

In southeast Brazil there is a massive shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Aparecida. The Basilica is the second largest church in the world, capable of seating 60,000 people, and second only in size to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Aparecida attracts over 10 million pilgrims and tourists each year.

Ten years ago, beginning on May 13, 2007, over 150 bishops from across Latin America gathered at Aparecida to discuss critical and urgent problems effecting the life of the Church in Central and South America. The challenges they addressed were many and varied, and not unlike our own.

- They focused on the monumental losses the Church was experiencing as other religions aggressively proselytized a traditionally Roman Catholic population across Latin America;
- They spoke of the growing gulf between the rich and poor;
- They addressed the effects of secularism and the lure of materialism, especially in the lives of the young;
- They examined threats to family life and marriage, and a soaring rate of divorce;
- Some voiced concerns over the degradation of the environment;
- In one voice they raised alarm over the ever-growing plight of migrants and refugees, not only in Latin and South America, but indeed across the whole globe.

The meeting at Aparecida was significant to the entire Church, not just Latin America, for two very particular reasons. The first was the fact that Aparecida produced a powerful blueprint, a roadmap, to address challenges that dioceses across the globe share in common. The Aparecida roadmap is remarkable for lack of defensiveness, its radical optimism, its unadorned candor, and its pastoral practicality.

The second and lesser known reason why Aparecida is so significant is that one of the major players at that meeting was the Cardinal of Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergolio, who is said to have played a major role in the formation of the master plan.

Six years after the meeting, the College of Cardinals elected Cardinal Jorge Bergolio as Successor of Peter, the 266th Pope, and first from the southern hemisphere.

By examining the Aparecida Document, I propose that you will also be given a window into the mind and method, and understand the genesis of so many of his papal themes and strategies.

Joe and Kirby, many of the challenges you will face as priests and ministers of the Gospel in contemporary society are mirrored in Aparecida.

Aparecida admonishes you as newly ordained priests and all of us to launch into the future without fear, living and ministering confidently, joyfully, with Jesus Christ as our constant companion and north star.

Aparecida begins and ends with the same forceful conviction, that "*Jesus Christ is the way that allows us to discover the truth and to achieve fulfillment in our lives!*" Joe and Kirby, this is precisely what I want for you—to take His yoke upon your shoulders and to learn from Him, but also to make it your passion to invite others to encounter him, to embrace and to love him as the one who "fills our lives with meaning, truth and love, joy and hope."(165)

I cannot say this strongly enough. The very heartbeat of effective priestly ministry is founded upon intimate friendship with Jesus Christ. Pope Benedict was present at the opening session of Aparecida. His admonition to priests was perennial and uncompromising: "*The essential foundation of priestly ministry,*" he wrote, "*is a deep personal bond to Jesus Christ. Everything hinges on this bond... The priest must be a man who knows Jesus intimately has encountered him and has learned to love. Without a strong spiritual substance, the priest cannot long endure his ministry.*" On this, your day of Ordination, I want you to take Benedict's words and Pope Francis' example into your hearts and lives.

The spiritual life of the priest is nourished by the daily celebration of the Eucharist, fed through works of compassion, and strengthened at the Table of the Word.

As you become immersed in the busy life of the priest, I ask you to ensure that your prayer life always receives first billing, and is never crowded out by the myriad demands that every effective priest experiences in his daily responsibilities.

Next, Aparecida consistently raises up the role of the laity, who, in days gone by, were portrayed as passive players and compliant beneficiaries of the ministry of the clergy and religious.

Fifty years ago, the Second Vatican Council introducing new language and concepts of collaboration, consultation, collegiality. The Council envisioned a new paradigm—with clergy and laity working together.

Aparecida picks up on that theme, and Pope Francis runs with it.

Aparecida proposes that all of us, without exception, are called to become missionary disciples by virtue of our Baptism.

Aparecida says forcefully that the Church is "to be on permanent mission" together, and "*Jesus invites all to participate. No one may stay back with crossed arms!*" No slackers, no benchwarmers, no passive players. No exceptions. We are a Church on permanent mission! That is our mandate and common call.

Joe and Kirby, in the years ahead, I ask you to be part of a vision that will be articulated in our pastoral plan--the empowerment of the whole diocese to become missionary disciples, working hand in hand as a people co-responsible for the propagation of the Gospel throughout our beloved Diocese.

I ask you to draw from the wisdom and expertise of the lay faithful. Know what you don't know, and surround yourself with wise and experienced people.

Wherever your ministry takes you, help your people to encounter Jesus personally and intimately first by the example of your daily life, and through beautiful and well-prepared liturgy and sound preaching and teaching.

Never lose sight of the strong admonition contained in Aparcida-- "*A Catholic faith reduced...to a collection of rules and prohibitions... to the repetition of doctrinal principles, and bland or nervous moralizing, does not convert the life of the baptized or withstand the trials of our time.*" That is merely placing new wine in old wineskins.

