



RADIATE CHRIST

THE PASTORAL LETTER STUDY GUIDE



CENTER FOR THE
NEW EVANGELIZATION



INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GUIDE

Welcome! We're glad that you have decided to study, reflect and pray with Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr's pastoral letter, Radiate Christ.

As we anticipate the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Cincinnati, we hope you will seize upon this moment in our Church's history to deepen your relationship with Jesus and to discern your own role in the renewal of the Church!

The purpose of this study guide is to foster deeper faith in the lives of people, small groups, families and parishes as they take the archbishop's words to heart and are compelled by them to make Christ more radiant in their lives.

Before beginning this study guide, read the pastoral letter in full. Then, reread each section before you begin the study guide material for that section.

Including the introductory and concluding remarks, there are seven sections in the pastoral letter, and thus, seven sections in this study guide.

Each section of this study guide will have:

- An opening prayer (2 min)
- A catechesis on that section (5 min)
- A list of reflection questions (35 min)
- A closing prayer (2 min)

Each section should take about 45 minutes to complete in a group setting.

Some possible uses for this study guide include:

- Individual study
- Small group study
- Parish staff formation, visioning or strategic planning
- Family study in the home

We hope you find both the pastoral letter and this study guide to be enriching and edifying. As we read in the Psalms, "Look to Him and be radiant!" (Psalms 34:5)

SECTION 1

MY DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

Read this section found on pages 1 and 2 of the pastoral letter.

OPENING PRAYER: PSALM 34: 2-6

*I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall be always in my mouth.
My soul will glory in the LORD; let the poor hear and be glad.
Magnify the LORD with me; and let us exalt his name together.
I sought the LORD, and he answered me, delivered me from all my fears.
Look to him and be radiant, and your faces may not blush for shame.*



INTRODUCTION

On June 3, 2020, Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr released “Radiate Christ,” a pastoral letter to Catholics of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. The occasion for this document is the anticipation of the 200th Anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Cincinnati, which we will celebrate in 2021.

TEACHING THROUGH A PASTORAL LETTER

A pastoral letter is an official teaching document sent by a bishop either to the clergy, or to all the Catholics of his diocese. This kind of letter is usually written to address a pressing issue or to commemorate an important moment in the diocese, but it can deal with any subject affecting the faith, practice or worship of the people.

A pastoral letter can also be released by groups or regions of bishops. For example, in 1984 the 10 African American bishops in the United States released a pastoral letter called “What We Have Seen and Heard” on evangelization in the black community. This was followed in 2018 with “Open Wide Our Hearts,” a pastoral letter against racism from all the bishops of the United States.

A pastoral letter is important because it is an example of the bishop teaching us with the authority that he has received from Jesus and the Apostles. It is a way for the bishop to exercise his role as shepherd, leading and guiding us.

WHAT IT MEANS TO RADIATE

Archbishop Schnurr has chosen the theme “Radiate Christ.”

The word “radiate” has several meanings that are relevant to Christians:

- It can mean “to show a particular feeling or attitude in your expression or behavior.” (*Macmillian Dictionary*) Thus, to radiate Christ means to feel as He feels and to behave as He behaves. In other words, our demeanor and attitude remind others of Jesus.
- It can mean “to send out rays, to shine brightly.” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*) In other words, we aren’t Christ in a secretive or hidden way (no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel), instead, we radiate Christ, He shines brightly in us for all the world to see.
- Finally, it can mean “to proceed in a direct line from a center.” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*) We cannot radiate Christ unless we make Him our center, so that our lives and everything we do issues forth from Jesus and His Presence in us.

According to Archbishop Schnurr, these two words “Radiate Christ” are rich in meaning and implication for the Church in western and southwestern Ohio:

“These two words summarize God the Father’s hope for humanity on this earth. The words contain both a reality and a mission: the reality of the person of Jesus Christ as the Savior of all people and the mission of each Christian to participate in the Son’s redemption of the world.” (para. 1)

Archbishop Schnurr concludes his introductory remarks by stating that if we are converted to the Lord Jesus, then we will be strengthened as an archdiocese and we will bring about a greater vitality and a stronger, more life-giving Christianity.

