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"I shall reflect on myself and ask: 'What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I do for Christ?'" -St. Stanislaus

NEWSTAN

18 76

The Newsletter of St. Stanislaus Parish El Boletín de la Parroquia de San Estanislao

Winter -Spring 2025

An Invitation from Archbishop Pérez

Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez released a pastoral letter on January 6, 2025, outlining his hopes for the Church of Philadelphia over the coming years. At the core of this letter is a call to a pastoral change of heart, a conversion to the lifestyle and mindset of a missionary disciple. The letter also shares with us the Archbishop's vision for the future of the Church of Philadelphia and an invitation to all Catholics to be a part of the conversation about what that will look like. He is asking for your help in being a part of the process. For your convenience we are re-printing the letter in this issue of NewStan. However, we highly recommend you visit https://trustandhope.org where you will not only find the letter but a video and other resources including info sessions that will be held all around the Archdiocese including one at Lansdale Catholic High School on Thursday, May 22. We will also have local information sessions here at St. Stanislaus Parish so be sure to keep an eye on the bulletin and the Parish website where they will be shared as soon as they are scheduled!

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace be with you on this feast of St. John Neumann, the Fourth Bishop of Philadelphia! I am writing to you because I need your help. Please join me for a conversation about our future. Your voices and presence are essential as we navigate our way forward together as the Church of Philadelphia.

Thank you.

I am deeply grateful for all of you. One of my greatest joys as Archbishop comes from the interactions I have with you as I travel around the Archdiocese. Coming to know you personally and to see how you serve our community is awesome!

Your resilience is a testament to God's work in our lives. The Church of Philadelphia has experienced more than two decades of crisis; everyone has suffered here in one way or another. When I received the call to come home to Philly as Archbishop five years ago, the biggest priority on my heart was to help our Church move from crisis to hope. That remains my top priority, but I cannot do it alone. I need your help.

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An Invitation from Archbishop Pérez

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Our hope rests in the Lord, in whom we trust. God relentlessly pursues all of us, His beloved children. As your brother, I yearn for a deeper encounter with Him. As your Archbishop, I want you to know that God continues to reach out to encounter you. He loves you. You have a home in the Church. The light is on, and the door is open. In Pope Francis's own words:

"I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting Him encounter them...No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since 'no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord'...Whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that He is already there, waiting for us with open arms." (Joy of the Gospel 3)

We need everyone in our lives and across our local Church to know this. Where do we start?

Where are We Today?

To get anywhere, you need to know where you are starting from. We are living in times more like the earliest Christians—times when many are living without Christ. Many Catholics have drifted away or been driven away from the practice of the faith, creating a challenging landscape.

Connected more than ever by technology, people, especially the young, experience an epidemic of loneliness, anxiety, and despair. We have faced crises that have tested our faith and diminished our numbers. Yet, even amidst this suffering, hope persists.

Our hope is in the Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who is always calling us home. Our current task is to carry that hope to those who feel distant from the Church—those who may have slipped away or feel pushed away, angered and impacted by the abuse scandals, and those still seeking connection.

Today, 83% of our fellow baptized Catholics don't come to church. That fact needs to make us uncomfortable. We need to have urgency around this.

A Pastoral Change of Heart

When determining how to respond to such a pressing need, discussion in dioceses around the world typically starts with 'pastoral planning.' This term usually describes a process that starts with the question, "Where can the Church no longer afford to be due to finances or the number of priests?" We know the answer to this question often leads to parish closures. In Philadelphia, the answer to this question has resulted in numerous closures in places like North Philadelphia, West Philadelphia, and Chester.

I do not want to perpetuate this cycle. I want to embark on a new form of pastoral planning by asking a new question, "Where does the Church need to be and how?" We need to inspire a pastoral change of heart that focuses on those who are absent and that aligns our collective efforts across parishes, schools, and charitable ministries to listen, rebuild trust, and invite people home.

This change of heart starts with me, and it requires your help. As I have been out and about during these past five years, I've heard stories of interactions with the Archdiocese that have caused a strained and deteriorating relationship. These stories are from your friends, coworkers, neighbors, parents, or your children, and grandchildren. We can do better. I can do better.

