

Thematic Framework of the 2021-2024 USCCB Strategic Plan



Created Anew
by the Body and Blood of Christ,
Source of Our Healing and Hope



Thematic Framework of the 2021–2024 USCCB Strategic Plan

The Gospel of Christ and the teachings of his Church guide the work of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The work of the Conference is rooted in three general mission goals and organized into three key areas of responsibility: (1) to act collaboratively and consistently on vital issues confronting the Church and society; (2) to foster communion with the Church in other nations, within the Church universal, under the leadership of its supreme pastor, the Bishop of Rome; and (3) to offer appropriate assistance to each bishop in fulfilling his particular ministry in the local Church. This report is a window into the 2021-2024 USCCB Strategic Plan and an invitation to join the work of the Church at the national level in the United States.

Developing a comprehensive strategic plan for an organization that works on and addresses such a wide breadth of issues is a significant undertaking. The 2021-2024 USCCB Strategic Plan includes more than 235 objectives and 869 individual activities, each one comprehensive and complex in their own right. The work is carried out by approximately 45 committees, subcommittees and departments at the USCCB. The strategic plan invites more than 1,800 partners—individuals and organizations—from within the Conference and the broader community of faith into a collaboration that serves the common good.

Through active participation of the bishops, USCCB staff and volunteer consultants, the development process for the strategic plan takes two full years. In the case of the 2021-2024 plan, it began in November 2018 with

the provision of inputs by bishops on the 2021-24 USCCB Strategic Priorities. These inputs were used to draft Strategic Priorities, which were provisionally approved by the full body of bishops at the June 2019 General Meeting and then fully approved at the November 2019 General Meeting. This was followed by the drafting of operational plans by the USCCB committees, subcommittees and departments that began in July 2019 and was originally completed in January 2020. Operational plans were submitted with the intention of the presentation of the final version before the body of bishops for their approval in November 2020 at their November plenary.

The theme chosen for the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, “Created Anew by the Body and Blood of Christ: Source of Our Healing and Hope” emerged as the result of listening sessions with bishops, the National Advisory Council, and groups of priests, religious, and lay people. The groups were asked to reflect on the challenges and opportunities facing the Church in the four years ahead. The most commonly heard and heavily discussed issues among the groups naturally formed the overarching theme of the strategic plan that will guide the USCCB for the next four years.

In March 2020, shortly after the operational plans were submitted for approval, the world was abruptly faced with a major disruption due to the widespread outbreak of the novel coronavirus, which the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic on March 11. Within a matter of weeks, every aspect of life was impacted as daily routines

were forcibly disrupted in order to curb exposure to the virus and limit its spread. In the United States, local and state “stay-at-home” ordinances forced employers to deploy telework plans, schools switched to online instruction, retail and service-oriented businesses were closed or reduced to a minimal scale, and sporting and cultural events were cancelled to prevent large gatherings of people. In all too many cases, employers faced the difficult task of having to furlough or lay off staff.

Severe limitations on gatherings impacted houses of worship and non-profit operations. Parishes were closed. The public celebration of Mass was suspended. The availability of the sacraments to the faithful was severely limited. In dioceses across the country, the financial impact of church closures had an immediate and detrimental impact on parish ministries, schools, and diocesan operations as offertory collections were halted and parishioners faced abrupt income reductions or sudden job loss.

As the duration of the suspension of regular activity was unclear, the Committee on Priorities and Plans (CPP) considered how the USCCB would incorporate this new reality into the proximate strategic plan, as submitting and implementing a plan with no mention of COVID-19 would neither represent the will of the bishops nor fulfill the mission of the Conference. It was clear that an emergent priority was keeping the Church spiritually close in a time of physical distance. In late March, the CPP chairman formed a COVID-19 Impact Working Group that would develop a strategic priority and accompanying emphasis areas on the pandemic to allow for the amendments of operational plans.

The CPP working group met on April 15, 2020 and developed a new “Pandemic Recovery” strategic priority and agreed to allow for adjustments to the strategic plan. The Conference’s Executive Committee expressed full support, and USCCB Committees reviewed their operational plans in light of the new strategic priority and emphasis areas to determine if there were additions or revisions that were appropriate.

