

Today, at the bishop's directive, all priests of our diocese are to speak about:  
"On Mission for the Church Alive!"

I find this very unusual, not speaking on the scriptures, but, nevertheless hear we are.

Of all the 'programs' that have been enacted by the diocese, this is an effort with which I am in total agreement. Let me explain why.

If we just step back and look at the Church's current 'situation,' not only in America, we must face the fact that the Church is actually in decline. The Church, at large, and not only in this diocese, has been on the wane, i.e. on the 'down swing' for many years, even before the scandals came to light—which, certainly, has not helped our 'situation.' Church attendance, alone, tells the whole story.

In the majority of parishes of our diocese, regular attendance is below 30%. We need only observe the remarkable attendance at Christmas & Easter, and even with that overflow, attendance is still less than 100%. Yet, that Christmas/Easter number should be the norm.

And it **KEEPS** going down. Something is radically wrong. The pope's recent visit has done much to lift our spirits, but it is far from the solution. The '*priest-scandal*' notwithstanding, this decline has been evolving for decades.

I think much of this decline can be attributed to society at large. We now have many 2-income homes, with people working 2 & 3 jobs just to make ends meet. Consequently 'home life' has suffered immeasurably. We've lost faith in our political leaders. Where are the statesmen of years ago? We have a society that openly embraces abortion and same-sex marriage. The electronic, computer-driven, digital age, with all its wondrous benefits, has brought porn into our homes/minds at the touch of a button. The temptation is severe. Our children can become Jihadists via cyberspace. We shudder to think if they are safe in school... if they'll be gunned-down, stabbed to death, or abused by their own teachers!

Yes, there is something wrong in the Church and I think it's because there's something wrong with our society with its loss of a moral compass.

Getting back to the bishop's 'plan' of 'On Mission,' something needs, desperately, to be done. You see, for years, the Church has been in, what I call a Church of 'Maintenance.' We were trying to 'maintain' the status quo. Church leaders, for the most part, had their heads in the sand, ignoring the decline or simply wringing their hands in frustration.

Finally, a bishop, our bishop, is willing to try to break-out of the declining ‘maintenance mode’ and lead us into a ‘mission mode.’ He is urging us to become active, each in our own way, as Christians in general, and as Catholics in particular.

His initial plan will take a few years to try to begin to turn this ‘situation’ around. Of course, we’re not going to ‘fix’ society with its myriad problems. BUT we can try to make our moral & social life better in our own backyard.

So this isn’t a single parish effort, but a diocesan-wide effort, calling everyone of us to be aware that the world around us is faltering and that each of us, by virtue of our own Baptism into Christ, is called to try harder to build up the Church/the Kingdom of God in our homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

Beginning with this 1<sup>st</sup> year of prayer & thought, we will be called to reach out to the hurting & ‘lost’ people around us, as we have never done before. We will examine our own parish structure/life. Fr. Boyle will soon invite, at least, 4 people, probably outside our current employees & volunteers, to be on a Parish Advisory Council. They will be asked to attend special, diocesan training sessions to assist Fr. and the rest of us in this remarkable adventure to be ‘Alive’ & ‘On Mission,’ i.e. to break out of just ‘maintaining.’

The Pittsburgh Catholic is running a series of articles explaining the plan in more detail. It’s on pg. 5 every week. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> week. Be sure to read it for a better understanding of the bishop’s plan.

This ‘On Mission for the Church Alive!’ endeavor is a very exciting and hopeful time for every one of us. At last, someone is trying to actually lead us into a better future for parish, for society, for Church!

May God give each of us the courage to lift our heads and see His light!

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless each of you...  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.