In 2013, Pope Francis promulgated an apostolic exhortation in response to the Synod on the New Evangelization and at the end of the Year Faith. It is called *Evangelii Gaudium* or *The Joy of the Gospel*. I will briefly look at this document, but also encourage you as catechetical leaders to read it for yourself.

We are all called to proclaim the Gospel with our lives, with our attitude, and with our words. Pope Francis stresses the point that we need to keep our attitude in check and share this Gospel, this Good News with joy! Jesus’ salvation is not only for the Jews, but also for all who come to believe! The Incarnation of God through the person of Jesus has ushered in a
new era of hope, faith, and love. But this new era is not without trials, persecution, death, war, scandal, and so on. As we are the Church, it is up to us to shape the future, especially our evangelization efforts, and to evangelize with joy.

The following are some excerpts --some gems-- I found in reading this document. Let us see how this apostolic exhortation can help our evangelizing efforts:

**On what he will write about in this exhortation:**

“I have decided, among other themes, to discuss at length the following questions:

a) the reform of the Church in her missionary outreach;
b) the temptations faced by pastoral workers;
c) the Church, understood as the entire People of God who evangelize;
d) the homily and its preparation;
e) the inclusion of the poor in society;
f) peace and dialogue within society;
g) the spiritual motivations for mission.”

(EG, 17)

**On evangelizing today:**

“In our day Jesus’ command to ‘go and make disciples’ echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth’.” (EG, 20)

“In fidelity to the example of the Master, it is vitally important for the Church today to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear.” (EG, 23)

**On the preeminence of mission over administration:**

“I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. ‘Mere administration’ can no longer be enough.

Throughout the world, let us be ‘permanently in a state of mission’” (EG, 25)

“I dream of a ‘missionary option,’ that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.” (EG, 27)

**On the evangelizing parish:**

“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. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be ‘the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.’ This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory; an environment for hearing God’s word; for growth in the Christian life; for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship, and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.” (EG, 28)

**On small Christian communities and other Church institutions:**

“Other Church institutions, basic communities and small communities, movements, and forms of association are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up
by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervor and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church. This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots.” (EG, 29)

On pastoral ministry:
“Pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed. When we adopt a pastoral goal and a missionary style which would actually reach everyone without exception or exclusion, the message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary. The message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth, and thus becomes all the more forceful and convincing.” (EG, 35)

On the witness of the catechist or religion teacher:
“We need to remember that all religious teaching ultimately has to be reflected in the teacher’s way of life, which awakens the assent of the heart by its nearness, love and witness.” (EG, 42)

On missionary outreach by all and to all:
“If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbors, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, ‘those who cannot repay you’ (Lk 14:14). There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message. Today and always, ‘the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel,’ and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them.” (EG, 48)

“Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting, and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light, and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: ‘Give them something to eat’ (Mk 6:37). (EG, 49)

On money:
“Money must serve, not rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but he is obliged in the name of Christ to remind all that the rich must help, respect, and promote the poor. I exhort you to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favors human beings.” (EG, 58)

On evangelization as joyful:
“After having considered some of the challenges of the present, I would now like to speak of the task which bears upon us in every age and place, for ‘there can be no true
evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord,’ and without ‘the primacy of the proclamation of Jesus Christ in all evangelizing work.’ Acknowledging the concerns of the Asian bishops, John Paul II told them that if the Church ‘is to fulfill its providential destiny, evangelization as the joyful, patient, and progressive preaching of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority.’ These words hold true for all of us.” (EG, 110)

**On evangelization as our mission:**

“Evangelization is the task of the Church. The Church, as the agent of evangelization, is more than an organic and hierarchical institution; she is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God. She is certainly a mystery rooted in the Trinity, yet she exists concretely in history as a people of pilgrims and evangelizers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary. I would like to dwell briefly on this way of understanding the Church, whose ultimate foundation is found in the free and gracious initiative of God.” (EG, 111)

**On evangelizing person to person:**

“Today, as the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbors or complete strangers. This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.” (EG, 127)