As Committees worked on exploring the need for revisions to their plans, the May 25 death of George Floyd spurred national and international uproar. The incident sparked protests nationwide against excessive use of police force, and the subject of racism was brought to the forefront with calls for deeper reflection and meaningful, lasting social reform. This was another cataclysmic series of events that would call for the Church to stand in solidarity with all those peacefully seeking racial justice.

The revisions made to the strategic plan in June 2020, therefore, include both these global events that have rapidly reshaped the world in which the Church must continue to proclaim the Gospel message.

The five strategic priorities identified by the bishops and each of the specific emphasis areas that will guide the bulk of the Conference’s work are defined as follows:

- Evangelization: Form a band of joyful missionary disciples.
- Life and Dignity of the Human Person: Serve the common good as a leaven in a free society.
- Protect and Heal God’s Children: Restore integrity, foster virtue.

- Vocations: Equip all Christ's disciples for mission.
- Pandemic Recovery: Promote the healing of the personal, spiritual, and societal wounds of COVID-19 through the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician.

While each of the initiatives and activities in the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan have components that bridge multiple strategic priorities and emphasis areas, the select highlights below are meant to give a sampling of the wide-encompassing work of the Conference.

Five Strategic Priorities

Evangelization

Form a band of joyful missionary disciples.



Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Serve the common good as a leaven in a free society.

Protect and Heal God's Children

Restore integrity, foster virtue.



Vocations

Equip all Christ's disciples for mission.



Pandemic Recovery

Promote the healing of the personal, spiritual, and societal wounds of COVID-19 through the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician.

Evangelization: Form a band of joyful missionary disciples.

As Christians, we are called to bring the Gospel message of Christ to the world through word and action. Every day, the Catholic Church in the United States lives out this call to evangelize at the local level in communities across the country through her parish ministries, education, health care, and social services. The USCCB's initiatives, activities, and advocacy through its committees, subcommittees and offices uphold the strategic priority of evangelization, with special emphasis on the following areas:

- Evangelize a culture in need of hope, especially the religiously unaffiliated.
- Invite and empower youth/young adults to become missionary disciples.
- Foster an evangelizing focus in catechesis and Catholic schools.
- Communicate more effectively how the faith transforms lives.
- Offer our society an account for the hope that is within us.
- Acknowledge and welcome the gifts and talents that the Hispanic community brings to Christ's Church.

The following highlights are a sampling of the Conference's work in these emphasis areas.

Supporting a Culturally Diverse Faith Body of Youth and Young Adults

As the demographic makeup of the Church in the United States has changed, parish

membership has shifted to reflect a more culturally diverse body of faith. In order to help ministers and educators

in their outreach to youth and young adults, the Committee for Cultural Diversity in the Church will continue to work with the Youth and Young Adult Ministry office within the Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth in the production of intercultural materials about *Christus Vivit*, the post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis released after the 2018 Synod of Bishops on young people, faith and vocational discernment. With this exhortation, along with (1) the insight and information gathered as part of the V Encuentro process with Hispanic-Latino young people (2017-2019) and (2) the National Dialogue collaborative initiative with youth and young adult ministries (2017-2020), the Church has been challenged to think anew of its work with young people as synodal, pastoral, popular, and missionary/vocational through a methodology of discernment and accompaniment with a non-judgmental, compassionate, and hopeful spirit.

Pastors, pastoral leaders, families, and engaged youth and young adults are called to be "protagonists" in the Church and in society—with an impact of transforming parish and diocesan efforts to reach and accompany young people. This new national framework would draw together experts to work with the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth with a process of communication and dissemination following up from World Youth Day 2022 and the following 2-3 years in order to create this guiding vision for our Church.



Strengthening Missionary Discipleship of Asian and Pacific Island Catholics

A national encounter for Asian and Pacific Island Catholics and those who minister among them will aim to strengthen missionary discipleship and unity amidst diversity in the U.S. Catholic Church. This gathering will be through the collaboration with multiple offices within the Conference, bishops, national ministry networks, Asian and Pacific Island organizations, national, diocesan and parish leaders, and representatives of Catholic organizations who serve Asian and Pacific Islanders to welcome and integrate the faithful of this community to live a faith-filled life in the Catholic Church.

As a follow-up to the V Encuentro process, the Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs will review the operational plans and activities of the USCCB contained in the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan and develop a thorough statement and pastoral plan for Hispanic ministry, so the Church in the United States may strengthen and enhance this ministry over the next ten to fifteen years. A working document will be created first and reviewed by the Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs with the intention of having the statement and pastoral plan used during the *Raíces y Alas* Congress in September 2021.

