



A Pastoral Letter from Bishop Edward J. Burns

Easter Sunday • April 20, 2025

POST-SYNODAL PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE DIOCESE OF DALLAS

Brothers and sisters, Christ has risen! This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice. Christ has triumphed over death for the salvation of our souls. We emerge from the desert of the last 40 days to accept the joyful promises of a future with our Risen Lord.

“Christ is the Light of nations” (*Lumen gentium, 1*). His love also enlightens our hearts. Through His resurrection, we set our

eyes not on the things of earth but on Christ, and ultimately on life with Him for all eternity. Our Risen Lord has shown us that peace goes beyond conflict, that joy goes beyond sorrow, that courage goes beyond fear. Jesus Christ sustains us, and His love and mercy endure forever (*Psalm 118:1*).

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“The movement of the Holy Spirit in our hearts will continue to animate our communities, our parishes, and our Diocese to be a leaven to the world and bring others to Christ. Renewal must begin from within.”

—BISHOP EDWARD J. BURNS



We have a unique opportunity in this Easter season to reflect on and celebrate the gifts we have been given here in this Diocese. The Diocese of Dallas is filled with wonderful, engaged, and committed people. The vibrancy of faith present here in this Diocese will only continue to grow and flourish with the time, attention, and unified communal effort that our synod has nurtured. Catholics in the Diocese of Dallas are proud to be Catholic, and I want to make you ever prouder to be Catholic.

The fruits of our Synod will grow when we remain close to Our Lord; interior communion with Him is necessary. In light of this, I outline four actions to help us grow as disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ this Easter season, establish a stable community, and lead to continual flourishing as a Diocese.

- **Renew your commitment to Jesus Christ.**
- **Renew your commitment to family life.**
- **Renew your commitment to the life of your parish.**
- **Renew commitment to community.**

RENEW YOUR COMMITMENT TO JESUS CHRIST

The Lord wishes to bring us closer to Him. We are deeply loved and valued by Our Lord. It is important for us to know and trust in God's presence. He speaks to us always; we must learn how to listen. For this reason, I encourage you to cultivate a specific, daily prayer life that invites conversation with the Lord. Renew your commitment to Him.

Renewing our commitment to Jesus Christ is a lifelong journey of deepening faith, ongoing conversion, and active discipleship. At its heart, this renewal is a response to God's love revealed in Jesus—a love that continually calls each person into deeper union with Him. Rooted in Baptism, the Christian is invited to continually say “yes” to Christ, not only through formal acts of faith but through daily life—by prayer, reception of the sacraments, moral living, and loving service to others. This renewal is not a one-time event, but a dynamic process shaped by grace and strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

The Church teaches that this commitment must be personal and communal. In Christ, the Church

finds her purpose and mission. Renewing our commitment means centering our lives on Christ: listening to His Word, encountering Him in the Eucharist, and allowing His love to transform our hearts. It also means recognizing the call to mission—to witness to the Gospel in everyday life and to be agents of Christ's mercy and peace in the world. Ultimately, this renewal draws us into the heart of God's plan: to be holy, to live in communion, and to bring others into that same loving relationship with Christ.

Establish a firm foundation of connection to the Word of God, as it will nourish and sustain us in the many seasons of our lives. Set aside time each day, even five to ten minutes if that is all your life allows, and offer to the Lord the sincere concern and hopes held in your heart. Ask the Lord for the grace to know what He wants of you, thank Him for the blessings He has bestowed, ask for forgiveness for the transgressions that separate you from Him, and offer your efforts for His glory.

