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# ENCOUNTER *that leads to* TRANSFORMATION

## Introduction

### *Welcome to the Diocese of Austin Pastoral Plan Study Guide*

This Study Guide is offered to assist you, your family and the parish community to reflect on the content of the Pastoral Plan, *Encounter that Leads to Transformation*. The reflection questions will help you read and understand how the plan is for you and all the people of the Diocese of Austin.

## How to Use the Study Guide

The Study Guide is divided into seven reflection sections that follow the structure of the Pastoral Plan. Though the reflections could be done in any order, it is best to begin with the first reflection and proceed to the seventh. It will be helpful to have a copy of the Pastoral Plan with you and read those sections referred to in the Study Guide.

For each reflection, an opening prayer is offered which is taken from the YOUCAT Youth Prayer Book. This is followed by either a quote from scripture or a related quote from a document of the Church. The reflection questions are presented in this order: the first one is for personal reflection; the second may be used with a family; and the third reflection question may be used in the parish community, organization or ministry. Reflections five through seven are based on the three goals of the plan and include questions for the three initiatives associated with each goal. The last section of the reflections suggests an action item, something you can do having reflected on and discussed that section of the plan.

The hope is that this Study Guide will help you on your faith journey to deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church and become an “inspiring and credible witness” of your Catholic faith.

# Reflection 1

## ENCOUNTER THAT LEADS TO TRANSFORMATION

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### OPENING PRAYER

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.  
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.  
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I may love but what is holy.  
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.  
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.*  
(YOUCAT 101)

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### READING: JOHN 1, 35-39

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.

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### REFLECTION

Please reflect on the following questions.

- Who is Jesus Christ for you? Why is he worth following?
  - How do you invite Christ to be a part of your family?
  - Who accompanies you on your faith journey to follow Christ?
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### CALL TO ACTION

Reflect on the introduction and vision of the Pastoral Plan and identify key words and concepts that inspire you.

## Reflection 2

### HOW WAS THIS PASTORAL PLAN DEVELOPED AND WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

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#### OPENING PRAYER

*Most high and glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart  
and grant me right faith, sure hope, and perfect charity.  
Fill me, Lord, with understanding and knowledge,  
that I may fulfill your holy command. Amen*  
(YOUCAT 124)

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#### EVANGELII GAUDIUM 1 – POPE FRANCIS

“THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL” fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew . . . I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come.”

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#### REFLECTION

- A pastoral plan is a document that guides the people of the diocese to accomplish the Church’s mission. What opportunities does a pastoral plan offer to help me grow in my relationship with Christ? Can you identify a moment in your childhood, adolescence or adulthood that has brought you to an encounter with Christ?
  - How do you encounter the person of Jesus Christ in your family? What opportunities can you intentionally create in order for your family to encounter Christ?
  - Who in your community can benefit from your sharing the vision of the pastoral plan? How can this be of benefit to them?
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#### CALL TO ACTION

Read the part of the Vision of the Pastoral Plan (Where do we want to be?) and identify one thing that you can do on a personal level, with your family and with your community to embrace the vision of the Pastoral Plan.

## Reflection 3

### REFLECT ON TODAY'S OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES IN OUR DIOCESE, PARISHES AND FAMILIES.

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#### OPENING PRAYER

*Lord, God of peace, we thank you for all the longing, all the efforts,  
all the striving that your Spirit of peace kindles in our time.  
Open our spirits and our hearts to all our brothers and sisters  
who are now in need of love, so that, more and more,  
we may become bearers of peace. Amen.*  
(YOUCAT 130)

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#### READING: GALATIANS 3:28-29

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.

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#### REFLECTION

- Tell a story of your experience encountering people from other cultures.
  - In what ways does your parish community attend to the reality of your family? How has your family experienced change from one generation to the next?
  - Many parishes have priests from other parts of the world. How does this reality affect the community, and what other opportunities does this offer your parish?
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#### CALL TO ACTION

- Research the story of how your family came to the United States.
- If possible interview a family member or parishioner from a previous generation in order to learn about how their faith has grown through their life.

## Reflection 4

### IDENTIFY AND REFLECT ON THE PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE PASTORAL PLAN

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#### OPENING PRAYER

*I am not afraid, my LORD, for you have created me. You call me by name. I am yours!  
When I pass through the waters, you are with me, and through rivers –  
they shall not overwhelm me. When I walk through fire I shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume me. For you are the LORD my God, the Holy One, my Savior!  
I am precious in your sight, and you love me. For your glory you have created,  
formed and fashioned each one by your name. You alone are God,  
now and for evermore. Since you are by me, I do not fear. Amen.*

(YOUCAT 23)

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#### NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS, 17 A

The New Evangelization does not seek to invite people to experience only one moment of conversion but rather to experience the gradual and lifelong process of conversion: to draw all people into a deeper relationship with God, to participate in the sacramental life of the Church, to develop a mature conscience, to sustain one's faith through ongoing catechesis, and to integrate one's faith into all aspects of one's life.

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#### REFLECTION

- What does it mean to say that your faith journey is a lifelong process of conversion? Where are you on this faith journey?
  - How could the guiding principles in the pastoral plan help you to engage members of your own family who no longer participate in the life of the church?
  - How does your parish community embrace the guiding principles of the Pastoral Plan?
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#### CALL TO ACTION

Identify and reflect on the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy and how they can become the basis for an encounter with Jesus Christ.