A TRADITIONAL THEME

Archbishop Schnurr’s focus on radiating Christ is not in isolation. Instead, he stands within a consistent tradition of popes who have taught on this theme. Pope Francis, in particular, has often used the idea of “radiating” and “radiation” in his teaching. For example:

- We are “called to radiate light and communicate life.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 83)
- “The light of faith is an incarnate light radiating from the luminous life of Jesus.” (*Lumen Fidei*, 34)



- “The saints are joyful and full of good humour. Though completely realistic, they radiate a positive and hopeful spirit.” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 122)
- “Each of us has and is a mission on this earth. We are here to witness, bless, console, raise up and radiate the beauty of Jesus.” (Homily for Mass on World Mission Sunday, Oct. 20, 2019)
- “Jesus is the radiant ‘day’ which has dawned on the horizon of humanity.” (“Urbi et Orbi” Message, Dec. 25, 2015)

Later in the pastoral letter we’ll find sidebars that present the quotation above from *Lumen Fidei*, as well as a poignant Scripture passage: “Look to Him and be radiant.” (Psalm 34:5)



OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

1. Who is Archbishop Schnurr writing this pastoral letter to?
2. What does the archbishop hope this time of reflection and examination produces for us?
3. What is the reality and the mission contained in the words “Radiate Christ”?

UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

1. Why do I think the theme of radiating Christ has been so prevalent in the writings of our recent popes?
2. Does anyone in my life radiate Christ?
3. What is it about them that makes them so radiant?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. When I think of the prospect of radiating Christ, how does that make me feel?
2. What keeps me from radiating Christ?
3. What’s one thing I can do between now and the next time we meet to radiate Christ to the people around me?

CLOSING PRAYER: ACT OF FAITH

O my God, I firmly believe that You are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became flesh, died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths that the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.

SECTION 2

SEARCHING FOR MEANING IN A WORLD WOUNDED BY SIN

Read this section found on pages 2 and 3 of the pastoral letter.

OPENING PRAYER: GOD ALONE SUFFICES

I offer you, Lord, my thoughts: to be fixed on you; my words: to have you for their theme; my actions: to reflect my love for you; my sufferings: to be endured for your greater glory.

I want to do what you ask of me: in the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it. I pray, Lord, that you enlighten my mind, inflame my will, purify my heart and sanctify my soul. O Mary, Mother of God and my Mother, pray also to Jesus for me.



INTRODUCTION

Twice in this section, Archbishop Schnurr asserts that the “world in which we live is not the world as God intended it to be.” (para. 1 and 4) This may seem like an alarming statement at first. How can the world not be as God intended it? Doesn’t everything happen according to God’s plan?

In order to understand what God intended for the world (or, what His Will is), an important distinction must be made. There is only one divine Will, but there are two ways to understand how this Will is fulfilled. Sometimes God’s Will is “Positive,” other times it is “Permissive.”

THE POSITIVE WILL

The Positive Will is at work in everything God commands, desires or directly causes. This includes:

- the act of Creation (God said, “Let there be light” and there was light)
- the universal (as in, applying to everyone for all time) instructions and commands of God in the Bible (the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, the Great Commission, etc.)
- the authoritative teachings and precepts of the Church
- the natural requirements of your state and vocation in life

All of this is a function of the Positive Will of God. The Positive Will represents what God desires for us. It’s what, in a perfect world, we would always do.



THE PERMISSIVE WILL

The Permissive Will of God is at work in everything that God allows to exist. God does not directly cause or create suffering, sin or evil. Instead, He allows these to happen either because they are a natural consequence of free will, or because He desires to bring an even greater good out of them.

God desires that we love Him, but love must be freely chosen. This means that, instead of forcing us to love Him, God gives us free will, which is the ability to choose. Every day we choose either for God or against God, and every choice against God brings evil, suffering, sin and even death into the world.

