

*Monthly study guides can be used in personal prayer and for small group reflection.*

## APRIL 2025

### SCRIPTURE

Read: John 14:1-14

### REFLECT:

1. This passage is part of the 'Last Supper Discourse' in John's Gospel. What is the significance of Jesus giving this message at the Last Supper?
2. What does Jesus mean when he refers to himself as 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life'? What does this message mean for us? How do we internalize it in our lives?
3. What might God be calling us to do in response to this passage?

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### READ: A selection from *Via Fidelis* — Chapter 1

The *Via Fidelis* — the faithful way — is the way of the Lord Jesus, as he said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6). Each of us who have been baptized in the mystery of Jesus Christ have been chosen and are invited to walk the faithful way with the Lord. He tells us: "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you" (Jn 15:16).

The faithful way compels us to discern, recognize and accept God's will in our lives. The will of God speaks to us. It is not a distant or removed voice, but is the "still, small voice" (see 1 Kgs 19:12) that resonates in the inner recesses of our hearts.

The will of God is our best path to enriching the common good, building up a culture of life, and ensuring authentic human flourishing in our society. It is the source of the abundant life offered to us in Jesus Christ (see John 10:10).

### REFLECT:

1. How does the scripture passage shed light on the selection from *Via Fidelis*?
2. What does it mean to discern God's will in our lives and as a community? How do I respond to God's calling in my daily life?
3. Are we attuned to listening for God's will in our lives? How can we improve this listening posture?



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## MAY 2025

### SCRIPTURE

Read: Matthew 16:13-28

### REFLECT:

1. What is the connection between Peter's confession of faith and Jesus' prediction of his passion and death?
2. Why are the conditions of discipleship given after the prediction of the Jesus' passion and death?
3. What might God be calling us to do in response to this passage?

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### READ: A selection from *Via Fidelis* — Chapter 1

In Jesus Christ, therefore, we seek to live as the children of God, to think beyond ourselves and our own interests, give mercy, show compassion, welcome all men and women as true brothers and sisters, offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, and allow for the transformation of our minds so that we may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect (see Rom 12:1-2). In all these ways, we work and labor to always follow the will of God, to live as the Lord Jesus lived, and to remain on his faithful way.

The faithful way is not an easy way. It requires much from us. Of course, it is not the way of the proud, or arrogant, or haughty. It is not the way of the greedy and selfish. It is definitely not the way of the unforgiving and lustful. It is not the way of the envious.

The faithful way is about love, a true love that is willing to die to itself in order to serve the good in others (agape love). The Lord Jesus tells us: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life?" (Mt 16:24-26).

### REFLECT:

1. How does the scripture passage shed light on the selection from *Via Fidelis*?
2. What does it mean for us to think of God's path for our lives in terms of the cross of Christ?
3. What blocks our way along this path? What might we be able to do about that?



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## JUNE 2025

### SCRIPTURE

Read John 17:1-26

### REFLECT:

1. Why is Jesus' message here to his followers? Why is it significant that he imparts this message just before his death?
2. What does it mean to belong to Christ and to realize that Christ recognizes us as his own?
3. What might God be calling us to do in response to this passage?

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### READ: A selection from *Via Fidelis* — Chapter 1

In the Upper Room, as the Lord Jesus prepared to give himself up for our salvation, he prayed to the Father: "But now I am coming to you. I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely. I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth" (Jn 17:13-19).

The prayer of the Lord Jesus to the Father was deeply personal and social. We dare to say a summary of his teaching and testimony. It came from the depths of his heart. He was praying for us! The Lord Jesus was offering supplications for us. The Lord Jesus prayed for our joy, our protection, and our consecration. As his followers, we cannot allow the prayer of the Lord Jesus to have been made in vain and to go unanswered in our society today. The Lord has prayed for us. We have received a commissioning, a divine calling from him.

As Bishop of Charleston, I call on all believers and all people of good will, particularly the Catholic community in South Carolina, to respond to this call of the Lord Jesus, to leave the things of darkness aside and to recommit themselves to Lord and his faithful way — the *Via Fidelis*.