While I served as the bishop of the Diocese

of Juneau, Alaska, I marveled at how captains of vessels or anyone who would take their boat out onto the waters would always make sure that they knew their charted course, their timing, and how it related to the tidal charts. That is to say, they always knew the tides—low tide and high tide. They would never go out without checking all this information. At the same time, every pilot who ventured to take their plane on a trip always checked the weather. While the Inside Passage of Alaska is beautiful, it can be most treacherous. Pilots and captains always knew that before they ventured out, they always had to be prepared for the journey and take time to check in with a higher authority. I believe it is the case for the disciple of Jesus Christ: before venturing out into the world, we too need to prepare ourselves for the journey by establishing a strong relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, and to renew our commitment to him. The struggles and the challenges that we face each day should be met with a fortified relationship in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is going to sustain us on the journey.





RENEW YOUR COMMITMENT TO FAMILY LIFE

As members of the Church, we each serve others appropriate to our vocations. Priests are called to give of themselves to their parishes and pastoral work in a sacrificial way, to be Christ here on earth: “These ministers in the society of the faithful are able by the sacred power of orders to offer sacrifice and to forgive sins, and they perform their priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ” (*Presbyterorum ordinis*, 2). The laity too are called to give of themselves to their families and communities in a sacrificial way, so that others may encounter the Lord by knowing them.

We know from our own experiences of growing up that we are shaped by the family and friends that are part of our lives. The people we encounter and are close to are the ones who form and shape us. We also form and shape others around us.

It is necessary to take these roles seriously and uphold our responsibility to those in our own families appropriately and well. The family holds a special role in the stability of our world as the domestic church. “Christian husbands and wives are cooperators in grace and witnesses of faith for each other, their children, and all others in their household” (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 11). For those who are married, attending to the needs of marriage is a way to grow in holiness and virtue.

For those who are not married, participation in family life—supporting and being supported by parents, siblings, relatives, and close friends—is also of fundamental importance.

Our listening sessions and synodal discussions provided difficult reflections on the troubles that face families today, including division among family members who disagree. The Church asks us to respectfully and lovingly engage with those in our family who may think or act differently from us in social, political, or even religious matters: “This love and good will, to be sure, must in no way render us indifferent to truth and goodness. Indeed love itself impels the disciples of Christ to speak the saving truth to all men. But it is necessary to distinguish between error, which always merits repudiation, and the person in error, who never loses the dignity of being a person even when he is flawed by false or inadequate religious notions” (*Gaudium et spes*, 28). Growing in this skill can begin by deepening connections across divisions especially in our own families.

Love your family members. Strengthen your relationship with them and renew your commitment to them. This can be done simply by visiting them, hosting them, and spending time with them. Find shared interests that can foster real connections. Spend time with the older

generations within your family, as well as the younger generations. Find opportunities to create shared memories that can serve as a foundation for enduring difficulties together. Together we can begin to attend to the needs of the world by attending to the needs of those closest to us.

Then, invite your family members to pray with you. Take the relationship that you have with your family members to the spiritual level. After having grounded yourself in a renewed commitment to Jesus Christ, ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and the right words. When you speak to your family, do so from the heart. Share why prayer matters to you, how it helps you feel closer to God, and how you’d love to share that connection with them—not out of obligation, but out of love.

It helps to begin with something simple and non-intimidating: a short prayer before meals, a decade of the Rosary, or even just a moment of silence together at the end of the day, especially when the family is facing difficult or challenging moments. Don’t be discouraged if the response isn’t immediate or enthusiastic. People’s hearts often soften gradually. Keep praying for them quietly, and be consistent in your own prayer life—it’s often your example, more than your words, that speaks the loudest. Courage in faith is gentle, persistent, and always rooted in love.





