



+February 22, 2020, +Chair of Peter

To the people of God in Western Washington,

It is my great honor and privilege to serve as your archbishop. Over the past few months, it has been inspiring to celebrate Mass at over 40 parish communities, to witness the selfless determination of our Catholic educators, and to meet many of you through countless conversations. These experiences have helped me understand our many strengths, opportunities for growth, and unique realities here in the Archdiocese of Seattle. Please be assured that you and your loved ones are always on my mind and in my prayers.

The recent past has been immensely challenging for our church. The abuse crisis looms over us despite our efforts to be transparent. We face a future shortage of pastors and the painful reality that many young Catholics are not in the pews. This region continues to boom, but we are not seeing an increase in registered Catholics. While we cannot ignore these challenges, we also cannot let them define us. Instead, we must retrain our focus and renew our commitment to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today I am eager to announce two important initiatives: a new *pastoral planning* effort to enable greater mission effectiveness and a *strategic planning* effort to ensure wise stewardship as we answer Christ's ongoing call to rebuild his church.

Pastoral Planning: In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis challenges the global church to adapt our structures and processes for effective evangelization in today's world. In this light, we begin a new pastoral planning process with the understanding that every member of the church shares not only in the life of the Risen Jesus, but also in the mission of Jesus Christ. This summer I will convene a new archdiocesan pastoral council to provide valuable lay insight in the creation of an updated pastoral plan. Additional input will be sought from all Catholics in the archdiocese; my hope is for all the people of God to participate by sharing their thoughts and praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our goal is to become a more mission-oriented church that continually draws people closer to Christ, regardless of where they are in their faith journey.

Strategic Planning: The Archdiocese of Seattle includes 169 parishes, missions, and pastoral centers; 73 Catholic schools; about 300 total priests; and more than 5,000 employees. As our region continues to grow and becomes increasingly diverse, we must evaluate our resources, systems, and infrastructure to confirm they are best serving the people of God in Western Washington. I have asked Bishop Mueggenborg to lead this strategic planning work. His team will develop objective standards to guide our strategic planning decisions.

I am honored to accompany you on this journey of faith, and together, to build a thriving and mission-oriented Catholic community in Western Washington. With the planning work ahead of us, I humbly ask for your prayers for guidance from the Holy Spirit to unite us and assist us in becoming a church that gives credible witness to the world of our faith in Jesus Christ.

In the heart of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul D. Etienne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "P" and "E".

Most Reverend Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archbishop of Seattle