I want to begin to close this distance between many of our loved ones and the Church. I want people to know that the Lord is still calling them, that they are of great worth, have a divine purpose, and an eternal home.

The Church describes a person that goes forth encountering people in this way as a "Missionary Disciple." While that language may feel foreign, I encourage you to embrace it. When you boil it down as Pope Francis states in Joy of the Gospel it becomes clear it is something we all naturally strive to be:

"The Church which 'goes forth' is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and there fore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast" (Joy of the Gospel 24)

Many times, you may be the only person in a loved one's life who can reach them when they are feeling lost or disconnected. Your encounters can mark the beginning of their return. This is our shared mission: to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ's love, mercy, and resurrection to a world that desperately needs it.

We must be a community of Missionary Disciples focused on renewal, rebuilding trust, and inviting people to a relationship with Jesus Christ!

Where Does the Church Need to be?

Historically, Philadelphia has taken an on/off approach to parish life—with parishes either open or closed. When I became Archbishop, the second question at my introductory press conference was, "Will you close parishes?" My answer then, and now, is the same: I didn't come here to close parishes; I came here to build up the Church of Philadelphia.

Pope Francis encourages us to think of parishes as flexible entities that can adapt to the surrounding world:

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"The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community (<u>loy of the Gospel</u> 28).

Not all parishes need to be the same. They should be 'flexible centers for ongoing missionary outreach.' A pastor and his community are responsible for the wellbeing of all souls in the parish, not just those who attend Mass or parish events. Too often, we think of our parish only as those who enter the church doors.

Many parishes that experienced decline in past decades are now flourishing with different communities or cultures filling the pews. In other places, small communities of faith have persevered amid challenging circumstances and have been a beacon of hope for their communities.

However, I am not naïve about the number of parishes we have and how we are spreading our priests thin. While I want to avoid widespread parish closures, we will inevitably face some changes and closures over time. My hope is that, through flexibility and an open heart, we can work creatively to meet the needs of our parishes and create more time for the Holy Spirit to inspire them.

How does the Church need to be?

To build up the Church, we must form our people to be Missionary Disciples. Pastoral planning focusing solely on changing our current parish footprint will not cultivate that culture. We need to try something new. The goal of this initiative is a pastoral change of heart over the next twenty years. It begins today by planting seeds and tending the garden as the fruits of our efforts begin to grow.

Over the next decade, I want to establish "Missionary Hubs" across the entire Archdiocese, aiming for at least ten per county, planted at parishes and other locations. The goal is to reach out to Catholics who don't participate and non-Catholics, using our resources and talents to ignite a spirit of Missionary Discipleship. This will create a supportive network of missionary life across the whole Archdiocese, animating our communities everywhere, especially in underserved areas.

We need to plan for these Missionary Hubs in a spirit of synodal discernment and collaboration. I want communities and leaders to express interest in having a Missionary Hub planted at their parish. The seeds planted today will be the evangelical fruit of tomorrow.

These Missionary Hubs will fulfill several roles.

They will turn the Church outward, focusing on those not currently engaged in the life of the Church and working to reconnect them. Community provides a connection point that many crave in today's world.

- They will connect various Catholic ministries within a community—high schools, elementary schools, Catholic Human Services, religious communities, and parishes ensuring that we work together and maximize the use of our resources where they will have the most impact.
- ❖ They will work to bring people to Jesus—through the Eucharist and through service to the poor. Some of our brothers and sisters may not be ready to return to Mass immediately but could encounter Jesus through acts of service, a steppingstone to returning to church. As Jesus exhorts his disciples, "whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will find it." (Mark 8:35).
- If and when parishes need to adapt, change, or close, the hubs will be a local community with resources and talent prepared and formed to welcome and care for new people.

Parish Renewal; Reimagining Ministry

Missionary Hubs would help to support parish life, reopen in our Church deserts, and inspire our people to be Missionary Disciples.

- Missionary Hubs will have full-time staff working under a pastor committed to outward engagement. The staff may include service coordinators, communications experts, event specialists and missionaries all focused on facilitating an encounter with Christ and his Church.
- We would plant Missionary Hubs throughout the Archdiocese and allocate resources where they are needed most, especially the poorest areas of our community.
- A Missionary Hub would anchor hope and ensure a vibrant future of the Church for your children and grandchildren with an impact for generations.