# Reflection 5 – Goal 1

## PROVIDE SPIRITUAL FORMATION THAT LEADS TO ENCOUNTER

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### OPENING PRAYER

*Where should I go? – Lead me there. Who is this I am meeting? – Show me the person.*

*What should I speak of, or not speak of? – Show me what to do.*

*What do you want to do, my God? Don't let me stand in your way. Amen.*

*(YOUCAT 23)*

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### READING: JOHN 21:17

He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time. "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

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### REFLECTION BASED ON THE 3 INITIATIVES FOR THIS GOAL

*Develop a spiritual formation strategy that fosters **encounter** by awaking faith, engaging the heart and **transforming** believers.*

- How would you describe the word "encounter?"
- How was your faith awakened in your home and with your family?
- What are the stories of encounter with Jesus Christ that have led to a transformation of the whole community?

*Create pastoral strategies that support the family as the Domestic Church; a place of **transforming** spiritual growth for forming disciples.*

- What does "Domestic Church" mean to you?
- What family activities reflect your understanding of Domestic Church?
- How does your parish community promote and honor the family as the Domestic Church?

For more information about the family as Domestic Church:

[www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) or [www.domestic-church.com](http://www.domestic-church.com)

*Identify pastoral approaches that overcome obstacles and increase opportunities to participate in the Church's sacramental life as a means of deepening faith and witness.*

- In what ways do you take part in the sacramental life of the church?
- How do the sacraments become opportunities of bringing your family closer together?
- How does your parish community welcome people who may not be able to participate in the sacraments?

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### **CALL TO ACTION**

Identify and explore the opportunities available to learn more about your faith and participate in retreat experiences that lead to an encounter with Jesus Christ.



## Reflection 6 – Goal 2

### DEVELOP A CULTURE OF MINISTRY THAT SUSTAINS TRANSFORMATION OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES TO BE MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

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#### OPENING PRAYER

*Whom shall I send? Here I am, Lord. Send me! Send me, Lord, wherever you please, for when I am sent by you, then I am quite sure that you will help me – in whatever situation I find myself – to fulfill what you ask. Amen.*  
(YOUCAT 76)

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#### READING: ROMANS 12:5

So we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.

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#### REFLECTION BASED ON THE 3 INITIATIVES FOR THIS GOAL

*Strengthen, nourish, and support ministry by focusing on the spiritual and professional formation of priests, deacons, consecrated religious women and men and lay ministers.*

- What does the word “ministry” mean to you? How are you already a minister?
- How do the members of your family minister to each other? How does your family serve others in the community and neighborhoods?
- How does your parish community nourish and support those in ministry (priests, deacons, professed religious women and men and lay ministers)?

*Change the culture of ministry within parishes, schools, Catholic entities and other ministries so that it is collaborative, **transformative**, unified and shared.*

- How do you collaborate with others?
- Tell a story in which your family learned the benefit of collaboration and how did this become a transformative experience?
- Describe a parish activity or event at which the community became united and shared their talents? In what way was this transformative for the parish community?

*Call, form and support pastoral leaders from different cultural communities and demographics, especially among Hispanic youth and young adults.*

- “So we, though many, are one body in Christ.” How do you see yourself as part of this one body in Christ made up of different cultures?
- Recognizing that the family is the “first seminary”, how does your family promote the notion of the home being a domestic seminary that fosters vocation?
- How does your parish invite people from different cultures into leadership, especially among Hispanic youth and young adults?

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### **CALL TO ACTION**

Identify the various ministries in your parish and the diocese and reflect on how they can become instruments of collaboration.



## Reflection 7 – Goal 3

### STRENGTHEN CHRISTIAN WITNESS AND OUTREACH TO TRANSFORM INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

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#### OPENING PRAYER

*Open my eyes, O Lord, to the wonders of your love.  
With the blind man, I cry out: Savior, let me see!  
Open my ears, O Lord, to my brothers' cry for help.  
Do not let my heart close up against their need.  
Open my hands, O Lord, for the beggars at my door.  
They await their portion too, Lord grant me the grace to share. Amen.  
(YOUCAT 134)*

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#### READING: MATTHEW 28:19

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.

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#### REFLECTION BASED ON THE 3 INITIATIVES FOR THIS GOAL

*Strengthen the commitment to be disciples in today's society by being **transformed** through an **encounter** with Jesus Christ.*

- What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- How does your family witness their Catholic faith in today's society?
- How does your parish intentionally reach out to your local community?

*Create strategies to strengthen and enliven our outreach and engagement to and with culturally diverse communities.*

- A culture is a way of life for a group of people: the behaviors, beliefs, values and symbols that they accept and pass them on from one generation to the next. How does this definition broaden your understanding of culture?
- What is the culture of your family? What do you do and why do you do it?
- In what ways does your parish community reflect the cultural makeup of your neighborhood?





## Diocese of Austin

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Phone (512) 949-2400 • Fax (512) 949-2520  
[www.austindiocese.org/pastoralplan](http://www.austindiocese.org/pastoralplan)

### **RESOURCES:**

New American Bible Revised Edition

YOUCAT Youth Prayer Book

*Evangelii Gaudium*: The Joy of the Gospel

National Directory for Catechesis

[www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

*Strengthen outreach and engagement with those at the periphery of society including the poor and the disadvantaged.*

- In what ways have you had an encounter with those who are poor, at the periphery of society?
- In what ways does your family counter the notion of our “throw-away society?”
- How does your parish share its resources among organizations and other parishes in need?

### **CALL TO ACTION**

Identify and study Catholic social teaching including church documents, such as, *Evangelii Gaudium*: Joy of the Gospel and *Laudato Si*: On Care for our Common Home.

