



Pastoral Letter

**YOU TOO GO INTO
THE
VINEYARD**

Bishop William Murphy

"You Too Go Into the Vineyard"



A PARABLE OF JESUS FOR US ALL

In 1988 Pope John Paul II wrote a very moving letter on the lay members of Christ's faithful people. He wished to underscore the importance of the vocation of the laity to be witnesses to Jesus Christ and to bring His message into the world. The title He used is found in Matthew's gospel, chapter 20, in which the Lord Jesus talks about a vineyard owner who is looking for people to go out and work in his vineyard. He needs as many as possible for him to produce the grapes that will make good wine. He goes out early in the morning. He discovers that there are people there standing idle and he invites them to go to work and he promises to pay them *what is just*. Several times later in the day, he does the same thing: anyone he finds he invites to go into the vineyard and work there to become productive with the others, cooperating with the master of the vineyard to make his vineyard bear much fruit. Even at the very last hour he finds people and sends them into the vineyard. You know what happens when it comes time for the vineyard master to pay them. He began with the last and gave that last group the full day's wage. Those who were waiting to get their wage and had worked longer naturally thought that they would get more money. However, they did not. He gave them all the same wage, a full day's wage, even though they may have worked only for a short while. Most of us, seeing that, would say that this just isn't fair. He should pay more to those who did more work. But, the point of the parable is that the Master of the vineyard, who is the Lord himself, is generous. Like the workers of the vineyard we have been invited to take part in the life of the Church and in the work the Church is sent into the world to do. No matter when we respond to the Master's invitation, the Lord is going to be generous and give abundantly to each and every one of us.

There is a great lesson and an even greater invitation in this parable for you and for me. You and I know that we are the People of God. He loves us and has blessed us with so many good gifts. Baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have the awesome dignity of being His sons and daughters, true brothers and sisters of His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ! He respects our freedom and calls us "to recognize our dignity", showing our gratitude by living as He calls us to live. Of course this includes our worship of God which is a solemn obligation of every human being. We Catholics come joyfully to Sunday Mass because our worship of God is true Eucharist, an act of thanksgiving where we hear God's Word, we proclaim the mighty deeds of salvation by Jesus Christ and are nourished by His body and blood.

But, as we all know, the Sunday Eucharist is not the beginning and end of our living the life of faith. We have to live it outside of Church in our daily lives. The closing words at Mass, *Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life*, are very real and meant to be accepted and acted on every day of our lives.

In Blessed John Paul II's letter, there is a deep connection between the parable of the Master sending workers into his vineyard and the sending forth of us all from Mass to live our lives as disciples in the worlds that make up our lives! The Holy Father wanted to underscore the fact that we have all been called to work in the vineyard. The Master is always ready to send us whenever we respond. Generous to a fault, God deeply desires to give us a bounteous reward through Jesus Christ in the Church in which we are all equal participants.

A WONDERFUL TRUTH I ASK YOU TO PONDER

In this pastoral letter, I would like you to keep this parable in your minds and hearts as we reflect on our life as Church. The Master of the vineyard calls us. He knows our strengths and our weaknesses. But He wants us not only to believe and celebrate our faith as we do in Sunday Eucharist. He wants us to share in the work of making His love known to others. The parable is a wake-up call to us. It is also a word of reassurance that He will be ever generous to us no matter when we respond to His invitation.

Every parable takes us off guard. This one does as well! I am not asking that you give up the notion of justice and injustice in terms of the wage. I am asking that we consider how in God's love those human notions of justice and injustice don't match up to His generosity and so, in a certain sense, are inadequate and even get thrown out the window when we encounter God's superabundant generous love for us. That is what we experience in the Church. You and I know that. We know it in our own lives and in our families. We know that as we look at history. History witnesses to the truth that the People of God, the Church, have always been the recipients of God's love. He forgives us our faults. Time and again He invites us to share His life. Time and again He rewards us with gifts that we cannot deserve or merit of ourselves.

What a great message this is! It is a message that tells us that God's love is so bountiful and yet His respect for us and our freedom is so deep. Thus He wants us freely to come into the vineyard and to use our time, our talent, and our treasure and to help as many as possible share in the life and the gifts that come from being part of the Master's household. From this perspective, it is not a matter of human justice any more, who gets what for how much work. The Master of the vineyard, Jesus, our Savior and brother, always goes beyond human justice and always is more generous to us than we can ever dream or imagine.