National Day of Prayer to Celebrate Native American Culture and Gifts

The Subcommittee for Native American Affairs is working on the development of a National Day of Prayer to be observed on the Feast of Saint Juan Diego. The intention is to make Catholic Native American Ministry more visible and have an opportunity to

celebrate the blending of the Catholic faith and Native American culture and its gifts in enriching the spirituality of the first peoples of the Americas. Saint Juan Diego was chosen because of his closeness to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas.

National Eucharistic Congress

The Committee for Evangelization and Catechesis is coordinating the effort to explore, plan and execute a National Eucharistic Congress. Declining Mass attendance, the lack of understanding of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and increasing religious disaffiliation are major challenges facing the Church today. The committee has recognized that the return to the Eucharist as the “source and summit” of who we are and what we do as Catholics is key to revitalization. Such a renewal would require work at every level of Church: the parish, the diocese, the region, and the nation—to reevaluate all of her activities from the celebration of the Mass and the preaching of a homily to its ministries, social programs, evangelization of the unaffiliated, and advocacy in the public square. The framework for developing programs and resources will follow the three great transcendentals to provide formation in these crucial areas: Catechesis and Apologetics (Truth); Devotion and Worship (Beauty); Conversion and Mission (Goodness). By first focusing on best practices for parish-based renewal around the Eucharist and then sharing recommendations for diocesan and/or regional Eucharistic conferences, these diocesan and regional initiatives could then lead to a national event in 2024 to inspire participants to return to their parishes and dioceses with a renewed Eucharistic focus as they proclaim the Gospel through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

African National Eucharistic Congress

The African National Eucharistic Congress (ANEC) is a gathering of African Catholics in the United States every five years to celebrate their Catholic faith and strengthen their response to be missionary disciples. The Committee for Cultural Diversity in the Church will collaborate with other USCCB committees to support the next ANEC, planned for 2021, to explore best practices and to find ways to respond to the growing pastoral needs of African Catholics, such as (1) strengthening their faith, marriages, and family life, (2) nurturing their vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and lay ministry, and (3) supporting the parish communities that welcome them.

World Youth Day

More than one million youth and young adults from around the globe will converge on Lisbon in summer 2022 for the next international World Youth Day (WYD), convened by the Holy Father. Leading up to this moment of encounter, the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth will coordinate the United States' participation. This massive undertaking will include the development of resources and tools for the pilgrim experience through catechetical, spiritual, and practical preparation leading up to WYD, as well as continued evangelization and vocational

movement towards youth and young adults' calling as missionary disciples, transforming their churches, their local communities, and society at large by concrete actions.

Assisting the Church in Central and Eastern Europe

Following decades of communist oppression and persecution, the National Collection to Aid the Church in Central and Eastern Europe was established to help the Church in Eastern Europe rebuild their churches from physical infrastructures to renewed pastoral and organizational capacity. In collaboration with the Diocesan Fiscal Management Conference (DFMC), Villanova Church Management Program, and select local dioceses, the Subcommittee for Aid to the Church in Central and Eastern Europe has been able to provide a rich experience of exchange for diocesan financial managers from nine out of twenty-eight countries it serves through the annual national collection. The experiences have covered management and pastoral topics such as diocesan finances, stewardship, Catholic universities, and special ministries such as post-abortion counseling. Participants are able to return to their home countries inspired by the best practices demonstrated in the U.S. and seek creative solutions to their local challenges.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person: Serve the common good as a leaven in a free society.

From conception to natural death, the Church teaches that the sanctity of human life must be upheld with special concern for the vulnerable: the unborn, the elderly, the sick, and those with disabilities; the poor; migrants and refugees; and those who are marginalized or persecuted. As a key theme of his pontificate, Pope Francis continuously reminds us to minister to those in the peripheries, and through the strategic priority of upholding the life and dignity of the human person, the bishops are placing special emphasis on the following areas:

- Work to heal the scourge of hatred based on race and/or religion.
- Protect and defend the dignity of migrants and refugees, of the poor and those on the peripheries.
- Defend the right to life for all people especially the unborn, elderly, sick, dying and persons with disabilities; and fight the advance of abortion, infanticide, assisted suicide, euthanasia, and the death penalty.
- Defend and secure religious liberty and freedom of association.
- Foster reverence for God's creation, our common home.
- Articulate a convincing anthropology of the human person, male and female, as proclaimed by faith and affirmed by science and right reason.

