Embracing the Future

The Very Rev. Brandon Macadaeg has one appeal to parishioners of the Diocese of Oakland: hear once the story of what Jesus Christ has done for us; that is the extraordinary news of the Gospel. It is strong inspiration for the task ahead — the Mission Alignment Process.

Local Roots

Father Brandon Macadaeg grew up in different parts of the diocese, attending Our Lady of the Rosary in Union City and All Saints School in Hayward. He graduated from The Catholic University of America, receiving a combined bachelor's and master's degree in philosophy. During those years, he entered the seminary and, at the request of then-Bishop Salvatore Cordileone, went on to study theology at the North American College in Rome.

Father Brandon was ordained for service in the Diocese of Oakland in 2013. After ordination, he became the parochial vicar at Holy Spirit Parish in Fremont. In 2017, he was assigned by Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ to the parishes of St. Lawrence O'Toole and St. Paschal Baylon, where he worked to merge the two parishes into one: Divine Mercy Parish. When the Very Rev. Jay Matthews passed away in 2019, Bishop Barber assigned Father Brandon to serve as the pastor and rector of the Cathedral of Christ the Light.

Making Disciples

In a recent conversation about the Mission Alignment Process, Father shared “that the most important goal of the Church is simple: To Make Disciples. Jesus, in fact, even commanded that of his disciples when he ascended into heaven. (Matthew 28:19) Jesus has lovingly raised authentic, joy-filled missionary disciples in the Diocese of Oakland, and we want them to flourish, to be on fire with the love of Jesus and boldly share the good news that Jesus is the answer to the desires of every human heart.”

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Likewise, the goal of the commission leading the process is to make sure all the resources of the diocese are effectively channeled for the formation of missionary disciples and the sharing of good news. Engage those on fire and set them up for success in seeking the lost and sharing the Gospel. This, Father Brandon reminds us, is the spiritual heart of the process. The goal of the commission is about people and what God is doing in the lives of His people.

This summons is clearly in line with the vision of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who said, “We need to move from a pastoral ministry of ‘mere conservation’ to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry.” (Evangeli Gaudium)

“We know there are issues and problems we are facing but we can’t let those issues distract us from furthering the mission of Christ,” Father Brandon said. “We must align everything we have: parishes, leaders, treasures.

“We are led by the Holy Spirit and are convinced that God is calling us to align the resources of this diocese to people who are courageously living their faith,” he said. “We recognize that we have resources that need to be oriented to helping people flourish as disciples. We want these disciples to be successful in growing deeper in their faith and live out their faith wherever God wants them.”

“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 [the Church’s] self-preservation” (Evangeli Gaudium)
How to Best Serve the People

Father Brandon stresses that parishes must be able to serve the people. As a diocese, we are called to move to a more decisively apostolic mindset of being Church; the framework which characterized the early Church, where Christians were overwhelmed by Jesus’ love for them and bold in their conviction to share the message of Christ to everyone without counting the costs. For many decades, we have lost our apostolic courage and have been operating in a Christendom model of church life, where the Church had been operating within wider society that was more or less aligned to Christian truths.

Sadly, our comfort in a Christendom era made the Church lukewarm in evangelizing, resulting in the posture of working to maintain structures, institutions or ways of doing things, that therefore make the Church unable to cope with the current culture around us.

To move forward, he says, we need a more bold and apostolic approach to being Church today. “I agree with Pope Francis that the Church’s way of doing things should be channeled not for preservation but for transmitting the good news. I am confident and prayerful that the Mission Alignment Process will set us on the right trajectory for where the Lord is leading us in this modern era.”

It’s an honor, he says, to be serving on the Steering Committee of the MAP Commission, along with the co-chairs, Very Rev. Lawrence D’Anjou, vicar general of the diocese, and Rick Medeiros.

Equally important, Father Brandon chairs the MAP subcommittee on priests. The task of that subcommittee is to support the priest survey portion of the process and, with the subcommittee’s team of priests, will analyze resulting data for consideration by Bishop Barber, highlighting the great gifts exhibited by our courageous priests.

How to Best Serve Our Priests

The goal is to create an experience for priests that will benefit their ongoing formation, providing clarity on preferences and skills. It is critical that 100% of the active priests will have completed their personal surveys. The team will provide mentors and mentorship to the priests in the diocese as they examine their individual strengths relating to parish life. Retired priests’ participation provides wisdom and expertise about where the diocese has been. The goal is for priests to come through this process with a deeper awareness of leadership preferences and skills, a future-oriented growth plan and a network for pastoral support.

What’s Next?

Father Brandon reminds us that this process can only be effective if we begin with trusting in the power of the Gospel. Pope St. John Paul II once wrote that the ardent proclamation of the Gospel can “one day overwhelm someone and bring them to the decision to entrust themselves to Jesus Christ by faith.” (Catechesi Tradendae 25) We must hear again the story of what Jesus Christ has done for each of us personally.

Father Brandon reminds us of the Gospel: God created us out of infinite goodness and saw that we are “very good.” We were captured by the lies of the evil one, who tricked us into thinking that we can be happy without God. God sent his Son to be our Savior and Redeemer, who has humiliated the evil one and destroyed death, re-creating us and giving us access to the Father. We each have the invitation to respond deeply to get his world back. May all of us rediscover the power and beauty of this Good News to become the missionary disciples Jesus needs for our local Church.

Ultimately this is the Lord’s work, Father Brandon reminds us. God is the architect and He is leading our diocese. Therefore Father said, “Let us commit ourselves to ardent prayer and active discipleship for that is the key to unlocking a diocese committed to mission.”

LEARN MORE at oakdiocese.org/mission-alignment-process.

Mission Alignment Process Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, look kindly upon the Diocese of Oakland as we take stock of the many gifts you have given us.

Send your Holy Spirit to inspire and guide us so that our efforts to proclaim the saving Gospel our Lord Jesus Christ more effectively may bear tremendous fruit.

May we, as your people, courageously proceed on this path of self-reflection and renewal.

In the end, with your divine assistance, we know that we cannot fail.

Holy Mary, Queen of the World and St. Francis de Sales, co-patrons of our Diocese, pray for us!