Thankfully, God does not simply tolerate the abuse of free will. Instead, He brings about a greater good. The death and resurrection of His Son are the perfect examples of this. God permitted the death of Jesus (the greatest evil) and brought from it the salvation of the world (the greatest good).

THE WORLD AS GOD INTENDED

Now that we understand how God's will works, we can appreciate what Archbishop Schnurr is saying here. When Archbishop Schnurr says that the world is not how God intended it to be, this is his way of opening our eyes to the wounded condition of the world. "We live in a world that is hurting." (para. 1) There is "unrest," "anxiety" and "turmoil." (para. 1)

This is not what God wants for us! He made us for more than that. Once we realize that the world does not satisfy and it never will, then we will finally be compelled to look elsewhere for our satisfaction.

MADE FOR MORE

According to Archbishop Schnurr, that "something more" that we all crave is *divine perfection* and *fullness of life*.

Divine perfection is when everything that makes us human is elevated so that we, while remaining human, also come to be more like God. This is what St. Peter had in mind when he wrote about becoming "partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4) God perfects us over time through His grace – making us more loving, more humble, more holy, more like Jesus – and this perfecting is completed when we join Him in heaven.

God also desires fullness of life for us. Archbishop Schnurr reminds us that fullness of life does not come from accumulating more things, nor does it mean a lack of hardship or loss in this life. (para. 2) Instead, fullness of life means:

- deriving meaning in life from a relationship with God (para. 1)
- radiating the peace and joy of Jesus (para. 2)
- tasting the goodness of heaven (para. 3)
- becoming a witness to the goodness of God and a relationship with Jesus (para. 4)

When we open ourselves to Jesus and welcome Him into our lives, we receive the divine perfection and fullness of life that our hearts desire and then, by radiating Christ, we can witness to this goodness and offer it to others.



OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

1. According to Archbishop Schnurr, does the world exist as God originally intended it?
2. Does the world satisfy?
3. Where then can we find our fulfillment?

UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

1. In my own words, what's the difference between God's Positive and Permissive Will?
2. How can Jesus be our ultimate fulfillment if, even after we receive Jesus, we still experience pain and suffering in this life?
3. How is divine perfection different from becoming a god?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Have I ever felt the joy of heaven? What gave me that joy? What was it like to feel that?
2. Am I a joyful person? Why or why not?
3. What's one thing I can do between now and when we meet again to bring more joy into my life, or to be a source of joy to others?



CLOSING PRAYER: OFFERING OF THE WILL

Lord, I come to offer You my will. I live these years when it is being forged. I want to offer it to You, so that You make it all Yours. Save it from the diseases which threaten it. By the grace of Your Spirit, make my will strong, not afraid of obstacles, persevering, not giving up because of stumbles, aiming at horizons higher and wider than my immediate needs, capable of making sacrifices to build a more vibrant future. Give me a will which is strong but not obstinate, willing to listen to voices of calm and experience, not presumptuous, but conscious of my limitations, not arrogant, choosing not to belittle those less fortunate than me, not selfish, willing to assist those in need of help.

Help me to understand that it is in doing small things that a great will is forged, in doing humble things that a noble will get its wings, in doing routine duties well that I prepare myself for heroic deeds. Be at my side, Lord, to lift me up, and push me forward, when the going gets rough, when I don't want to get up after so many falls, when I don't feel like doing anything to get myself out of the dumps. Help me say with You: "Not my will, Father, but Yours be done!" Help me conquer myself, before I am to conquer the world, and to be master of myself, before I am to lead others. Amen.

SECTION 3

1821 FORWARD: THE GROWTH OF A BELIEVING COMMUNITY

Read this section found on page 4 of the pastoral letter.

OPENING PRAYER: ACT OF HOPE

O my God, relying on Your almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Your grace and life everlasting through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.



INTRODUCTION

It's fascinating to learn about the birth of our archdiocese. When it was established in 1821, it not only spanned all the lands of Ohio and Michigan, but it also extended through much of the former Northwest Territory and beyond!