For me it is easy to say that the vineyard is the Church. Long ago, I felt called by the vineyard Master "to go into the vineyard" to be a priest. I have never regretted it. Just sharing in the life of the Church is a joy beyond any other measure. Being

a priest and bishop gives me immense fulfillment! As your pastor and brother, I want you too to experience the same joy by engaging with me and my brother priests in the most awesome and beautiful way of living that I can think of. Today, I want to invite you to consider once again how you might go into the vineyard. I am praying that here in our beloved Diocese of Rockville Centre more and more of you, the lay faithful, may join with my brother priests and me in helping to bring the fruits of God's life and love to one another and to all those who long to know and who long to have a share in the wine of God's love, even if they have never experienced it.

Just think for a moment what Blessed John Paul II and Blessed Teresa of Calcutta showed us in their very lives. Even in sickness, Blessed John Paul never ceased to show the world, and especially young people, the way to follow Christ, without fear, confident in God's love that embraces the world. Mother Teresa began by taking the sick and dying poor off the streets of Calcutta and never stopped caring for the poor, the forgotten, the outcasts with a love that mirrored God's love for us. To proclaim Jesus Christ is the best message we can give others because it is the only message that embraces everyone and saves everyone. Witnessing to Him like those two saints expands the very real treasures of good deeds that attract young and old to this great message of love and life.



BELONG MORE DEEPLY

By this pastoral letter, I am building upon my last letter to you, *Belong More Deeply*. I am inviting you to belong more deeply to Jesus, to His Church and to one another as they did. I am inviting you to accept God's call to go into the vineyard and to reach out to others with a specific invitation for them to come and know Jesus Christ. Yes, it is time for us to invite others to come and experience His life and love just as you and I have experienced it. I want all of us to be instruments to help others share what we share.

In *Belong More Deeply*, I spoke of two groups. The context was Christmas and the two groups I spoke of were the shepherds who came joyfully in response to the angels' voices and found the Lord, worshipped and adored Him, and placed their lives at the feet of Mary and her Divine Son. The others were the Magi who were wise men from a distant country who saw the star and were fascinated by that star and wanted to follow it to see if they could discover in their wisdom what it is that God's message would be for them. They came, they adored the Lord, they gave Him their gifts, and then they went back by a different way. No doubt they were touched by the Lord and were changed for the good even by that brief encounter.

There are so many of our brothers and sisters like them. For some brief or extended period of time Christ entered their life. But they did not find Him someone whom they wished to come to time and time again. These are good people. Many were baptized, others not. These are good men and women who are still searching, perhaps without even knowing it. They may be men and women of faith. They may be men and women who have troubles with faith. But they are good in their commitment to truth and to honesty. They are good in their desire to know God but, for some reason or for many reasons, they have come close to Him but the experience was not sufficient to keep them close to Christ and His Church. Consciously or not, they are still searching for something more. So, for one reason or another, these good persons may already belong to Christ or not. They may for awhile have worshiped Him with us or just fallen away from the practice. They may feel close to Christ or they may have some reason to be afraid of Him or feel threatened by Him or us in His Church. They may believe in Him or find it difficult to do so. They deserve to have a helping hand. We can do that so long as we do so sincerely and without any coercion, with respect for their freedom, integrity and dignity. But I am convinced that, like the young Augustine, they are still searching. I believe Augustine is right when he wrote, *Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee, O God.*

It is up to the shepherds then, you and I, to look out for and help those wise men and women find Jesus Christ again. All of us can do this, each in his or her own way according to our own talents and temperaments. But first, each and every one of us must ourselves seek to belong more deeply to Christ, to His Church, and to one another. Then we must be ready to meet these men and women where they are. Many have simply slipped away from the faith. I know of a family that never intended to stop going to Church. But kids and soccer and family gatherings and little time together sort of pushed Sunday Mass out of the picture. You may know people like that. Some find themselves just too tired. Others don't feel motivated enough. Some are quite angry about sins and failures of the Church which we in the Church must acknowledge and confess and seek never to commit again. Chief among them is the abuse of children and minors. But it isn't hard to list many others as well.

While *Belong More Deeply* did not mention all those specifically, they are parts of the today's reality. We, shepherds, need to be deeply aware of all the various influences that can be present in the lives of those we hope will discover Jesus and His Church through our prayer and our witness.

That is the challenge before us if we are to be the new evangelizers the recent popes have called us to be. Having been formed into a deeper and deeper union with one another at the Sunday Eucharist, we now are ready to respond to the challenge. Trusting in God and all He has given us, we must seek to do our best to help others re-discover Christ and His Church through us. Like shepherds rejoicing in the birth of Jesus and His life we share at Sunday Mass we become evangelizers to bring that joy of knowing Christ and celebrating the Eucharist out to the world. We can do this with great confidence because we know Him and we are nourished weekly by His Word and His sacrament. With great respect and the love that mirrors Christ's love for us we can offer to show those wise men and women who are searching that He is the answer to their longings because He is the answer to the yearnings of every human heart.