### REFLECT:

1. The bishop cites a portion of our passage in *Via Fidelis*. Why do you think it is important to highlight that we, as those belonging to Christ, do not "belong" to the world? What does that mean in practice?
2. The bishop also picks up on the theme present throughout John's Gospel, a theme of darkness and light. He calls us to leave darkness aside to follow Christ. What does it mean to think of our way, the "faithful way," as being the way of light?
3. What challenges might we face coming from "the world"? How might we rise to meet them?



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## JULY 2025

### SCRIPTURE

Read John 1:35-51

### REFLECT:

1. Why do you think first disciples are quick to follow Jesus? Are we that quick to respond to his call?
2. How does John the Baptist demonstrate great humility in service to the Gospel? How can we imitate the example of John the Baptist in our lives?
3. What are some ways that we can extend Jesus' invitation to "Come and see" to others? What should we bring people to see in order to effectively share the Good News and introduce them to Jesus?

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### READ: A selection from *Via Fidelis* — Chapter 1

The catechumenate (OCIA) was restored by the Second Vatican Council and serves as an invaluable resource on how to lead a non-believer into the fullness of faith through holy baptism. The process, however, is not only for those seeking baptism. The same process can be used to help those already baptized to go deeper into the faith, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us:

"Where infant Baptism has become the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. *By its very nature infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate.* Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth. The Catechism has its proper place here" (#1231, italics added).

In seeking to provide the fullness of a post-baptismal catechumenate to all the baptized, we will walk the *Via Fidelis* and seek the will of God together. Our walk will not be aimless but will have definitive steps. These steps include:

1. Evangelization and the Precatechumenate/Inquiry
2. The Catechumenate
3. The Period of Purification and Enlightenment
4. Mystagogy

### REFLECT:

1. The bishop describes *Via Fidelis* as modeled on the gradual journey of deepening faith that we call the catechumenate. Why do you think this model lends itself well to our journey as a Church?
2. How is the catechumenal process described here similar to Jesus' invitation to "Come and see" in the Gospel passage above?
3. Why is it fitting for us to remember our own baptism as we embark on this journey?



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## AUGUST 2025

### SCRIPTURE

Read Matthew 28:16-20

### REFLECT:

1. What is Jesus' message here? Why do you think this is the message that concludes Matthew's Gospel?
2. This passage is called "the Great Commission." What does it mean to be given a mission?
3. How can we take Jesus' words here and apply them to our lives? How can we make sure that the mission Jesus gives here is the mission that we are carrying out?

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### READ: A selection from *Via Fidelis* — Chapter 3

Love calls for a generous sharing of the Good News. It is at the feet of the eucharistic Lord where we must hear and heed the words of his Great Commission. As St. Matthew recounts: "The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age'" (28:16-20).

The Second Vatican Council echoed this commission and reminded us all that the Church is missionary by her very nature: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (*Ad Gentes*, #2).

As followers of the Lord Jesus and members of his Church, we must proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to all the nations. This is not just the responsibility of priests and religious, but of all the baptized. Each one of us has a unique role to play in sharing the Gospel with others and we must commit ourselves to playing our part to the best of our ability.

### REFLECT:

1. In this passage, the bishop comments on the Great Commission. Why do you think he prefaces this by describing sharing the Good News as an act of love? Does seeing it that way change the way we share the Gospel?
2. The passage cited from the Second Vatican Council talks about the Church as "missionary by her very nature." What do you think that means? What should we expect the life of the Church to look like? How do we, individually, participate in that life?
3. The bishop tells us that we each have a "unique role" in evangelization. What do you think your unique role is? How is God calling you to put that into action?



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## SEPTEMBER 2025

### SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 10:1-12

### REFLECT:

1. What do you think it means to say, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few”? How is this true today in our setting?
2. Why do you think Jesus asks those he sends to not carry a money bag or sandals and to not greet anyone along the way? What might this mean for us?
3. In what way is Jesus sending you out? To whom are you sent? What is the message you are bringing?

