News



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by Catholic News Service

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Archbishop Paul D. Etienne of Seattle has introduced new pastoral planning and strategic planning initiatives, both part of an effort he expects will rebuild and strengthen the Catholic Church in western Washington.

Announcing the initiatives in a letter to Catholics Feb. 22, Etienne said they will help the church respond to challenges posed by the clergy sexual abuse crisis, a shortage of priests, the loss of young people from active church life, and the lack of new parishioners across the archdiocese despite the region's booming population.

"While we cannot ignore these challenges, we also cannot let them define us," the letter said. "Instead, we must retrain our focus and renew our commitment to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The pastoral planning effort will involve the convening of a new archdiocesan pastoral council this summer. Its members will "provide valuable lay insight in the creation of an updated pastoral plan," the archbishop wrote.

Noting that the initiative stems from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium" ("The Joy of the Gospel"), Etienne said the council will seek input from Catholics across the archdiocese.

"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," the letter said.

The strategic planning initiative will be led by Seattle Auxiliary Bishop Daniel H. Mueggenborg. The effort will evaluate archdiocesan resources and infrastructure to ensure they are best serving the Catholic community, the message said.

Etienne was appointed coadjutor archbishop of Seattle April 29, 2019, and later succeeded Archbishop J. Peter Sartain, who retired in September.

The archdiocese has 169 parishes, missions and pastoral centers, 73 schools, about 300 priests and more than 5,000 employees.

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