TIME FOR THE NEXT STEP

There were two challenges that were addressed in that pastoral letter back in 2010. First we were getting ready for the new translation of the Roman Missal. All of you faithful laity, priests and deacons did that. It was not always easy. But all of us took advantage of the instructions, workshops and the “pew cards” and we did it very well. You are to be congratulated. You made that transition with great spirit and with a great sense of sharing the life which is ours in this community of communion which is the Church. I am convinced that this has brought a new awareness of the liturgical prayer of the Church and a new openness to be transformed by the spirituality of the liturgy.

Now we are ready for the second challenge of that letter. We are now called to become evangelizers. An *evangelizer* is someone who lives their faith and wants others to discover the joy we share in living as disciples of Christ in his Church. This means that when we celebrate the Eucharist, we do not leave our faith at the door of the church. We must do more than just be grateful that Christ dwells in our hearts. We must share the great gift and the good news about it with others so that they can discover Christ for their lives and in their lives. Filled with the love of God, the Holy Spirit, we become His witnesses. Now we must be examples to others and help those whom Christ is calling to belong more deeply, to encounter Him in and through the life of the Church. That is a life of faith, hope and love, a life blessed by the sacraments, and especially the Eucharist which is the source and summit of who we are as Church. In the words of St. James, the first apostle martyr, “we must be doers of the word and not just hearers”.



DOERS OF THE WORD

“Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord” is one of the dismissals we hear at the end of Mass. Responding to that, we affirm that what we have shared at Mass in word and sacrament we will carry with us into the world. We cannot be Sunday Catholics and Monday pagans or virtuous Catholics at home but act the opposite out in our daily world. We share a commitment, each in his or her own way, to bring Christ to the world. We are His evangelizers who see the world as the vineyard of the Lord and willingly and with great confidence, not in ourselves but in Christ, are ready to take part in helping make that vineyard ever more fruitful.

Some of you may balk at being called “evangelizers”. Who wants to push people into the Church? Who wants to interfere in other people’s lives? Why should I have to reach out to someone who probably wants to be left alone? Besides, isn’t that what bishops and priests are supposed to do? These can be many of the thoughts and reactions that come into your minds and hearts as you are reading this. I am sure you can add a few of your own. I understand that totally and I know that such reactions come from good people like yourselves who are yourselves holy and humble, good Catholics, but do not want to be showoffs, do not want to be the ones to put their noses into other peoples business or try to tell other people how to live their lives. You have a very good point.

BUT - I would like you to think a little more deeply and realize how often it is that you give a helping hand to a neighbor or that you forgive someone who may have hurt you or when you stand up for what is right and true or when you do not cut corners in your business or when you speak the truth in love or when you do things the right way or when you show your children by word and example the way they should live. All these are “qualifiers” to do what I am asking you to do! All these are moments, whether you use the word evangelizer or not, when you are evangelizing. You are **doing the Word of God! In a certain sense you are already doing what I am talking about. You already are living according to the teaching of Jesus. You, however, can go further by helping others discover how beautiful and freeing, how awesome and fulfilling it can be to know Christ Jesus in His Church. Through you they can come to know Him and deepen the bonds of life, love and hope that will respect their dignity and give new meaning to their lives! As “shepherds” you can reach out and invite wise men and women to come back to Bethlehem, back to the stable, back to Jesus and His mother, Mary! **Your lives are the proof it is worth it. Your example says more than words. The joy we share as members of Christ is the best argument we have. The message is simple but wonderful: Come with us to Sunday Eucharist. Re-discover Him Who is waiting for you. See if His words don’t help you. See if His love doesn’t touch you.****

In his wonderful letter, *Evangelii nuntiandi* of 1975, Pope Paul VI wrote about evangelization and the need for evangelizers for the world in which we live. He spoke of them as witnesses. He said we witness not just by words but by the authenticity of our lives. People are more convinced by what they see than what they might hear. When people can see us living the life of Jesus Christ, then they know first that it can be lived and second, that it is worth living. And is that not worth a bit of commitment and effort on our part?

Remember we are not doing this alone. We are emissaries of the Lord bringing people to Him, not ourselves. We never do it in a way that is insensitive or in any way tries to force and badger someone. We do not accost people in the streets or disturb them in their homes. On the contrary. We always have great respect for every human being, for their dignity, as the son and daughter of God, as Christ’s brothers and sisters of Jesus. We respect their freedom, their dignity, their integrity and their points of view. We have to take people where they are at. With words and deeds and with kindness and with sincerity of life and love, we invite them to discover what we have discovered.