The following highlights are a sampling of the Conference's work in these emphasis areas.



National Catholic Anti-Racism Gathering

The Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism had the framework and plans underway for a national gathering of Catholic lay leadership and clergy in [Date/Location] with the goal of educating, raising awareness, and having a forum for authentic and transformational conversion of heart and mind while building a capacity for understanding. The gathering has a renewed sense of importance and urgency with the killing of George Floyd that re-awakened the national conscience on the issue of racism in America. The incident sparked protests against the excessive use of police force, but it also fueled intense, renewed calls for meaningful and lasting social reform. The Church will have an important role to play to ensure America's long journey toward freedom and justice for all is finally completed. The national gathering [which has been adjusted to take place as a virtual event in the wake of the pandemic] will seek to engage campus ministers and administrators, as well as catechists and teachers in Catholic K-12 schools on the Church's history regarding race. There is an additional educational track designed for seminarians and priests on how and when to preach homilies on racism.

Reconciliation and Atonement

The ethnic and demographic shift of the Church in the United States has also meant that in some instances, communities no longer reflect an original parish's predominant community. A reconciliation and atonement initiative by the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism focuses on helping the Church and its members navigate communal healing caused

by racial disparities. There will be liturgical, theological, and pastoral resources for communities and parishes created as a part of this reconciliation and atonement project.

50th Anniversary of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development

Since its founding a half-century ago, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) has strengthened social justice efforts in communities and has touched and empowered the lives of low-income individuals across the country. The campaign's 50th anniversary provides an opportunity for reflection on the founding and the history of the campaign, its ongoing work, achievements, and its future. The gathering was initially planned as an in-person celebration from May 12-14, 2021 in Chicago, but it has been changed to a virtual event to gather in solidarity and look back on the Campaign's founding, its history, and the challenges it has faced. In addition to celebrating CCHD's achievements, it will also be an important time to look forward and shape the future of the Campaign. A key component of the gathering will be listening to the voices of people who live on the margins of our society: people from diverse communities with different lived experiences. Living out the call of Pope Francis for the Church to minister to those "on the peripheries," this gathering will seek to connect, learn, and find new ways to work for social justice and promote human dignity in our communities.

Human Trafficking

Asians are among the vulnerable and at-risk population of migrants, refugees, displaced persons, and those who are trafficked. Through a collaborative effort among USCCB offices such as Migration and Refugee Services, and Justice, Peace and Human Development, as well as with Catholic service

providers and Asian Pacific organizations around the country, an effort is underway to raise awareness, provide educational and outreach activities, and engage the Asian community in grassroots advocacy for the protection of life and dignity in their communities.

Pastoral Visit with Migrant Farmworkers

Each year, a pastoral visit is made to migrant workers in different areas of the country to see and to hear the reality faced by those who work in the U.S. agricultural fields and industries. The visit allows the members of the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers to express the U.S. bishops' care and concern for them and articulate the moral concern of the Church in the United States regarding immigration to better seek avenues toward addressing the challenges and difficulties confronting immigrants. Through continued engagement with the migrant workers—listening to their needs and advocating for dignified working and living conditions—the Church is able to strengthen its solidarity with immigrants and understand the needs of the migrant farm workers, as well as recommend best practices and identify priorities, pastoral care and advocacy.

Parental Choice in Education

Parental choice in education allows families to have access to state or federally funded scholarships to attend the school that best meets the needs of their child. As of 2020, there is only one federal education choice program (limited to residents of Washington, DC), and there are fifty-five programs in twenty-six states (plus Puerto Rico) at the state/local level. The Church teaches that "parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools" (*Gravissimum educationis*), but also that choice is not sufficient

if recourses are not made available. Therefore, the Committee on Catholic Education has prioritized expanding parental choice at the state and federal level. This initiative will be enhanced through parental outreach, building awareness within the Catholic community, advocacy and ensuring the public policy around these types of programs uphold Catholic schools' autonomy to teach and hire according to their mission, protecting religious liberties and upholding Church teachings.