This map of the Northwest Territory gives a sense of the expansiveness of the diocese back then:



Image via Wikimedia Commons, used with permission.

It's amazing to consider that this vast terrain was under the authority of one bishop, but with so few bishops and priests, this is how most of the early dioceses in the United States were formed.



SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

In 1825, Bishop Fenwick wrote a letter in which he expressed sentiments that are still true today:

“It is consoling and marvelous to behold the daily growth of our holy Religion in this rough region. All that is needed are evangelical workers and donations.”

Evangelical workers – as in, priests, sisters, religious and lay missionaries who were willing to do the necessary work of proclaiming the Gospel. Such Catholics were vitally important back then, and they remain crucial to the future of the archdiocese almost 200 years later. As Archbishop Schnurr reminds us:

“The believing community developed and responded to the needs of the day through committed individuals who allowed Christ to transform their lives. These converted Christians formed the families, groups and larger communities that gave and continue to give dynamic life to the Church.”

In order to continue the legacy of the committed individuals that came before us, we must be “converted Christians,” as they were. But, what is a converted Christian?

THE SECOND CONVERSION OF THE BAPTIZED

According to the glossary in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, conversion is:

“A radical reorientation of the whole life away from sin and evil, and toward God. This change of heart or conversion is a central element of Christ’s preaching, of the Church’s ministry of evangelization, and of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.”

The *Catechism* also teaches us that while the call to conversion is addressed first to those who do not yet know Christ and the Gospel (CCC 1427), it is also for those who have already been baptized:

“**1428** Christ’s call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This *second conversion* is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, “clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.” This endeavor of conversion is not just human work. It is the movement of a “contrite heart,” drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first.”

By making this simple reference to “converted Christians,” Archbishop Schnurr reminds us that the work of penance, renewal and reorienting our lives toward God is never finished, and we ought to be about that work if we want to, in his words, “continue to give dynamic life to the Church.”



OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

1. In what year was the Diocese of Cincinnati established?
2. Who was the first bishop?
3. What kind of worker was needed at the beginning of our diocese, and is still needed today?

UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be a “converted Christian”?
2. Why are the works of penance, renewal and reorientation toward God never finished?
3. What are some possible causes or catalysts for this “second conversion” in the lives of Christians?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Have I ever had a conversion experience?
2. If yes, what caused me to recommit my life to Jesus? If not, why do I think that is?
3. What’s one thing I could do between now and when we meet again to make Jesus more the center of my life?

CLOSING PRAYER: THE ANIMA CHRISTI

(This prayer is traditionally said after receiving Communion.)

*Soul of Christ, sanctify me;
Body of Christ, save me;
Blood of Christ, inebriate me;
Water from the side of Christ, wash me;
Passion of Christ, strengthen me;
O good Jesus hear me;
Within your wounds hide me;
separated from you, let me never be;
From the evil one protect me;
At the hour of my death, call me;
And close to you bid me; That with your saints,
I may be praising you forever and ever.
Amen.*



SECTION 4

WHERE DO WE EXPERIENCE GOD AND THE CHURCH?

Read this section found on page 4 of the pastoral letter.

OPENING PRAYER: ACT OF LOVE

O my God, I love you above all things, with my whole heart and soul because You are all good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of You. I forgive all who have injured me, and ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.



INTRODUCTION

In Section 2, we read that a relationship with Jesus brings divine perfection and fullness of life. We receive foretastes of these treasures now, in this life, as we grow closer to Jesus and receive His grace. We will receive them finally and completely in heaven.

We also learned that we must have this relationship in order to be witnesses to Christ and to radiate Christ. As we engage in the work of being the “converted Christians” mentioned in Section 3, which is really a life-long project, we are able to radiate Christ even more resplendently.

In Section 4 now, we find another reason why we must unite ourselves to Christ:

“As individuals we strive to know and be transformed by Jesus Christ so we can follow Him back to union with the Father,” so we can “return to the God who created us out of love.” (para. 1)

“We,” as in *all of us*, need to make this return. But why?