RENEW YOUR COMMITMENT TO PARISH LIFE

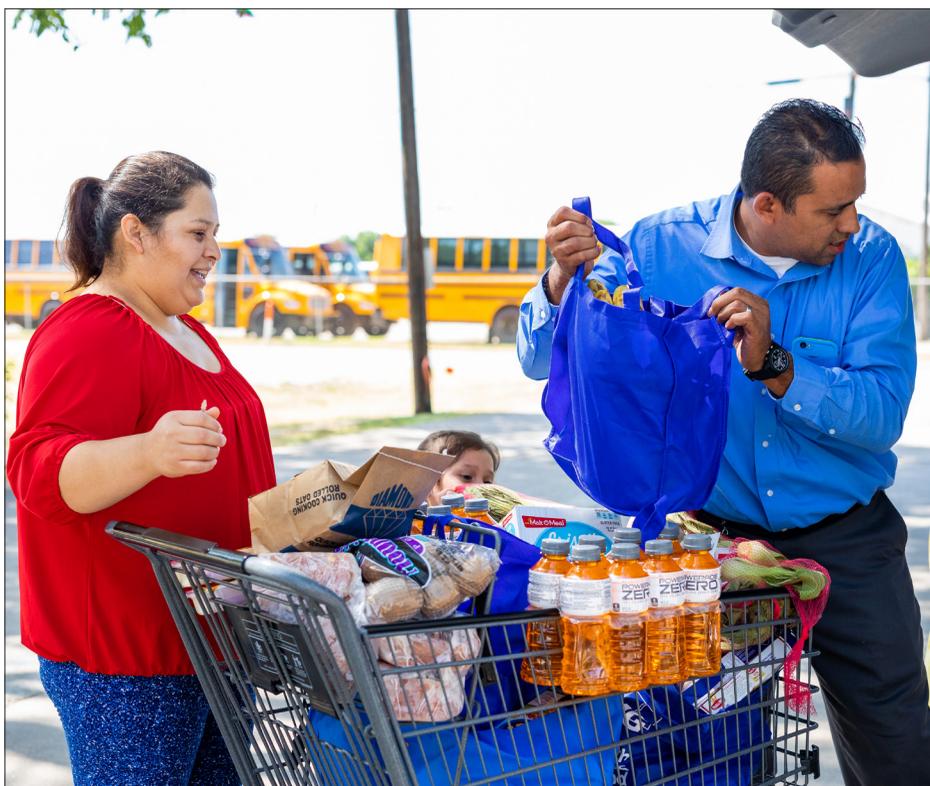
The life of the parish can be vibrant and inviting. The parish is the place nearest to you where you can encounter Christ; it exists to bring you closer to God. The priests there have dedicated themselves to prayer, preaching, and the nourishment of the faithful. The faithful receive from their pastors spiritual goods, especially the sacraments, and the Word of God. “The purpose, therefore, which priests pursue in their ministry and by their life is to procure the glory of God the Father in Christ” (*Presbyterorum ordinis*, 2).

It is important that the faithful participate fully in the spiritual, sacramental, and communal life offered to them at their parishes. “Their activity is so necessary within the Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness” (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 10). There is a place for everyone in parish life! Priests and deacons need the support of the laity to help them serve their mission well, and the lay faithful rely on clergy for provision of the sacraments and proper leadership of the parish. “Those responsible for the ongoing formation of priests are to be found in the Church as ‘communion’. In this sense, the entire particular church has the responsibility, under the guidance of the bishop, to develop and look after the different aspects of her priests’ permanent formation. Priests are not there to serve themselves but the People of God” (*Pastores dabo vobis*, 78).

Many discussions in synod listening sessions and in the assembly centered around what parish involvement currently looks like and what it can look like in the future. It is necessary for lay leaders to serve a parish in cooperation with the pastor and clergy and to offer the best of their talents in service of the church and its parishioners. The list of parish service opportunities is long, and includes serving as a catechist, a sacristan, a hospitality greeter, as one who provides funeral meals for grieving families, and many more things. I invite you to prayerfully consider whether you may be called to help in your parish in a new way going forward, whether you have been serving or have never served. There are many opportunities to bring the light of Christ to the world. As we renew our commitment to the parish, hopefully others will want to join us, and our parishes will continue to grow. Then, we will see the fruits of the synod unfold in the coming months and years.

Participation in the parish is a participation in the Diocese. Together, we will continue to grow and thrive not as a collection of active, welcoming parishes, but as one cohesive Diocese made up of many parts, all moving towards the same goal of growing closer to Christ.