If we truly desire to stay attrition, and attract new members, if we truly want to be a Church that is vibrant and life-giving, we need to move from maintenance to mission, from status quo to transformation.

That transformation depends on vibrant, faith-filled, life-giving, sound formation, and a common purpose. We need Christ-centered leaders working together, undaunted by present challenges, and willing to call forth whole communities of missionary disciples who are co-responsible for the life and mission of the Church. That is my hope and my expectation for our Diocese and for your ministry as newly ordained.

Next, I ask you always to provide a special place in your heart and life for the young Catholic. The Diocese of Helena already has a rich and wonderful ministry to youth, and inordinately high numbers of young Catholics involved in parish youth groups, the CYC, and Legendary Lodge. But others, particularly the millennial generation, feel spiritually adrift and long for direction and meaning in their lives.

Aparecida says it well, writing, "*Accompany the youth in their formation and search for identity, vocation, and mission.*" To accompany means investing time--face time, quality time with and among the youth and young adults of our community as a welcoming, listening, and invitational Church. This is an investment that has the power

over time to produce strong Catholic families, and to bless the Church with new vocations to priesthood and religious life. And the benefits are out of this world!

Time and again, Pope Francis has also drawn attention to the plight of the poor, and has underscored the import of Catholic Social Doctrine as the key that unbinds the shackles that keep people bound in poverty and misery for generations upon end.

Catholic Social Teaching is founded upon the conviction that every person is made in the image of God. There are no throwaway persons, no disposable souls, and no second-class citizens.

In his homilies and impromptu addresses, Pope Francis admonishes his priests to leave the comfort of the sacristy and the security of the sanctuary, and to minister to those on society's margins, voiceless and invisible persons languishing in prisons and jails, patients in hospitals and nursing homes, people in soup kitchens and homeless shelters.

"Have the smell of the sheep" is Pope Francis' way of telling you and me to know our people by name, and to assiduously avoid ministering only to those with whom we have comfortable relationships and easy rapport. In a word, bring the Church to the margins. Be willing to speak up and to speak out when injustice rears its head, being a constant advocate and friend of the poor.

Regarding pastoral style the Holy Father has been clear, consistent, and not infrequently critical of priests and seminarians. Avoid the dangers of clericalism, and the pitfall of narcissism, and the trap of entitlement. Eschew excessive rubricism and unbending legalism. Avoid harsh and strident attitudes, self-righteous anger, and the toxicity of gossip. Elect to stay on the high road when you encounter difficult or irritating people. Develop the skills of dialogue and attentive listening, prefer persuasion over polemics, and reconciliation over rancor, all seasoned with a healthy sense of humor and a heavy dose of gospel joy.

Listen attentively to Pope Francis' admonition to seminarians and young clergy when he admonishes you to avoid the trap of thinking in black and white when our people live in a world that is bathed in shades of gray.

In Ignatian parlance, master the art of spiritual discernment by knowing the mind of the Church and learning to exercise sound and caring pastoral judgment in the parlor and in the confessional, "so as not to break the bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick." (Is. 42-3)

Strive to become ministers of mercy and agents of reconciliation. Build up the unity of the Church by applying copiously the healing balm of Jesus in the hearts of the wounded and the aggrieved.

Finally, I ask you to live a balanced life, investing deeply in strong and supportive friendships with brother priests and by developing blessed friendships among the lay faithful. Don't neglect your families, whose love and encouragement has led you here to the foot of the altar.

This is such a blessed day for all of us across the Diocese of Helena.

Joe Paddock brings to us a keen mind, a generous heart, the gifts of humility and fidelity, and a joy that radiates from his warm style and caring smile. Joe lost his dear Mom Janie on February 18, just a few short months ago. How proud your Mother was of you, dear Joe. As you are surrounded by family and friends, don't lose sight of the fact that your Mom is so present to us in spirit, and has the best seat in the house for your Ordination Liturgy.

Kirby is the avid outdoorsman, a man loved by family, cherished by friends, and deeply feared by fish. He has zeal for the Gospel, the capacity to minister among a wide swath of people, and special gift for ministering among youth and young adults. He is self-disciplined, self-motivated, and admirable selfless in his ministry among the People of God.

In just a few moments, both men will lay down your lives before the altar, as a profound symbol of their readiness to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders as priests of Jesus Christ, and servant leaders in the Catholic Church.

Kirby and Joe, throughout your priesthood, keep the eyes of your hearts fixed on Christ so that your life as a priest and missionary disciple will radiate that special joy that comes to those who love and serve Him well.

In the words of Paul to Timothy, "Stir into flame the gift of God that you have received through the laying on of my hands." (Tim. 2:6).

From this day forward resolve to live a life worthy of so great a call, always patterning your life after Jesus Christ, who is ever in our midst "one who serves."