THE EFFECTS OF ORIGINAL SIN

Adam and Eve were created in perfect blessedness and communion with God, but once they committed the original sin, they lost their standing before God. They were no longer in right relationship with Him.

This divorce between God and man was dramatically displayed by their expulsion from the Garden, which was the place of relationship. Every human being after Adam and Eve comes into existence “outside of the Garden,” outside of relationship and communion with God. God still loves us and is with us, but our relationship with Him must be restored. After all, no one gets into heaven who has a broken relationship with God.

SOURCE OF COMMUNION

The Father sent the Son to become man so He could bridge the gap between God and man. We need someone who, with perfect obedience, could pay the price for all sins. Jesus did that with His death on the Cross and His resurrection. Jesus is the ultimate source of our communion.

When we radiate Christ and make Him present, we also become a source of communion for the people in our lives. As Archbishop Schnurr says:

“We cannot return to the God who created us out of love without the help and support of other Christians. This is why God gives us the Church. Our individual faith is strengthened when it is shared, and we find the courage to make the sacrifices of fidelity when others guide and inspire us.” (para. 1)

This should cause us to take a hard look at the various communities in which we find ourselves. Is my family a place where the members follow each other back to union with the Father? Is my circle of friends a place where the members radiate Christ and are committed to one another’s salvation? Is my work such a place? My classroom? My parish?

If not, why not?

THE RADIATION CONTAGION

What stands in our favor is the fact that when we radiate Christ, this radiation is contagious. It spreads in a joyful way, like laughter or random acts of kindness.

As the light of Christ is shared, it becomes more luminous, until the entire world is thrust from its darkness into the radiant light of Jesus Christ:

“When the individual members of these smaller groups radiate Christ to each other, the group takes on its own divine radiance. These small groups can then transform the larger structures they are part of: parishes, neighborhoods, schools and workplaces. When these larger communities radiate Christ, then the Church makes Christ present to the world.” (para. 2)

It’s common to look at the change that is needed in the world and wonder, “I’m just one person, what can I do?” Archbishop Schnurr is telling us what we can do: radiate Christ wherever we are, then watch the light of Christ spread to those around you.



OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

1. Do we enter into the world in righteous or unrighteous standing before God?
2. Who did the Father send to bridge the gap between God and man?

UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

1. Why do I think we need other people in order to return to God?
2. What does it mean to be “Church”?
3. What does a parish that radiates Christ look like?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Does my parish radiate Christ? Why or why not?
2. What’s one thing my parish can do to be more radiant?
3. God places people in our lives so that we can build each other up, but sometimes we tear each other down. Who is one person in my life that I need to say, “I’m sorry” to? Can I commit to making that apology?



CLOSING PRAYER: DIVINE PRAISES

Blessed be God.
Blessed be His Holy Name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.
Blessed be the Name of Jesus.
Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.
Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most Holy.
Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her Glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the Name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints.

SECTION 5

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Read this section found on page 5 of the pastoral letter.

OPENING PRAYER: COME HOLY SPIRIT

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.



INTRODUCTION

When the Diocese of Cincinnati was first created, Bishop Fenwick estimated that there were 6,000 Catholics within its vast boundaries. Today, there are close to 440,000 Catholics in an archdiocese that covers most of western and southwestern Ohio.

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati is currently home to 211 parishes, 107 Catholic elementary and high schools, eight Catholic hospitals, eight special centers for social services, and seven homes for the aged. In terms of enrollment, our Catholic school system is the fifth largest in the country. A significant institutional structure has been built over these 200 years to meet the growing needs of the archdiocese.

As Archbishop Schnurr indicates, it's now time to shift our focus:

“Upkeep, renovation and renewal will always be necessary, but the main impetus of physically building church infrastructure is behind us. ... [T]his charges us with a great responsibility, to shift our focus towards our families, our smaller faith groups and, even more importantly, to our individual relationships with Jesus Christ.” (para. 2)

We can use the occasion of this pastoral letter's publication to place a stronger priority on:

- families
- small faith groups
- individual relationships with Jesus



PRIORITIZING FAMILIES

There are few building blocks of society more important than the family. Everything really begins there. It is within the family that we first encounter God. After all, parents represent God to their children. If parents are heavy-handed and unmerciful, then children will see God as heavy-handed and unmerciful. If parents are loving, patient and forgiving, they will see God in that way.