All of our institutions and communities must embrace flexibility to welcome new members while preserving their traditions and sharing the authentic faith. We are called to care for everyone, including our elder parishioners who've called the same parish home for a lifetime and the young adults who tend to move across parish lines to find a welcoming community.

To support our parishes as long as possible as we face the reality of having fewer priests available for pastoral assignments, we may introduce Parish Life Directors: deacons, men and women in consecrated life, or lay individuals to manage operations without a resident priest and under the guidance of the Regional Bishop. This will allow retired and senior priests to continue to care for souls in these communities and to offer the sacraments without bearing the responsibilities of administration.

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Father Sean Says

Archbishop Nelson's letter for the future of the diocese is too important not to share in this edition of the *NewsStan*.

Pastoral letters have been part of the church since St. Paul wrote his first letter around 49 AD. Those letters we read at Mass every week, from St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John, St. Jude and the unnamed author of the Letters



to the Hebrews had specific reasons, specific audiences, and they addressed the many issues the Church faced spreading the Gospel. So, any time the Church reached a new audience, a new age, etc., there were issues that needed to be addressed, and it was done via the letter.

This letter, from our Archbishop, addresses the reality of the Church in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Currently, there is an average mass attendance less than 20% of those who have registered in Parishes. Archbishop Nelson wants to shift the way we look at this "problem" and see the opportunity ahead of all of us in reaching out.

How can we become the outward, evangelizing Church that we are called to be in every age and in every place?

Closing parishes is not the answer. The answer lies in all the baptized, (laity, religious and ordained), to respond to our baptismal call to be missionary disciples. The regional meetings to which we are invited are essential to shaping the vision for the archdiocese over the next 20 years. I encourage you most sincerely, to make every effort to attend one of the local meetings for our Church. Visit trustandhope.org to see a full schedule of meetings throughout the diocese and sign up to be a part of this critical moment in the history of our local Church.



Surfing Around?

Although we have reprinted the Archbishop's letter, we highly recommend you visit https://trustandhope.org where you will not only find the letter but video and other resources including info sessions that will be held all around the Archdiocese.



NEWSTAN

MISSION STATEMENT

In response to the St. John Paul II's call to evangelization, St. Stanislaus Parish started publishing *NewStan* to serve members of the parish community and the community at large, to inform parishioners and members of the North Penn region about new developments in the parish, and to serve as a channel for communications among St. Stanislaus parishioners and benefactors.

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Those who wish to contribute items for publication should forward them to the NewStan mailbox in the St. Stanislaus Parish Center The inclusion of submitted material is subject to the judgment of the editors in consultation with Father Sean and the St. Stanislaus Communications Director. The editors reserve the right to edit all submitted material for length and content.

Visit St. Stanislaus Parish on the web at www.ststanislaus.com

Follow us on Facebook: St. Stanislaus Lansdale

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Do you have a question about St. Stanislaus Parish, or about the Catholic faith in general?

Forward your questions to the *NewStan* mailbox in the Parish Center, anonymously if desired. We will direct the questions to the right person and publish the answers in a future issue.

Our Continuing Apologetics Series

Can a Strong Case Be Made for the Resurrection of Jesus?

by Phil Ricciardi

Skeptics frequently claim that the Resurrection of Christ cannot be believed because there is no evidence for it. But in fact, the case in favor of the Resurrection can be considered almost overwhelming. In this article I would like to present 3 points I consider critical.

Belief in the Resurrection Appeared Very Early in Christian History

I recently encountered a skeptic who was convinced the Resurrection was a myth created after the year 250. In 1 Corinthians 15: 3-5, Paul states "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received - that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that He was buried; that He was raised on the third day; that He appeared to Kephas (Peter), then to the Twelve." It's important to note that the language Paul uses to proclaim this assertion is not his own but is drawn from an older creed. We know Paul was in Corinth in the year 51 and wrote the letter approximately in 55, so the Resurrection story clearly existed well before 51. Paul also states in Galatians that he received the creed directly from Peter, 3 years after encountering Jesus in 32 on the road to Damascus, so the belief in the Resurrection appears to exist in written form from at least the year 35, very shortly after the event took place!

