses of Crookston and Fargo, delegates will become more familiar with the similarities and differences in parishes outside of their own.

On Saturday of the event, brainstorming and planning sessions will help participants to hear about endeavors and initiatives that are bearing fruit in other parishes. Then, participants will have the opportunity to gather back with their own delegations to ask and begin answering the question, "How can we foster a culture of missionary discipleship within our parish so that we might reach out to those outside of our parish?"

**Beginning Implementation**

Delegates will return to their parishes and communities to be catalysts for the New Evangelization. Delegations will take new ideas and resources from the convocation to begin or, to continue, strategic conversations about current norms and how to develop and enhance evangelization efforts in their parishes. More information about the follow-up process will be available in upcoming months

# Convocation of Parish Leaders

## Timeline

- **April 20:** Online registration available.
- **June 1:** Delegate registration deadline.
- **June-July:** Participants will receive e-mails with brief reflections, video clips, and other resources that will begin the preparation process.
- **August 1:** Printed participant guides will be distributed. These guides will include spiritual preparation as well as strategic and practical planning leading up to the Convocation.
- **August-November:** Delegations meet to pray, go through preparation resources, and gather feedback from parish. We recommend that delegations meet at least twice before the Convocation.
  - Suggested meeting outlines will be distributed to the pastors in the same mailing as the Participant Guides.
- **November 30-December 1:** Convocation of Parish Leaders; Avalon Events Center, Fargo.

## Schedule

**November 30-December 1, 2018**

*Tentative, subject to change*

### **FRIDAY - November 30,** *Feast of St. Andrew*

8:00 Registration  
9:00 Mass  
10:15 break  
10:30 Welcome  
10:45 Keynote 1 - Fr. Frank Donio, S.A.C.,  
Catholic Apostolate Center  
11:45 Lunch  
1:00 Witness Talk  
1:10 Keynote 2 - Msgr. Thomas Richter,  
Vice Rector of St. Paul Seminary  
2:10 Break  
2:45 Breakout 1 - Discipleship  
3:45 Break  
4:00 Breakout 2 - Evangelization  
5:15 Evening Prayer  
5:30 Supper  
7:00 Evening of Prayer & Praise

### **SATURDAY - December 1**

8:30 Mass  
9:45 Overview of Parish Meetings  
9:55 Break  
10:15 Parish Meetings  
12:00 Lunch (Boxed lunch for those who need  
to leave early)  
1:00 Deanery / Regional Meeting  
2:30 Summary and Closing Prayer  
3:00 Departure

Last Revised: April 12, 2018