“In this preaching, which is always respectful and gentle, the first step is personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs. Only afterwards is it possible to bring up God’s word, perhaps by reading a Bible verse or relating a story, but always keeping in mind the fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship. This message has to be shared humbly as a testimony on the part of one who is always willing to learn, in the awareness that the message is so rich and so deep that it always exceeds our grasp. At times the message can be presented directly, at times by way of a personal witness or gesture, or in a way which the Holy Spirit may suggest in that particular situation. If it seems prudent and if the circumstances are right, this fraternal and missionary encounter could end with a brief prayer related to the concerns which the person may have expressed. In this way they will have an experience of being listened to and understood; they will know that their particular situation has been placed before God, and that God’s word really speaks to their lives.” (EG, 128)

I will share more excerpts next month and in the months to come. To read the entire document, go to:

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

Upcoming PCL Gathering
November 9, 2017 ~ 9 a.m.–2:00 p.m.
Beginning at 9:00 for coffee, light breakfast and gathering at the Parish Center of the Cathedral Basilica of St. Anthony, Beaumont

Richard Drabik will present on “The Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation.” The Diocese of Beaumont and VLCFF are partners as catechetical leaders, catechists, parents, diaconate candidates, and others can take online formation courses to help equip them with the knowledge of the faith, the methods to pass on that faith, and to help them to grow spiritually. Please RSVP at EventBrite for this gathering by Wednesday morning, November 8, 2017. You may register here: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/november-pcl-gathering-vlcff-tickets-39255605573

PCL Gatherings

Epiphany Celebration
January 4, 2018 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
In appreciation for all you do, the office of Evangelization and Catechesis will provide the meal for this gathering. You are welcomed to bring a dish but please do not feel obligated.

Thursday, 2/15/18 PCL Retreat – Langtree Duck Farm

Thursday, 3/22/18 Fundamentals of the RCIA
by Luisa Negret and Twyla Satterthwaite; sponsored by Pflaum – Diocesan Pastoral Center

Thursday, 4/19/18 Curriculum Day
10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
sponsored by the diocese - Diocesan Pastoral Center, Beaumont

Thursday, 5/3/18 End of the Year Celebration
– sponsored by Loyola Press at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, Beaumont

Called, Formed, and Sent Day
Saturday, 1/20/18
A Day for Those Who Serve in the Areas of Evangelization and Catechesis CFS 2018 Theme: Living as Missionary Disciples @ Our Mother of Mercy, Beaumont beginning at 10:00 am and ending with the 4:30 pm Mass. There will be keynotes in English and Spanish including Aida Hidalgo from OSV and Luisa Negret from Pflaum. Other keynotes will include our very own: Bryan Reising, Linda Duhon-LaCour, Jesus Abrego, Melanie Ehrlich, Paul Thomas, and Julio Beltran! SAVE THE DATE

Parish Visits

Bryan has been visiting parishes since July. He is available to visit on the day of your Faith Formation classes. He could also do visits with pastors and catechetical leaders. Please arrange a time that you can invite him to your parish by contacting him via email: breising@dioceseofbmt.org or calling his office
at 409-924-4323. He will not get to all parishes during the catechetical year, but he would like to get to all regions of the diocese.

What will happen with these visits? The following are some possibilities: an observation of your faith formation during the time of instruction, perhaps an in-service with your catechists, or even a catechetical presentation as a guest catechist for adults, youth, or children.

**CEMI Courses**

Upcoming courses include a course on Mark’s Gospel beginning on Tuesday, November 7, 2017. This and other offerings are found at https://www.eventbrite.com/o/diocese-of-beaumont-evangelizationcatechesis-7578878365

**RCIA in the Diocese of Beaumont**

Team RCIA rescheduled their Making Disciples Institute for Friday, April 13, 2018 and Saturday, April 14, 2018 at the Church of St. Jude Thaddeus in Beaumont. For further information and to sign up: https://www.dobgifts.org/events/making-disciples/

From our Diocesan RCIA Guidelines:

1. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the normative way for adults to be initiated into the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Beaumont.

2. In the Diocese of Beaumont, the suggested time for completing the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is one year or more.

3. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is a process that should be used only for the following:
   - Unbaptized adults (18 years and older)
   - Adults baptized in other Christian Traditions
   - Baptized adult Catholics who have not received Confirmation and Eucharist.

4. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults should ideally be a year-round process, enabling people to begin the process when they first approach the Church.

5. Catechesis in the RCIA process should include both Scripture and Tradition, and provide a conversion experience that is both formational and educational.

6. Members of the parish community should be invited to become involved in the RCIA process through the different roles of the RCIA team, and should be prepared for their ministry, especially the catechists who should attend the Catechist Formation Process offered by the diocese.