In this process, the Church not only evangelizes, but the Church becomes herself evangelized. Pope Paul in that beautiful letter that I just mentioned explains all this in an extraordinarily sensitive way. This is where the *New Evangelization* gets its start. Inspired by the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul opened up a new way of witnessing for the Church and you and me! Blessed John Paul II then proposed that we all embrace the *new evangelization* as our way to follow Christ. Now, by calling for the Year of Faith beginning this October, Pope Benedict XVI is urging us to help others to belong more deeply by re-affirming the faith we share. He tells us and wants us to tell others that *the door of faith is always open to us!* You, my friends, can be the ones to show the open door to so many others who need your help and who will respond to the goodness that you show from your heart and in your lives.

If you believe in your heart and profess with your lips that Jesus is the Lord, you are already an evangelizer. Our Diocese of Rockville Centre is full of people like you. I know because I have been meeting you and talking with you for more than ten years now. You are God's chosen ones. You live your faith, love your faith, and pass it on to your children. You are the best advertisement that God has of His love sent forth into the world. You are the best bearers of Jesus' message of salvation. I know that is true because I know you. And much more importantly, the Lord knows you. He is the one calling us to evangelize our brothers and sisters so that they can know what we know and live what we live.

We are the body of Christ and each one of us has a part to play. As your bishop I have a distinct role and responsibility for our local Church. As St. Augustine said so famously "for you I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian". My brother priests, you share in the ministerial priesthood with me. Together we are the one presbyterate that serves the People of God by bringing Christ to them and bringing them to Christ. Bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated women and men have specific roles and responsibilities. They are meant to serve the Church and help lead, order and inspire the whole Church to become the witness in the secular world about us.

Above all, then my dear lay brothers and sisters, our roles are meant to support, help and encourage you. You are the ones who go into the vineyard of the secular world. By your lives are others given the example of Christian living. By your words and example do they learn of God's love and see that Christ is alive in Christian hearts. You, the lay faithful, are the evangelizers in your communities, in your place of business, where you go to school, where you relax, and all the different places that make up your life. We all have heard and most of us have used the words "we are the Church". And we are. No one group in the Church can say by itself, "we are the Church". Only united as one body of Christ does the particular Church exist. The Diocese of Rockville Centre is the Church composed of us all without exception and without exclusion of any one of us!

And that is not all! We are the Church always joined in union with Mary and the angels and the saints who surround us when we offer the Sunday liturgy. As the prefaces of Sunday Mass constantly proclaim: *with angels and archangels and thrones and dominations as together we say holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts*. We, bishops, priests and deacons, offer you our service. The consecrated women and men are ready to help you realize the full implications of life in Christ in this world for the next. **You are the ones whose lives truly change the world.** And you are the ones whom I invite now to be the world changers, to be heart changers, to be life changers, for all those wise men and women who are searching for Christ. They need you. They must be helped to come into regular contact with Christ and to the greatest gift He has left us, the gift of the Eucharist, which we celebrate every Sunday.

You know how often that I have mentioned to you the wonderful story of the Scytillan martyrs in North Africa in 180. Their words should be ours: *Without the Sunday Eucharist, we cannot live!* When we say that and live it, we give witness that the Sunday Eucharist is the source and summit of our lives. It is what makes us who we are, gives us our identity, brings us closer to Christ, and allows you and me to live the life that He wants us to live. Now it is time for us to invite others to share what we already have.



INTO THE VINEYARD!

We have all the resources we need. We have the Word of God, the Bible. We have the teachings of the Church through all of the two thousand years in which the Spirit of God has guided the Pope and bishops in Council and solemn teaching. I have already mentioned these resources of the past fifty years. They are all ours! All of them belong to us as the records, the signposts, the indications, the filling out of the information, knowledge and wisdom for us to become who we are called to be and to invite others to be one with us!

We are called to be one with God and with one another as Church. What we have most importantly is the love of the one God who lives as a community of three persons: the Father who sent His Son to save the world: the Son Who became flesh so that He might share our lives and by His death and resurrection free us and give us a share in divine life: the Holy Spirit who is the bond of love divine. We have Mary and the saints. We have the Church and the sacraments. We have God's Word and the Eucharist. We have the documents of the Church and, now for these past twenty years, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. We have one another, and we are all one in Christ Jesus. No wonder Pope Leo the Great could exclaim, *Christians, recognize your dignity*. So, let's get started!