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### READ: A selection from *Via Fidelis* — Chapter 3

During his ministry, the Lord Jesus sent out 70 disciples to cure the sick, cast out bad spirits, and proclaim the kingdom. Just so, we will be inviting and calling forth leaders from our parishes around the diocese to guide our efforts to evangelize, and we will be encouraging all the baptized to live out their call to share the good news of Jesus.

Evangelization is uncomfortable and should be at times since it calls us out of our comfort zone and leads us to give testimony to Jesus Christ. We live in a secular world that does not want to hear the Gospel. We live in a materialistic world that rejects the spiritual world and eternal realities. We ourselves can oftentimes get locked in our social circles and only associate with those who agree with us.

The *Via Fidelis* expects more. The Great Commission commands us to break from our routine and normal social networks and to share the saving message of Jesus Christ with everyone we meet. The command of the Lord is based on love, since people need the mercy, hope, and promise of eternal life that is given to us in Jesus Christ.

### REFLECT:

1. In this passage, the bishop reminds us of our baptismal call to share the Gospel. How often do you think about Baptism and the call that goes along with it? In what ways can you respond to this call?
2. In this passage, evangelization is described as sometimes “uncomfortable.” In what ways is this true? How can we get past that discomfort?
3. What are some concrete ways that you can share this Good News with others? How is every encounter with another person an opportunity to share the Gospel?





# PROCLAIM THE FAITH YEAR 1 STUDY GUIDES

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## OCTOBER 2025

### SCRIPTURE

Read Mt 13:1-23

### REFLECT:

1. Why do you think Jesus uses this image of the “sower” to talk about the Kingdom of God? What can we ascertain from pondering the figure of the sower and his behavior in this passage?
2. What might the different types of soil tell us about receptiveness to the Gospel message? How might this affect how we think about evangelizing?
3. What type of soil do you think you are at this moment? What areas of potential growth can you identify?

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### READ: A selection from *Via Fidelis* — Chapter 3

When we hear the word “evangelization,” we often imagine knocking on people’s doors or preaching on a streetcorner. While such efforts are sometimes helpful, this is not how most of us will be called to evangelize.

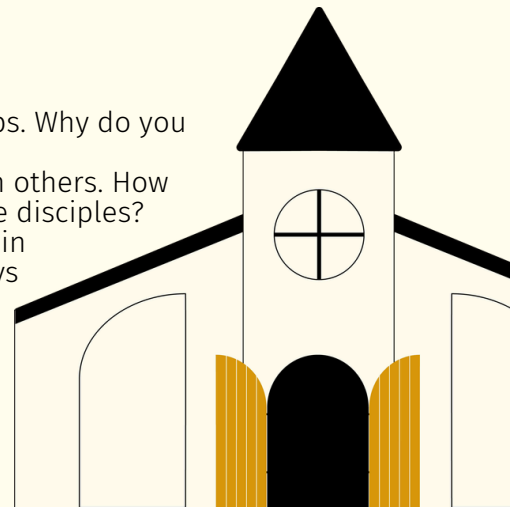
Rather, evangelization begins by walking alongside the people who God has placed in our lives — our family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers. We form relationships with them and meet them where they are. This is what Jesus did when he first began to walk with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, asking about them and listening to their worries and fears.

In the context of this relationship, we can help to gradually establish trust and clear away obstacles that might be hindering the person’s relationship with God. By being approachable and joyful in living our faith, they can feel comfortable to inquire or pose questions to us about God.

This is a gradual process of “clearing the soil” so that their hearts might be better prepared to receive the seeds of faith, so that the seeds of faith can land in good soil rather than rocky soil (Mt 13:1-9). This preparation can be called “pre-evangelization.”

### REFLECT:

1. In this passage, the bishop talks about the importance of relationships. Why do you think this is such a key component for the process of evangelization?
2. The image invoked here from Emmaus is one of walking together with others. How does this inform our understanding of our baptismal mission to make disciples?
3. In what ways does understanding ourselves in the context of the soil in the “Parable of the Sower” help us to understand others? In what ways can we “cultivate the soil” in the hearts of those we walk with?



