

SURPRISED BY THE SPIRIT

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coincidences. I do believe that there are moments of convergence when the voice of the Spirit breaks through the dizzying pace of our lives to call us to action. Unexpected, unpredictable, beyond our control, they signal the action of the transforming Spirit of God at work in the world. Surprised by the Spirit, for those who have *eyes to see and ears to hear*, they represent a call to action.

The first was the surprise visit of our new bishop, John Barres to the noon Mass at Infant Jesus on July 2nd. The bishop arrived early to spend time meeting and greeting parishioners before the celebration. During his homily, Bishop Barres’ passion and enthusiasm were evident as he proclaimed his vision of dramatic missionary growth for the church on Long Island. He addressed a call to all of us to become collaborators in making the vision a reality.

The bishop drew our attention to the feast of Saints Peter & Paul coming up during the week. Peter: the first to answer Jesus’ question: *Who do you say that I am? “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* That same Peter denied Jesus and ran away from the tragedy and suffering of his passion and death. Humbled by his failures, transformed by the Spirit, Peter repented. Jesus entrusted to this very human Peter the responsibility to build the community of disciples.

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Paul was different. A zealot, convinced of his interpretation of his Jewish faith, and his judgment that the followers of Jesus’ WAY were blasphemers, sought authorization of the Jewish leaders to stamp them out wherever he found them. A man with the courage of his convictions, he set out on his mission. Stopped in his tracks by a vision, he heard Jesus’ say, *Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?* From that moment forward, he changed his life. This was the man Jesus called to become his Apostle to the Gentiles.

The second event, held in Orlando, Florida from July 1 through 4, ***The Convocation of Catholic Leaders: the Joy of the Gospel*** was sponsored by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCC). This first of its kind this gathering brought together 3000 Catholic leaders, bishops, 200 Catholic organizations, and delegations from dioceses to consider how the Church in the US can better promote the gospel in today’s context. The gathering took its lead from Pope Francis’ vision in his landmark encyclical letter, ***The Joy of the Gospel***, a call urging all Christians to be missionary disciples going to the margins to preach the gospel. Be alert to the outcomes which will undoubtedly appear in the Catholic press in the weeks and months ahead.

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Where do you fit in? How is Christ calling you to use your gifts and talents? Now is the time to respond. The call to become missionary disciples is urgent. **Why not you? Why not us? Why not now?**