Educating on Christian Anthropology

A convincing and authentic Christian anthropology lies at the heart of understanding the Church's teaching on issues surrounding sexuality, gender, and racism. It is vital that Catholic schools become more intentional about it, which will necessitate ongoing teacher and administrator formation. The Committee on Catholic Education—working with other USCCB standing committees (Evangelization and Catechesis; Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth; Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations; Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism)—seeks to support school leaders by creating and compiling resources that would include webinars and workshops aimed at deepening the understanding of Christian anthropology.

Protecting Religious Freedom

In recent times, there have been several attempts to curb the religious liberty of Catholic institutions. For Catholic schools, whether in response to legislative actions or judicial decisions, school leaders and parents need resources about the issue and tools for advocacy. The Committee on Catholic Education—in collaboration with the Committee for Religious Liberty and the offices for General Counsel and Government

Relations—is developing resources and tools for educating diocesan superintendents and school administrators, as well as parents and the faithful in the pews, as well as developing outreach efforts that support ongoing vigilance and policy advocacy to uphold and protect what has been called our “First Freedom.”

Walking with Moms in Need

Pope Francis reminds us that our parishes need to be “islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference.” Pregnant and parenting moms in need are in our parishes and our neighborhoods, and everyone in the parish community should know where to refer a pregnant woman for lifesaving support. The 25th anniversary year of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (The Gospel of Life) gives us an opportunity to assess, expand, and communicate resources to pregnant moms and families in need. In the ongoing effort to uphold the dignity of human life through both word and action, the Committee for Pro-Life Activities is inviting parishes, through the support of their bishop, to join a nationwide effort entitled: “Walking with Moms in Need: A Year of Service.” Initially envisioned for March 25, 2020 to March 25, 2021, many dioceses have been using alternative launch dates due to COVID-19. The committee has developed educational, pastoral, and action-oriented resources for parish use, such as tools to document an inventory of local resources for pregnant mothers in need; ideas for improving parish responses; prayers for building a culture of life and a civilization of love; reflections on the teachings of *Evangelium vitae*, *Evangelii gaudium*, and *Laudato si'*. The hope is that this Year of Service will kick off a multi-year effort at the local, diocesan and national levels, to better reach and assist pregnant women in need.

Protect and Heal God’s Children: Restore integrity, foster virtue.

The Catholic Church has confronted the scandal of sexual abuse. The U.S. bishops have expressed their commitment to helping survivors find healing and hope, and dioceses across the country have worked to put policies and programs in place to protect young people and to create safe environments in parishes, schools and other Church ministries. As the issue of leadership and bishop accountability began to take center stage, Pope Francis convened the heads of bishops’ conferences from around the world for a summit on the protection of minors in the Church and he issued his *motu proprio*, *Vos estis lux mundi* (“You Are the Light of the World”), which set new rules and procedures to ensure that the world’s bishops and religious superiors would be held accountable for allegations made against them for either committing abuse or mishandling abuse claims. As part of the ongoing commitment to restoring the trust of the faithful and working toward the goal of ending the scourge of child sexual abuse—not only in the Church but in the wider society—protecting and healing God’s children is a strategic priority for the U.S. bishops, with special emphasis on the following areas:

- Create and maintain safe environments through sound policies and procedures.
- Extend and ensure effective collaboration with the laity.
- Cultivate an ever-deepening spirituality of chastity and virtue.
- Nurture courageous and transparent reflection and leadership.
- Accompany survivors and embrace their witness.

The following highlights are a sampling of the Conference’s work in these emphasis areas.



Abuse Prevention and Safe Environment Training

In its ongoing efforts to end child sexual abuse—and out of concern for the protection of all of God’s children—the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church will be facilitating a dialogue between the Office of Child and Youth Protection, diocesan safe environment directors, and the leaders of particular Catholic ethnic and cultural groups. The purpose of this dialogue is to discern culturally appropriate ways to conduct child protection and safe environment trainings and enlist community leaders in abuse prevention and identification, as well as encourage reporting of abuse and promote the healing of abuse survivors. As part of this effort, existing services and resources will be identified, and there will be an effort made to encourage the sharing of these resources and know-how between the dioceses so that healing of victims and abuse prevention can better reach all linguistic and cultural communities.