The Risen Christ Had Eyewitnesses

Were there actual eyewitnesses? It's true the Bible gives no account of anyone seeing Jesus actually stride out of the tomb. However, the Gospels do record a lot of comings and goings from the tomb on that incredible morning. Peter, Mary Magdalene and several other women, John, Cleopas, just to name a few, are said to have encountered the resurrected Christ. In his letters written before the Gospels, Paul also lists several people as having seen Jesus in His raised state, and even makes the fantastic claim that He appeared to 500 people at once, most of whom were still alive at the writing of 1 Corinthians. Paul is the only source in the Bible for this mass appearance, which makes some people doubt its authenticity, but you have to wonder why Paul would make such a dramatic and easily debunked statement if it wasn't actually true.

Peter is even more blunt. In Acts 2:32, he asserts "God has

raised Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact." He made this bold proclamation in front of thousands of people on Pentecost. Remember that the Bible is not kind to the apostles on the day of the Crucifixion. They are reported to have denied Jesus, ran away from Him to avoid their own capture, and tried to hide the fact that they were Galileans. All of this is especially true of Peter. He must have seen something extraordinary to make him change his tune so thoroughly only days later.

The Disciples Died for Their Beliefs, and Skeptics Were Converted

After Christ was crucified and His followers dispersed, the Jesus movement appeared stopped in its tracks. This happened many times in Judea during Roman rule – a rabbi would appear, develop a following which would worry Rome, get executed, and that would end the matter. But Jesus' followers profess His Resurrection, go on journeys where they experienced ridicule, beatings, and imprisonment, ultimately give their lives in gruesome ways, and not once did any of them back off on their belief and experience that Jesus was raised from the dead.

Consider also the kind of skeptics who came to belief. The author of the Epistle of James is said to be from Jesus' family, who did not believe Jesus and were embarrassed by His claim to be the Messiah. He was part of that rejection, yet suddenly he became head of the Church in Jerusalem. Why? Paul states the obvious - he encountered the Resurrected Jesus. And look at Paul himself. Not only does the great persecutor back off on Christians, he joins them! By his own testimony it is because the Risen Christ appears to him. The conversion is so complete Paul can perform miracles for the Corinthian church, which he reminds them about in his second Letter to them. He would never have written that part of the letter to people who could easily dispute that he did the things he claimed. Acts is full of stories the rapid and historically confirmed growth of a belief system that spread not through violence or coercion but simple testimony of people about the Risen Lord.

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Apologetics is a genre of religious writing which involves the formation of reasonable, logical arguments for the truth of faith. As modern Catholics, we probably are confronted with tough questions from non-believers even more frequently than in the past. If you have any questions you'd like addressed, please drop them off in NewStan mailbox in the Parish Center.- Ed.**

Watch Your Language!

by Dianne Spotts

The English language is a catch-all of cultural and ethnic influences. "I'll be there in a jiffy," for example. I never learned what a jiffy was, did you? "Raining cats and dogs," is another one. There are expressions distinct to areas of our country (Y'All for instance), and various lifestyles have added curiosities. The Bible has also had an impact on our vernacular. How many of these ring a bell? (All quotes are from the Catholic Edition of the New Revised Standard Bible).

Skin of one's teeth: (*Job 19:20*) Job was tested by God and endured a multitude of heartaches. He told a friend 'My bone cleaves to my skin and flesh and I escaped by the skin of my teeth.'

Writing on the wall: (Daniel 5:5-27) The King of Babylon was shocked and frightened when he saw a finger writing words on the wall that no one understood. The Prophet Daniel had a gift for interpreting such things, though the King was far from happy with his translation of the writing.

Apple of my eye: (*Deut 32:10*) Referring to Moses and (*Zech 2:8*) refers to God's people in exile.

An eye for an eye: (Ex 21:23-25) Payment based on the crime. and (Mt 5:38-39) where Jesus changes the Old Testament meaning to "Do not repay an evildoer."