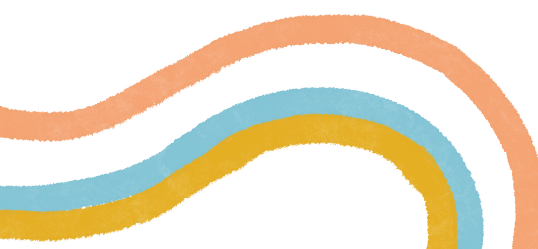
The family is also the context in which we learn how to interact with our peers and with adults. It's where we learn how to cooperate and forgive. It's where we learn how to share, grieve and pray. It's where we learn our faith and how to love.

Despite its special significance, the family is in danger in our modern culture. Divorce, contraception, pornography, abuse, poverty, addiction, racism and many other societal ills all threaten the integrity of the family and its flourishing. No amount of excellent programming or dynamic teaching will bear fruit if it is taken back to the rocky soil of a family who is not in relationship with Jesus.

The possible approaches to strengthening the family are as varied and numerous as the families themselves. We can begin by asking the right questions:

- What can we do in our parishes to prioritize families? Let's measure the success of our activities, programs, and other parish initiatives through this lens: Does it include and strengthen families?
- How can we help parents be the primary educators of their children? Are we giving parents the tools, skills and resources they need to teach the faith with courage in their homes?
- Are we focused on strengthening the personal relationship that each parent and child has with Jesus? Does every point of interaction with a family include a component where the Gospel is proclaimed, and the Good News of what we believe is celebrated?
- Are we giving our families opportunities to learn, grow and have fun together?
- Do we have family-friendly sacramental celebrations? Is our culture one that welcomes the family, that makes them feel valued and appreciated?

These questions and many more could be used to start an important conversation in our small groups, in our parishes and in our personal prayer lives about the steps we can take to strengthen our families.



OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

1. How many Catholics are in the archdiocese today?
2. Is Archbishop Schnurr encouraging us to focus on building new institutional structures or on nurturing small faith groups and relationships?
3. What did Archbishop Schnurr say is the mission of Jesus and His Church?

UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

1. Why do I think Archbishop Schnurr is shifting our focus towards families, smaller faith groups, and individual relationships with Jesus Christ?
2. How or in what way is the family negatively impacted by each of the societal ills listed in this study guide (divorce, contraception, pornography, abandonment, abuse, poverty, addiction and racism)?
3. How is the family the fundamental building block of society?

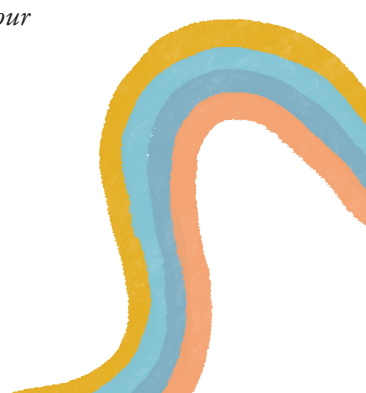
APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What's one thing I could do between now and when we meet again to make Jesus more the center of my family?
2. The study guide lists several questions about the family in an attempt to get parishes "asking the right questions." Spend some time with those questions.
3. Take those questions to the Parish Council and start the conversation on how to make my parish more family-focused.