In doing God's work with Him our strength comes from the sacramental life of the Church and the Eucharist. Our minds and hearts are shaped by His word. We now place our gifts at the service of others because Jesus Christ placed His life at the service of all humankind.

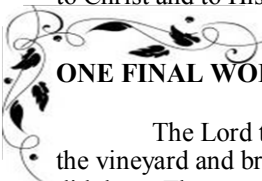
Thus we come to this wonderful opportunity which is going to be brought forth to us in a very concrete way through the invitation that I now make to you at the beginning of this *Year of Faith*. Here is what is going to happen.

The *Year of Faith* was called for by Pope Benedict XVI to begin the weekend of October 13th and 14th, fifty years after the opening of the Second Vatican Council, twenty years after the publication of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. On that weekend of October 13th and 14th in our parishes we pastors are going to invite you to begin the year by praying personally and specifically for a person or persons whom you would like to belong more deeply to the Church. It may be a member of your family. It may be someone who you are close to. It may be someone with whom you have lost contact. It may be someone about whom you worry. It

may be someone whom you have loved from a distance. It may be someone whom you know needs help. We are asking you to write only the first name of those for whom you are going to pray in a special way, on a card that will be provided. All those names will be placed together in a designated area in the church. From that day on a petition for those persons is to be included in the Sunday general intercessions, not only that week, but in the subsequent weeks.

Depending upon what works best in your parish, on the first or second Sunday of Advent, whichever Sunday your pastor designates, those who will be prayed for are to be invited to Mass and to an experience of hospitality of the parish's choosing. It may be the 9:00, the 10:00, the 11:00, it may be the Saturday evening vigil Mass. A specific invitation will be offered by you to those persons for whom you have been praying. That invitation is not intended to single out or draw attention to those being prayed for or who have accepted the invitation. Rather, this is an opportunity for us as a parish to welcome any and all who join us so that they too may share in the richness of the vineyard. In this way we wish to give everyone an opportunity to experience once again the beauty of the Sunday liturgy and the joy of knowing Christ Jesus in the community of communion which is His Church. There is no better place to do that than in your parish, with your pastor, priests, deacons, parish staff, friends and neighbors, all one in Christ's family.

To help us to prepare for this, we will be having parish pastoral staff study days. There will be three of them for the parish staff. They will be an opportunity for all of the parish staff to meet our new auxiliary bishop, Bishop Nelson Pérez, who was in charge of the Catholic Institute for Evangelization in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia before he came to us. There will also be the opportunity for support staff and for pastoral council study. They in turn will be able to help us all as we seek to belong more deeply to Christ and to His Church.



ONE FINAL WORD

The Lord told his disciples that the harvest was plentiful but the laborers few. He asked them to pray for laborers to go into the vineyard and bring in a good harvest. What He asked His first disciples, He asks us today. The invitation comes to us now as it did then. The opportunity is at least as great now as it was then. With confidence in Him, we can go into the vineyard. With prayer and with the strength we have as Church we can make a difference for the good. Now is the time.

In his letter *Porta Fidei*, Pope Benedict reminds us that "this is a time of spiritual grace the Lord offers us in recalling the precious gift of faith". We want to profess that faith in all its fullness. We want to celebrate our faith, especially in the liturgy. We want to share our faith in such a way that others will want to share in what we know gives us hearts that are filled with love and lives that are filled with meaning. We do not do it alone. We do it with Him Who is *the Way, the Truth and the Life*. We do it with Him Who has said, *I am the Good Shepherd*. We do it with Jesus Who taught us that He and the Father are one. We do it with Him Who gave up His life as a ransom for many and Who proclaims, *behold, I am with you always, even until the end of the world*.

+ William Murphy
Bishop of Rockville Centre
September 3, 2012
Feast of St. Gregory the Great



The Diocese of Rockville Centre began a new evangelizing initiative in 2010 – 2011 entitled **Belong More Deeply**. Bishop William Murphy initiated this event with a Pastoral Letter, "Belong More Deeply". A series of events were held to introduce the Revised Roman Missal and to encourage more active participation in Sunday Mass. This second pastoral letter "You Too Go Into the Vineyard" inaugurates the second phase of **Belong More Deeply** as the Diocese joins the Church Universal in the Year of the Faith.



Additional Copies are available at www.drvc.org and www.drvc-faith.org



Diocese of Rockville Centre
PO Box 9023
Rockville Centre, NY 11571-9023
www.drvc.org

ADDITIONAL COPIES ARE AVAILABLE AT
WWW.DRVC.ORG AND WWW.DRVC-FAITH.ORG