Sharing best practices and encouraging ongoing dialogue on child and youth protection

Though *Vos estis lux mundi*, the Holy Father set new rules and procedures to ensure that the world’s bishops and religious superiors

would be held accountable for allegations made against them for either committing abuse or mishandling abuse claims. As part of the U.S. bishops' ongoing commitment to end the scourge of child sexual abuse, ongoing dialogue and the sharing of lessons learned and best practices is paramount. The Committee on Protection of Children and Young People will attend or host an international child and youth protection conference. Providing resources to English-speaking episcopal conferences and exchanging ideas and sharing best practices in the area of child and youth protection benefits all.

Continuing education and awareness for clergy

Recognizing that ongoing education, awareness, training, and vigilance is necessary in the area of child and youth protection, the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations will consult and collaborate with the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People to provide practical resources for the initial and ongoing formation of priests and deacons related to the protection of children and youth.

Vocations: Equip all Christ's disciples for mission.

Encouraging, supporting, and educating on the Church's teachings and its pastoral needs with regard to vocations is a vital part of the work of the bishops. Each person is called to fully live out their vocation, whether it is to the priesthood, diaconate, or consecrated life, or through marriage and family life, as well as single life. As part of the ongoing work of the Church to foster and embrace one's vocation, equipping all of Christ's disciples for mission is a key priority for the bishops with special emphasis in the following areas:

- Foster lifelong discernment and formation to fulfill one's God-given vocation.
- Prepare for and sustain the living out of marriage and family life.
- Create a culture that nurtures Consecrated Life and Holy Orders.
- Encourage the laity in their mission to evangelize society.

The following highlights are a sampling of the Conference's work in these emphasis areas.

Fostering Vocations in the African American Community

The Subcommittee for African American Affairs will be focused on increasing forming clergy, lay leaders, and solid allies in the African American community for the evangelization of African American Catholics and for promotion of vocations. Part of this initiative would be to research, examine and synthesize both best practices and deterrents to promoting vocations within the Black Catholic community and to provide helpful information to the bishops, seminary rectors, vocations directors, diocesan staff, Catholic educators,

national organizations with a vocations mission, and youth and young adults to enhance their ministries.



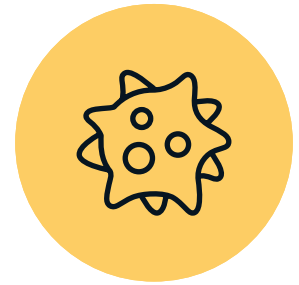
Promoting and Strengthening Marriage and the Family

Each year, National Marriage Week (February 7-14) and World Marriage Sunday (second Sunday of February) provide the opportunity to focus on building a culture of life and love that begins with supporting, promoting and upholding marriage and the family. The Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (LMFLY) chooses a theme each year and provides tools for diocesan ministry leaders and clergy to encourage participation in dioceses and parishes, such as virtual retreats for couples, preaching resources for clergy, and a bulletin insert in English and Spanish. A social media kit is also provided to dioceses and parishes to use with their own media channels.

World Meeting of Families

The World Meeting of Families (WMOF) started by St. John Paul II is an international gathering of families held every three years. To encourage more families to participate from the United States, the LMFLY staff are planning to pilot a comprehensive project to assist families and groups with resources for pilgrimage planning. These resources will include prayer and reflection guides, handbooks for travel safety and other useful information, as well as materials to assist diocesan and parish leaders in their efforts to coordinate local events around the WMOF with the hopes that more families will be able to access the riches and blessings of this international gathering.

Pandemic Recovery: Promote the healing of the personal, spiritual, and societal wounds of COVID-19 through the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician.



The world in which the Church proclaims the Gospel has changed with the COVID-19 pandemic, and once the recovery process begins, additional changes will be needed to adjust to a new reality. The impact of the pandemic touches upon every aspect of our lives. Stay-at-home orders and limits on gatherings have meant that even operational aspects of the Church's ministry need to be re-evaluated. With no guarantee that 2020 will see the end of this pandemic, thoughts turn to what Church ministry will look like in the long-term and what adjustments may be needed. With that in mind, one of the key priorities for the bishops focuses on pandemic recovery with special emphasis in the following areas:

- Foster the efforts of dioceses and parishes to recover from the destructive power of COVID-19 upon the body, mind, and soul especially among the poor.
- Identify new measures and assist in existing efforts to be prepared to minister effectively in the face of the next potential pandemic or existential threat.
- Invite the faithful to share in the triumph of the Cross over all destructive forces by encountering the Lord Jesus in Holy Mass and being renewed in the healing power of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The following highlights are a sampling of the Conference's work in these emphasis areas.