CLOSING PRAYER: PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS BY ARCHBISHOP DENNIS M. SCHNURR

*Almighty Father, You have created us for some definite purpose.
Grant us the grace to know the path You have planned for us in this life
and to respond with a generous "Yes."
Make our archdiocese, parishes, homes and hearts fruitful ground for Your gift of vocations.
May our young people respond to Your call with courage and zeal.
Stir among our men a desire and the strength to be good and holy priests.
Bless us with consecrated religious and those called to a chaste single life, permanent deacons, and
faithful husbands and wives, who are a sign of Christ's love for His Church.
We commend our prayer for vocations to You, Father, through the intercession of Mary our
Mother, in the Holy Spirit, through Christ our Lord. Amen.*



SECTION 6

CONSIDERING OUR CONTRIBUTION

Read this section found on page 6 of the pastoral letter.

OPENING PRAYER: PRAYER FOR RENEWED STRENGTH

O Lord, my God, Please give me the grace to maintain my hope in you through all of life's changes and to taste and see your goodness. I praise You for the gifts You have showered on me for so many years. Help me find joy in a renewed strength of spirit. Please bless me with good health, and inspire me to be a good example to others. For you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.



INTRODUCTION

In this section, Archbishop Schnurr affirms every member of the Church and their importance to the future of the faith in western and southwestern Ohio:

“None of us is superfluous, disposable, or unimportant. God has given each of us something specific to contribute.” (para. 1)

Or, as St. Paul tells us in his first letter to the Corinthians:

“If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” (1 Cor. 12:15-21)

WE ALL HAVE A ROLE

We all have a role to play in the building up of the Church, and we all have gifts that God has given us to fulfill that role. This role is so specific to us that it will not be achieved by anyone else but us – that’s how important we are.

Do we help each other discern what our role is? This affirmation of the integral contribution of *every member* of the Body of Christ is also a call to make our families and parishes places

where we can discover our gifts, use our gifts, and be valued for how God has uniquely blessed us.

Parents can make their families such a place by observing and nurturing their children's gifts. Parishes can do this by offering opportunities for participants to discern their gifts, and by encouraging people to use their gifts to courageously radiate Christ.



DISCERNING OUR ROLE

Archbishop Schnurr concludes this section with 12 questions to help us discern our role in the Church and the strength of our relationship with Jesus. In place of the usual questions, spend some time with the following 12 questions:

1. Am I open to the encounter? Do I believe that Christ wants a relationship with me?
2. Do I give space and time in my life for this encounter to take place?
3. Are there periods of silence in my day so that I can draw closer to God?
4. Do I believe that God has a unique plan for my life and that He wants to help me accomplish that?
5. Is my life nourished and sustained by the sacraments?
6. Is the celebration and reception of the Eucharist the center of my spiritual life?
7. Do I foster my relationship with Christ through prayer?
8. Does my relationship with Christ direct my decisions and actions?
9. In moments of difficulty, do I remember that God is suffering with me and wants to support me?
10. Am I eager to experience the goodness that Christ has in store for me?
11. Is there something I am afraid of losing if I grow closer to Christ?
12. Will I allow Christ to transform me? Will I radiate Christ so that others can know His goodness and love?



**CLOSING PRAYER: PRAYER TO BE DISCIPLES AND MISSIONARIES
BY POPE FRANCIS**

Hail Mary. . .

Lord you left your Mother in our midst that she might accompany us.

May she take care of us and protect us on our journey, in our hearts, in our faith.

May she make us disciples like herself, missionaries like herself.

May she teach us to go out onto the streets.

May she teach us to step outside ourselves.

May she, by her meekness, by her peace, show us the way. Amen.



SECTION 7

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Read this section found on page 8 of the pastoral letter.

OPENING PRAYER: PHILIPPIANS 3:8-11

More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith to know him and the power of his resurrection and [the] sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

INTRODUCTION

The final section of this pastoral letter begins with a simple greeting, “My brothers and sisters.” (para. 1) The Archbishop is our Shepherd and our Father, but this greeting reminds us that he also stands with us and alongside us in this quest to radiate Christ, to renew the Church and to enter into the fullest communion with the Father.