RENEW YOUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY LIFE

So many people are suffering in today's world. Loneliness, mental illness, family distress, economic uncertainty, and other concerns are present wherever we turn. Yet while we may know and live sufferings here on this earth, we know the joy of the Risen Lord! It is our responsibility to be the hands and feet of Christ here on earth and to help those around us who are in need of our assistance. One clear way this is possible is through Christ-like hospitality.

Inviting others into community requires knowledge of ourselves, knowledge of the other, and knowledge of the community to which we are inviting them. Investment in our community requires efforts that pull us out of ourselves, such as extending hospitality towards others. Consider joining a parish ministry to carry out the corporal works of mercy for our neighbors in need. There are concrete ways in which we can show others the love of God.

In Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus gives us one of the most powerful teachings in all of Scripture. He tells us that at the end of time, we will be

judged not by our status, titles, or even how often we went to church, but by how we loved: “I was hungry and you gave me food... a stranger and you welcomed me... sick and you visited me.” These aren't just poetic words—they are a call to action. Jesus identifies Himself with the poor, the sick, the prisoner, and the forgotten. He says, “Whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Through the corporal works of mercy, the Church gives us seven concrete ways to live out this Gospel: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. These aren't optional—they are essential. They are how we live our faith in the real world and in our community.

But how do we do this well? The best way is to begin where we are. Look around: who in your life is carrying a heavy burden? Who needs encouragement, food, or comfort? Living the Gospel doesn't always mean going on a mission trip. Sometimes, it looks like bringing soup

to a sick neighbor, welcoming someone new at school, or praying for someone in prison. It means forming a habit of mercy—choosing to see others with the eyes of Christ and responding with love.

Jesus isn't asking for perfection. He's asking for compassion. And the beautiful truth is this: when we serve others, we meet Jesus. In their eyes, we see His face. In their needs, we hear His voice. And in loving them, we love Him.

As your shepherd, I ask that we continue to grow in our ability to listen to others and invite them into community. “Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth. Thus every layman, in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself ‘according to the measure of Christ's bestowal’” (*Lumen gentium*, 33). It is by how we conduct ourselves in the world that others are brought to know the Christ within us.





DIOCESAN RENEWAL AND WHAT REMAINS

The fruits of the synod will unfold over the remainder of this year as I continue to formulate the Post-Synodal Pastoral Plan that will be released in December of 2025. And yet, there are some things we have already begun! While the full plan will contain more in-depth logistics, timelines, and an outline of future efforts, I would like to share with you some of the things that have already begun as results of the synod:

- We have assembled an Implementation Commission of priests, deacons, and laity to assist in the work that lies ahead. Visit DallasCatholic.org/synod.

- Plans are in place to bring together many leaders within the Diocese to continue conversations about how to improve Diocesan operations for the purpose of bringing people to Christ.

There are many more things to come. Truly, we have witnessed the outpouring of grace for the efforts of the Synod in the Diocese of Dallas. We are blessed with a vibrant and engaged people, motivated by love of the Lord and love of one another, who continually strive for holiness in our actions and in our words. The work that lies ahead in continuing to renew and unite our efforts will unfold over the coming years, assisted by our sincere and humble efforts, so that we might “bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church” (*Lumen Gentium, paragraph 1*).

The movement of the Holy Spirit in our hearts will continue to animate our communities, our parishes, and our Diocese to be a leaven to the world and bring others to Christ. Renewal must begin from within. These ways outlined in

this letter are ways that we can begin to come together as a Diocesan community and grow in humble obedience to Our Lord who has offered Himself to us on the cross, died for our sins, and rose again on the third day.

I ask for your continued prayers for the Diocese, for all of God’s people, and for the continued fruitfulness of our diocesan Synod.

Blessings to you and your loved ones in this joyous Easter season.

He is Risen!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Edward J. Burns
Bishop of Dallas