7. All the Stages or Periods and Rites of the RCIA should be experienced by those involved in the process.

**University of Dayton’s Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF)**

**Cycle 1: January 14 - February 17, 2018**

(Registration: Opens Oct 25, 2017; Closes Jan 10, 2018)

- A Vision for Catholic Youth Ministry
- Advanced Catholic Social Teaching
- Autism in Faith Formation (SN 4)
- Bible Basics
- Catholic Beliefs
- Catholic Teaching on Chastity, Family Life, and Human Sexuality Education
- Christology
- Church History 1
Catechetical Planning
For those who are catechetical leaders, Bryan can provide a closed course on “Designing a Parish Catechetical Plan.” Other catechetical leaders who have taken this three-week seminar found it very helpful in looking at all aspects of planning for catechesis for their AFC or parish. Please contact Bryan at breising@dnu.org if you are interested. The course is scheduled for Cycle 2: March 4 - March 24, 2018 (seminars only) (Registration: Opens Jan 17, 2018; Closes Feb 28, 2018)

ACTS
A Town Hall Meeting on the future of ACTS!

When: Saturday, November 18th, 9:00am - 11:30am
Where: St. Elizabeth Catholic Church, 2006 Nall Street, Port Neches, Texas 77651

No cost to attend! Registrations appreciated!

Join us for a Town Hall meeting to discuss the future of ACTS in the Diocese of Beaumont, connect with ACTS Brothers and Sisters from across the Diocese, and break bread with one another!

Men/Women, College, and Teen ACTS all welcome and encouraged to attend!

Special thanks to the St. Elizabeth Core Team for coordinating breakfast for us! http://beaumontacts.org/events/town-hall-meeting

Religious Education Safe Environment Compliance Reminders
The deadline to return the reporting forms to the diocese, along with the form noting children’s attendance and absence is December 15, 2017.

An opt out form called Keeping Kids Safe is available in both English and Spanish. This is provided to the parent/guardian who prefers to do their owning Safe Environment training of
their children. This form must be signed and returned before your training in the fall.
In signing the Opt Out form, the parent/guardian is agreeing to train their own child. Use the opt out form provided by the diocese. Do not change the content of the form. Any opt out forms signed by the parent/guardian are turned in to you before the training in the fall.

Any DRE, youth minister, catechist, adults helping with youth ministry, or anyone who may be in a ministry with minors is required to be in total compliance with safe environment requirements.
To be in compliance, one must have attended in person a Protecting God’s Children (PGC) session. After 5 years from the initial training participation, a rectification is required. This can be done either through the diocesan website online module, or by attending another in person PGC session.

If you have any questions regarding Safe Environment Training, you may contact the diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator through the following information:

Paul J Thomas
pthomas@dioceseofbmt.org
409-924-4315

Remember to abide by all the deadlines for Safe Environment. Thank you!

PGC Trainings
Protecting God’s Children for Adults

Tuesday, November 7, 2017 6:00pm
@ Catholic Pastoral Center, Beaumont
Facilitator: Linda Reising
Contact: 409-924-4309

Tuesday November 28, 2017 6:00pm
@ Sacred Heart- St Mary, Port Arthur
Facilitator: Sheryl Channel
Contact: 409-985-5104

The complete schedule of PGC sessions can be found at:
https://www.dioceseofbmt.org/safe-environment/#sessions

Thank you for keeping our children and youth safe!

Interested in a Bachelors or Masters in Theology?
St. Thomas University in Houston:
https://www.stthom.edu/Academics/School-of-Arts-and-Sciences/Undergraduate/Theology/Index.aqf

National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) Membership
Join NCCL and receive CL (Catechetical Leader) online Magazine, CL Weekly from Margaret Matijasevic, discounts on resources, and information on the national conference and regional workshops! The cost of an individual membership to NCCL is only $75.00. This is only $6.25 a month. For further information about membership, check out the Web site: www.nccl.org. For information on the national conference (Chicago: May 30-June 2, 2018), go to www.nccl.us.

Parish Catechesis Questions
After reading Pope Francis’ new apostolic exhortation, what new ideas on how to do evangelization and catechesis will you share?

Share these with your pastor and other leadership at your parish!

How can this document inspire your catechists and your parents?

“Go out. Go out and share your testimony. Go out and interact with your brothers. Go out and share. Go out and ask. Become the Word in body as well as spirit.”
— Pope Francis