

DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN FOR 2016 – 2020

STEWARDS OF THE GOSPEL

Dear Clergy, Religious and Faithful of the Diocese of Honolulu,

Peace be with you!

Over the past several months I have met with parish leaders in each of our nine vicariates to receive input on the renewal of our diocesan pastoral plan. I am grateful to all who shared their insights so that we can be good stewards of the resources of time, talent, and treasure that the Lord has entrusted to us for his mission. I am particularly grateful to James Walsh, Director of Pastoral Planning, for his great work on the development of this pastoral plan.

Those who are familiar with our last pastoral plan *The Roadmap for Our Mission* will notice similarities between this current plan and the *Roadmap*. While the priorities may be similar, I want this pastoral plan to help us all direct our attention **outward**, and not simply to focus on the internal structures and programs of our diocese and parishes. This is in keeping with the mandate of Jesus himself: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Let us hearken back to the beginnings of the Catholic faith in Hawaii. In 1827, when the first Catholic missionaries of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary arrived here, they found a beautiful place with a beautiful culture, but one that knew little or nothing of Jesus Christ and his saving Gospel. The missionaries and all who supported them offered their time, talents, and treasure to make it possible for the Gospel of Jesus to be proclaimed in virgin territory, because they were all convinced of the saving power of the Word of God, who was made flesh in the person of Jesus. The Catholic faith they shared with the native Hawaiians and others who were living in Hawaii was a faith that transformed cultures. It respected the language and culture of the host country, but at the same time called it to conversion, to see things from a different perspective, and to shine a new light on marriage and family life, on economics and education, and on respect for human life and human dignity. They did not simply tithe on their time, talent, and treasure, but they gave all they had to bring the joy of the Gospel to these islands. The Catholic faith in many ways was counter-cultural, and although embraced by many, it was also suspect by others to the point of being outlawed for ten years (1829-39). Yet our ancestors in the faith never gave up in spite of the difficulties, the challenges, and even the persecutions. Because they took seriously their call to be stewards of the Gospel, we enjoy the legacy of the Catholic faith that grew from the seeds they planted.

Today we live in a culture that is no longer centered on Christ but rather on the individual and that almost acts as if each person is his or her own god, making decisions of life and death, about what is moral and immoral, all without reference to a Supreme Being who made us and has

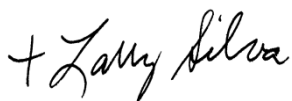
revealed to us the most life-giving way to live. There are wonderful people, but we have been lured into what I call “ego-theism,” the notion that “I” am god, who make all the decisions of life and death, of right and wrong, for myself. This notion ultimately is destructive of our communion with one another, taking us farther into isolation and making it much more difficult to agree about the common good. While our current culture is certainly familiar with Jesus, it tends to sideline him as a heroic figure of history who presented us with wise teachings, but who disappeared from the scene, just like other heroic figures before him.

Even though we Catholics are subject to the temptations of the culture in which we live, our vision as Catholics is very different from the prevailing cultural vision. In many ways we are challenged to be like those early missionaries, coming into a culture that needs transformation through the healing light of the risen Jesus, facing virgin territory in planting and nurturing the seeds of faith in Jesus Christ. The mandate of Jesus to “Go, ... make disciples” may not take us to foreign lands but today challenges us to offer our time, talents, and treasure for the transformation of the very culture in which we live. Just as the early missionaries to Hawaii were faithful and dedicated in spite of trials and persecutions, we, too, need to be strong in sharing our faith and giving witness to Jesus.

Our Church is alive and thriving, and our parishes and diocese are venues for celebrating the faith with others who share this gift that has been given to us. But it must also be said that we Catholics have had a tendency to focus more on those who come to us rather than prepare ourselves to go out to others who do not yet fully know the saving power of Jesus. So even though this diocesan pastoral plan *Stewards of the Gospel* contains many elements of the *Road Map*, our vision in implementing it must be different. We should always be reminded that our parishes and diocese, our programs and institutions, are not ultimately for ourselves and our own spiritual growth. They are meant to equip us for our mission of taking the Gospel of Jesus to those people and places that have not yet embraced our Lord and his Way.

The mission that Jesus gives us is clear, and it is meant for our own time as much as it was for times past. Yet we must be wise in our use of resources of time, talent, and treasure. Therefore, a pastoral plan is necessary to help us be good Stewards of the Gospel, so that it may reach every person on these beautiful islands of Hawaii. I ask you to reflect on these priorities in your parishes, your vicariates, your families, your circles of friends, and wherever you find yourselves, so that, like those first missionaries, we can give faithful witness to Jesus.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry Silva". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Larry Silva
Bishop of Honolulu