Equipping the Church to minister during a pandemic and in a post-pandemic world

The Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (CCLV) will collaborate with organizations dedicated to ongoing clergy formation to incorporate into the annual theme—particularly at annual conferences—the support of those in the clerical state, focusing on the Eucharist and on recovery after the pandemic. Additionally, CCLV will host a meeting with experts in the field of ongoing formation to discuss drafting the second edition of the *Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*, taking into account new circumstances revealed in the life of priests by the stresses of the novel coronavirus. In doing so, CCLV hopes to identify new measures and assist in existing efforts to prepare clergy to minister effectively in the face of the next potential pandemic or existential threat. Additionally, in a unified effort to continue its ministry and evangelization efforts during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs will continue to dialogue with different Christian denominations to share best practices for ministry and evangelization. The Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (LMFLY) will be enhancing its marriage and family ministry efforts, as well as supporting its lay ecclesial ministers in light of the circumstances and stresses caused by ongoing economic, mental, emotional, and spiritual impacts.

Pandemic recovery and disproportionately impacted communities

The Committee for Cultural Diversity in the Church will facilitate consultation on particular issues and participation in various collaborative projects with an emphasis on (1) supporting pandemic recovery efforts, especially among the communities that have been disproportionately impacted, as well as (2) preparedness to minister in the face of future threats.

Catholic education during a global pandemic

The financial impact of the closure of churches has had an immediate and detrimental impact on the parish schools, as weekly offertory collections were halted and some parishioners faced abrupt income reductions or sudden job loss. The Committee on Catholic Education has continued its advocacy efforts through the state Catholic conferences in support of legislative and regulatory initiatives that impact Catholic schools, including school choice and funding, emergency financial aid for families, governmental aid to assist financially challenged schools, and the health and safety of students, teachers and staff related to the pandemic. As plans are made to re-open schools amidst uncertainty with the ongoing spread of the virus, the Committee is working on resources to prepare diocesan education leadership on health and safety measures in Catholic schools.

The Church's works continue

The Church's works of social justice, evangelization, education, and national and local institutional development must continue, despite a global pandemic. In order to effectively carry out our mission as Catholics, we need to combine resources in order to support the Church and those in need. The novel coronavirus knows no bounds, and the COVID-19 pandemic hit each and every community. The weekly offertory was not available with the parish closures, and parishes that did not have electronic giving options (or parishioners who usually give electronically) found themselves in an especially difficult position. Across the board, there were faithful parishioners who lost their jobs or saw drastic income loss as a result of the pandemic that made it difficult to continue financially contributing to their parish. The Committee on National Collections has been working with the dioceses to promote options to assist with financial recovery, including e-giving platforms. One specific example of the way that the Committee is preparing for pandemic recovery efforts is the adjustments made by the Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions to include the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) as an acceptable use of the grants.

Created Anew by the Body and Blood of Christ: Source of Our Healing and Hope

Throughout these pages, you can uncover the architectural plan for the Holy Father's beloved field hospital in the United States. They show how the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops will help bind the wounds—physical and spiritual—that are so present in society today. Bringing the real presence of Christ to those hungering for God's healing mercy is our commitment to every soul in need of hope. These pages are an invitation to Catholics, Christians and people of good will to join the saving work of serving our sisters and brothers. As Pope Francis has said, "If we act as one people, even in the face of other epidemics that threaten us, we can make a real impact."

This strategic framework was written by more than 300 bishops, 1,800 collaborators, and more than three dozen committees, subcommittees, ad hoc committees, secretariats, and offices of the Conference. The work reveals the Holy Spirit animating more than 230 objectives and nearly 900 activities—all for the purpose of building the Kingdom of God.

During his extraordinary *Urbi et Orbi* message at the height of the global pandemic, Pope

Francis spoke to God for us all, "You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing. It is not the time of your judgment, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not."

This has been the task of writing and updating our strategic plan during these times. We set about this work guided by the wisdom of St. Luke found in chapter 14 of his Gospel.

Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, "This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish."

Now, with our preparations done, let us go forth and renew our sacred commitment to bring the hope of our resurrected Lord to the world.

The Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio,
Chairman
Committee on Priorities and Plans



Created Anew
by the Body and Blood of Christ,
Source of Our Healing and Hope