



*Executive Summary of 2014 Pastoral Letter*

## **Lord, where are you going? (Domine Quo Vadis?)**

*Archbishop Mancini's 2014 pastoral letter, and its accompanying five year pastoral plan, begins the next phase of our Transformation process. Based on feedback from our Transformation groups, "Beyond the Pews" consultation, and 2014 Assembly of the People of God, the letter is a vision and plan for the transformation of our local Church. It highlights three key themes, which were prayerfully discerned at our 2014 Assembly of the People of God: **Mission, Community and Formation.***

Dear Friends,

This Pastoral Letter is about discerning where the Lord is asking of me and our Church at this time – I have realized that this question is a major struggle. The times and circumstances in which we find ourselves are nothing that any of us could have easily anticipated or wished for. Knowing what the Lord is asking of me and you at this time becomes crucial. If Christ and the clarity of his direction are not behind this pastoral letter or the vision that motivates it, then we are wasting our time and energy.

### **Mission**

Our mission is the same one Christ had: to proclaim a vision of life and a hope for humanity, revealed in a culture of personal encounter and experienced in relationships of self-sacrificing love. This is central to our faith and our lives as Catholic Christians, but it represents a radical alternative in our present time! To live this way requires courage, as there are costs to being a Christian today – fortunately, the hope and promise of the resurrection more than exceeds any earthly costs. Continuing Christ's mission must become the primary focus of our efforts. This will mean letting go of what holds us back so we can form communities marked by a dynamic, personal Christian faith – communities that share the message of Christ's love and mercy, minister to those in need, and allow the Holy Spirit to empower their mission.

### **Community**

"Rebuilding our Church" is not about maintaining what we have or once had. We must create communities of disciples – groups of people who joyfully live in personal relationship with Jesus Christ and engage with our world as it is now. It is necessary that a community gather regularly, as this is how we experience the source and summit of our Christian life. In this way we begin by sharing Christ's love with one another, but we must remember to always look beyond ourselves as well. With openness and love, our communities should invite others to join us – a community of disciples must become a truly missionary community.

Our parishes must become centres of hope and hospitality, where we can draw from each other the new life of faith. In this way, the Holy Spirit will be felt and the Risen Christ recognized. It doesn't matter whether a parish is in the city or in a rural environment – authentic Christian faith and community can be experienced anywhere, on any scale. The challenges that this lifestyle presents may

initially deter new members, but we must take heart in the imagery of sowing seeds and allowing them to grow, confident that, in time, the joy of our faith will draw others to Christ.

## Formation

This vision of our transformed Church requires significant effort. We must consider Christ's call to each of us, and work together to develop personal and communal formation to become disciples of Christ in our world. We all need ongoing formation in discipleship that helps us grow as followers of Christ. Formation and support for leadership was one of the most important themes raised in our 2014 Assembly. Leadership is not primarily about exercising power – it is also “leadership” when each person does what is uniquely that person's role to do. We are all called to collaborative leadership and co-responsibility. We must not only make disciples, but transform every disciple into an apostle of Jesus Christ to engage the leadership and responsibility of all. This means identifying our community leaders, but also recognizing and activating the gifts of every member of the Body of Christ.

At the same time, those specifically called to the ministries of service within our Christian community – our priests, deacons, catechists, and others – must be supported. Too often, we recruit people to serve but do not provide the necessary tools and supports. Empowering disciples for service is essential for the growth of our local Church, and must be built into our planning in an intentional way. Lastly, we need to provide formation for those directly involved in sacramental preparation, as well as those receiving the sacraments. Do we ensure that those seeking sacraments are properly formed and disposed to receive them? There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach for training Catechists or determining someone's suitability for the sacraments. If we intend the sacraments to be personal encounters with Christ we must treat them as such, and prepare accordingly, rather than seeing the sacraments as mere rites of passage.

## Meeting the Challenge Ahead of Us

A life of authentic Christian discipleship is not easy and it is no longer something to be presumed – living and sharing the Gospel in our present time has become a radical alternative. But it is clear that our Church needs renewal, and now is the time to act. As Archbishop, I have never had any illusions about my role or my capacity to make anything happen of my own accord by some magical exercise of Episcopal authority. My experience has demonstrated beyond doubt that, alone, I cannot do any of the things that I write about in this pastoral letter.

In order for us to meet the challenge that lies ahead of us, I propose a five year plan of action with Mission, Community and Formation as our three areas of focus. You have told me these are the areas where we need to make substantial changes and where action must take place. I have listened and I agree. A discernment tool has been developed to help parishes gauge their current reality in light of our goals. My hope is that it will help guide us in our journey ahead. I pray and hope that, in our Church of Halifax-Yarmouth, we can shift from an attitude of pastoral consumerism and functionalism to one of personal commitment as missionary disciples. May our Church be new again and may we go with Christ down the road where He is leading us.

*To read the complete Pastoral Letter and Pastoral Planning tools please visit  
[www.halifaxyarmouth.org/plan](http://www.halifaxyarmouth.org/plan)*