Head on a platter: (*Mark 6:25*) Remember John the Baptist's tragic death?

Thorn in the flesh: (2 Corinthians 12:7) Paul writes: "I will not boast, except of my weaknesses... to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me." God responds: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."

Scapegoat: (*Lev 16:10*) A goat was sent into the wilderness after the Jewish Chief Priest had symbolically laid the sins of the people upon it, prefiguring Jesus' death outside of the city.

Raise Cain: (*Genesis 4: 1-16*) The children of Adam and Eve: Cain, a farmer killed his twin brother Abel, a shepherd, because he was jealous that the Lord preferred his brother's sacrifice.

A disclaimer: Though this and my last article may give the impression that I handle the topic of the Bible lightly, please know that the Bible is my prayer book and I value it. I focus on the readings of each day's Mass, which are printed in each weekend's bulletin.

The Phillie Phanatic Visits Mater Dei Catholic School!

Mater Dei Catholic School recently outpaced numerous private and public schools in the area to win the "Full Belly Bag" competition, an event sponsored by "The Giving Tree" and Giant Food Markets which provides Full Belly Bags to local food shelters, hospitals, and food pantries.

Mater Dei raised \$2,800.00 at the November Bake Sale and Dress-down Day. Our students assembled **1250 Full Belly Bags**. The bags were filled with mac-and-cheese cups, applesauce, granola bars, cookies, oatmeal, and a note of encouragement.





As a reward for winning the competition, the sponsoring organizations treated the children of Mater Dei to a visit from the Phillie Phanatic! Phanatic delighted the children with his crazy antics and dance moves. Children's laughter filled the gym, and their cheers and smiles were heartwarming to all who shared the moment.

Many thanks to Mrs. Peg Dominick and her team for organizing this event for our students. Thank you, Mater Dei families, for generously supporting and contributing to the "Full Belly Bag" project. We are most grateful to you.



October Family Fest

The St. Stanislaus Legacy Committee hosted an October Family Fun Fest on October 6 2024.

Good food and good times were had by all, especially the children in attendance. Enjoy these pictures from the event!

[Photos care of Phil Ricciardi]









An Invitation from Archbishop Pérez

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We must prioritize resources and support for evangelization. Investing in growth is critical, and harnessing the wisdom and energy of our retired priests in this way will be a gift to the Church of Philadelphia during this time of renewal.

I am so grateful for the generosity of spirit of our amazing priests, deacons, religious, and dedicated lay leaders and ministers that make Church happen every day because of their loving and passionate hearts. A growth mindset cultivates fruitfulness, leading to many more vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and marriage.

An Invitation

I invite you to join me this coming spring for discussions about the future of the Church of Philadelphia. I see our local Church as a hub of evangelization, vibrant with hope and grace. But to move forward, I need to listen to your hopes, dreams, concerns, and desires for renewal. Please join me.

Let us not underestimate the power of the Spirit of God working in us, through us, and despite us. As Saint Paul says, we believe in a God "who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20). Our hope remains in the Lord. Let us rely on God's love for each one of us and be conduits of grace.

You are resilient. You are loved. Your steadfastness despite social and spiritual challenges doesn't go unnoticed. Thank you for walking this journey with me and for embodying the heart and soul of our Church. Just as Saint John Neumann and Saint Katharine Drexel led with love and resilience, may they intercede for us as we move forward in faith.

Please pray for me and be assured of my prayers for you each day.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D.D. Archbishop of Philadelphia

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Parish Census Data for July - September 2024



Owen Michael Arner Dakota Elaine Attwood Elena Feliza Bilan-Yu Owen Joseph Chapman Katherine Marley Corvino Aiden Alexander Espinal Hernandez Gabriela Garcia Chamo Ximena Guzman Olivares Lakelyn Mary Hemmerle Teagan Rose Hemmerle Drew Marie Irick Kylee Faith Jackson Vivian Rose Jackson Conor Patrick Joynes Jack Tierney

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John Roken Nick & Danielle Semenza Matthew Shaw Robert & Michelle Stoczko II Tyler & Brianna Sundstrom Brittany Thorpe Chadd & Kylene Wood



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