



# ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

July 22, 2022

Feast of St. Mary Magdalene

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

St. Mary Magdalene was the first disciple entrusted with the message of the Gospel. After his resurrection, Jesus Christ tasked her to share this joyful news with his apostles. As disciples, we all share in this mission to share the Gospel with those around us.

For many years, the Holy Spirit has placed on my heart the importance of forming missionary disciples; that we are all called to share with others the news of our personal encounter with Jesus Christ and how he has changed our lives. I have worked especially with our priests at our recent convocations exploring evangelization and moving towards intentional discipleship. Four years ago we were blessed with the experience of More Than You Realize. Two years ago, in the midst of Covid, the priests experienced the power of the kerygma with Fr. John Riccardo and ACTS XXIX. Both of these experiences bore great fruit in orienting us towards mission.

This move towards mission coincided with Pope Francis' announcement of a synod on synodality and his request that every diocese in the world have a synodal experience between October of 2021 and April of 2022. Here in the Archdiocese of Denver, we discerned in a synodal way where God is calling us on mission. I want to thank all of you who participated in this initiative. I know we asked for a significant amount of time in prayer and discussion but giving such space for the Holy Spirit bore great fruit. I want to thank in a special way all the pastors, parish staff, and parish representatives who facilitated this encounter of prayerful listening to the Lord.

As the Holy Father said in an audience this January, "synodality is not a simple discussion...nor is synodality the search for the consensus of the majority...no, it is a style to be assumed, in which the main protagonist is the Holy Spirit, who is expressed first and foremost in the Word of God, read, meditated upon, and shared together." For this reason, we began our synodal journey with our Advent Retreat, where every parish heard the foundational story of the Gospel over four Sundays in Advent. We heard how God created us out of love, how we were captured by the devil and enslaved to sin and death, how Christ came to rescue us, and how this great drama demands a response on our part.

Once everyone heard the Gospel, we then moved to a parish phase where we prayed that the Holy Spirit would enlighten us about the mission of the disciple, the parish, and the archdiocese in our current time. Clear themes emerged, common across all geographical and cultural areas of our

archdiocese, including a strong focus on the mission of the family. In March, representatives from the various parishes, apostolates, and movements of the archdiocese met for a weekend to pray further into the themes that came up during the parish phase.

In these pages, I am pleased to share with you the summary of what we heard in prayer at the March event.

This experience is not over. We asked the Holy Spirit to reveal where we are being called on mission and we cannot refuse to walk the path he has shown us. I have been meeting with my Mission Leadership Team to further discern the steps we need to take to put into action what the Lord has asked of the Archdiocese as a whole. Over the coming months, we will work with various teams in the pastoral center and others across the Archdiocese to continue addressing the directives received in prayer through this synodal discernment process. The pastoral center will also be looking to provide support to our parishes as they now turn to the task of what the Lord invited them to do when they prayed about the mission of the parish. In addition to the missions of the Archdiocese and the parish, we also spent time praying about the mission of each family and disciple; I encourage everyone to take seriously what you heard in prayer and what we heard collectively as an Archdiocese regarding how we are called to better live our mission as families and individual disciples.

After clearly experiencing the Holy Spirit at work, we at the pastoral center have incorporated this model of synodal discernment into many of our meetings, giving God the time and space to reveal his plans to us by engaging in prayer and attentive listening to the Trinity and to others, before engaging in discussion. I would encourage you to incorporate this process, explained in the following pages, into your own lives, with your families, and even at your work. We live in an apostolic age and all of us are called to be disciples on mission. We spent the last few months discerning what this mission is, now let us go out to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ just as St. Mary Magdalene did on that first Easter morning.

St. Mary Magdalene, apostle to the apostles, pray for us!

May the Holy Spirit bless and strengthen you!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Samuel J. Aquila". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L.  
Archbishop of Denver