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## NOVEMBER 2025

### SCRIPTURE

Read 1 Cor 13:1-13

### REFLECT:

1. This well-known passage from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians discusses love. From reading the passage, what do you think Christian love looks like? What are the false forms of love against which Paul cautions?
2. In verses 8-9, Paul talks about the enduring character of love. What do you think he means by this?
3. In verse 11, Paul talks about "putting away childish things" as he has grown into adulthood. In what ways is this applicable to our growth in Faith?

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### READ: A selection from *Via Fidelis* — Chapter 3

As we walk with a person in their journey of faith, we can gradually introduce them to Jesus and his good news: that Jesus is God, that he created us with great love, that he died on the cross and rose from the dead, and that in him we can have forgiveness and a new life!

This is "evangelization." We share Jesus with love and gentleness, in a manner adapted to that person's spiritual needs. As St. Paul reminds us, "love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends" (1 Cor 13:4-8).

Evangelization is not just for priests or church staff: it is for all of us! Jesus is counting on all of us to help everyone know and love him. It will not be easy, and will sometimes involve suffering, but we are offering what every person is truly longing for.

True joy is found in God. It is expressed by our faith in him. This joy comes from the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is the answer to the deepest longing of the human heart and a foretaste here of the eternal joy that awaits those who love God. Our task is to accept this joy and share it with others, as St. John expressed: "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete" (Jn 15:11).

### REFLECT:

1. In this passage, the bishop discusses the gradualness of bringing someone to Christ by way of journeying together. How can we respond to this call in our own lives with the right balance of boldness and patience?
2. The bishop here reminds us that the call to evangelize is not simply for "priests and church staff" but for all of us. In what ways do we ourselves need to be reminded of this? How can we remind our fellow Catholics of this call?
3. In this selection, the bishop cites part of Paul's message to the Corinthians on love. Why is love something essential to the task of sharing the Gospel?



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## DECEMBER 2025

### SCRIPTURE

Read Ephesians 4:17-24

### REFLECT:

1. This passage from Ephesians discusses renewed life in Christ. Why is it important for us, as Christians, to constantly seek renewal? What does this renewal look like?
2. This passage contrasts life in Christ with “former” ways of life, outside of life in Christ. What is the difference that Christ makes in our own lives? How does that affect how we act outwardly?
3. In what follows this passage in Ephesians, we are told about forms of renewal in both individual and family life. What does it mean as communities and as families to seek renewal in Christ?

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### READ: A selection from *Via Fidelis* — Chapter 3

St. Paul teaches us that every family receives its name from God (Eph 3:15). The family, therefore, is sacred. Every good thing passes through the family. The first place where evangelization occurs is in the family. As such, our *Via Fidelis* is about honoring, supporting and walking with the Christian family.

The Second Vatican Council teaches us that “the family, is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state” (*Lumen Gentium*, #11).

As a Church, we place a special emphasis on praying for the families of our diocese and we dedicate them to the Holy Family. In our *Via Fidelis*, our Office of Family Life will continue to support and encourage the Christian family through its events and programs.

In our *Via Fidelis*, I call upon all the faithful of the diocese to invite friends and family members to come back to Mass. I encourage you to be open to difficult conversations as you walk with loved ones and work to bring them back home. We all need to show patience as we seek to evangelize and welcome back those who have fallen away, especially those who are dear to us.

### REFLECT:

1. In this passage, the bishop discusses the importance of the family in evangelization. Why is the family so important in this regard? How can we respond to this vision in our own lives?
2. The bishop here cites the Second Vatican Council and its description of the family as the Domestic Church. What do you think the Council means by this designation? How does this Domestic Church fit into the life of the local Church and that of the Universal Church?
3. At the end of this selection, the bishop asks us to invite our fallen away Catholic friends and family back to Church. What might this invitation look like? Can you think of anyone to whom you would like to extend this invitation?