Archbishop Schnurr is also filled with great hope and an expectant faith: “Christ wants to do so much through us.” (para. 1)

Before he prays with us, Archbishop Schnurr lists the purposes for this pastoral letter:

- It is a petition that we each seek to know Jesus Christ.
- It is an invitation to discover the joy in following Him.
- It is a word of encouragement when the road of discipleship becomes difficult.
- It is a proclamation of the beauty of being a joyful witness by radiating Christ.

These purposes will be fulfilled when we take seriously the words and invitations of this letter, and when we allow this letter to inform how we renew our families, friendships and personal relationships with Jesus – or, in Archbishop Schnurr’s words, our “archdiocese, parishes, homes and hearts.” (para. 3)



ENTRUSTING OURSELVES TO MARY

Archbishop Schnurr concludes with a beautiful prayer to our Blessed Mother. Let's consider each line of this prayer:

Mary, Mother of the Church and Our Mother,

- Jesus made Mary the mother of the Church when, in His last moments on the Cross, He entrusted her into the care of the Apostle John (see John 19:26-27). As an Apostle, John represents the Church and therefore all of us – and so, Mary becomes our mother.
- John affirms Mary's role in the Book of Revelation when he writes that the offspring of the woman [Mary] are "those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus." (Revelation 12:17) That's us!

Present our prayer of thanksgiving to your Son.

- As the mother of the King, Mary is the Queen and, as in all Davidic Kingdoms, she sits enthroned at the right hand of the King.
- This means she is in a unique position to bring our needs and our prayers to Jesus.

Beg from Him the graces we need to be faithful disciples who follow Him with enthusiasm and joy.

- What we're asking Mary to do here is nothing more than what the servants asked Mary to do at the Wedding Feast at Cana: reveal to Jesus our neediness and ask Him to relieve it (see John 2:1-5).
- We need "more wine," Lord, more of the grace that only You can give us.

May our witness to the love of God bear fruit in our archdiocese, parishes, homes and hearts.

- Witnessing to the love of God is what "radiating Christ" is all about. We pray that we will be the witnesses we need to see in the Church, and we pray that this witness will bear great fruit wherever we find ourselves.
- By praying for this fruitfulness, instead of simply expecting it to be so, we witness to our belief that, in the final analysis, conversions are not because of us – they are because of Christ working in us.
- This witness will not be fruitful unless it springs forth from an intimate communion with Jesus and a robust prayer life.

Teach us to be God's joyful witnesses, to radiate Christ in all we do, so that all people might know, love, and follow your Son through this life and into the next.

- Mary is the perfect one to teach us this.
- She is a joyful witness: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (Luke 1:46-47)
- She literally radiates Christ: "And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." (Revelation 12:1)

- Her only desire is that we might know, love and follow her Son: “Do whatever He tells you” (John 2:5)

Amen.

- We conclude this prayer as we conclude every prayer, with a hearty “Amen!”
- This familiar word has a Semitic origin. It means “to be trustworthy, confirm, support.” It is an expression of agreement with what came before it.
- It can even be seen as a stamp of approval, as a testimony to anyone who hears it, “What we just said here is true!”
- And so, we end as we began: with our witness, with radiating Christ.



OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

1. What greeting does Archbishop Schnurr use to begin this final section?
2. Who do we pray to at the end of this Letter?
3. What does the word “Amen” mean?

UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

1. What does Christ want to do through us?
2. In what ways has he blessed our archdiocese?
3. How does Mary show her motherly care for us?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Do I have a close relationship with Mary? What could I do in the next week to strengthen that relationship?
2. Do I feel hopeful for the future of the Catholic Church in Ohio? Why?
3. What do I need more of from the Lord? Spend some time in prayer with Jesus, bringing that need to Him.



CLOSING PRAYER

Mary, Mother of the Church and our Mother, present our prayer of thanksgiving to your Son. Beg from Him the graces we need to be faithful disciples who follow Him with enthusiasm and joy. May our witness to the love of God bear fruit in our archdiocese, parishes, homes and hearts. Teach us to be God’s joyful witnesses, to radiate Christ in all we do, so that all people might know, love and follow your Son through this life and into the next. Amen.



— ARCHDIOCESE OF —
CINCINNATI