

## REAL PEOPLE

### REAL STORIES

My Name is Linda. I am in my early 50's. I attended a Catholic school for 12 years. Once I left home, I quit going to church. My husband and I were married in the Church, but we got so busy with a house, friends, and job responsibilities that we seldom made it to Mass. As our children came along, we had each of them baptized. Our families expected it. In second grade I enrolled them in CCD for 8 months so they could receive their first Communion. We seldom took them to Sunday Mass.



A few years ago, my oldest son was diagnosed with cancer. After a bone marrow transplant and several rounds of chemo he went into remission. But it was short lived. Then came all the experimental treatments. The thing that sustained me during that time was returning to my faith and even to church. I felt strengthened by the familiar rituals and prayers I grew up with.

When my son died, I received support from the parish I now attended. Most weeks I wouldn't have survived without my faith. When all else failed, I knew that God understood what it was like to lose a son.

My other two adult children still struggle with the illness and death of their brother. I've painfully come to realize that they did not have what my parents gave me - a foundation in Catholic faith.

I regret that I neglected my children's faith formation as they were growing up. But I have also learned that it's never too late to start, or resume, or continue our growth in faith.

## Learning our Faith

### Loving Our Faith

### Living Our Faith

#### A Summary of the Pastoral Letter

Bishop Brown's recently released Pastoral Letter begins by begging the Holy Spirit for the grace to inspire each and every one of us to seek a *heartfelt enthusiasm for our Catholic faith*. His concern is about the easy-going attitude toward the faith held by many. The problem he identifies is one of indifference. This is evident in the following indicators:

- Enrollment often drops dramatically after First Communion.
- Less than half of the Catholic students who attend our schools come to Mass on the weekend because their parents don't.
- The fervor that leads up to Confirmation fades and few teens remain involved after the celebration.
- After their wedding, few couples remain connected or involved in a parish.
- Those baptized and received at Easter often lose their enthusiasm, become disconnected and are not around after a year or two.
- Many of our catechists/teachers do not take the time to work on their basic certification in religious formation.
- While Catholics are the largest denomination in Orange County, the second largest is "former" Catholics.

The faith and commitment of many Catholics has not reached the depth needed to sustain their Catholic faith and keep up its practice over the course of their lives.

Bishop Brown's *challenge and invitation* is to each and every one of us. **He is asking that we make our own commitment to ongoing formation.** And it is this commitment by each and every Catholic in the Diocese of Orange to better know, love and live out his or her faith, that will turn this trend around.

**How far must I go to deepen my knowledge and practice my Catholic faith sufficiently?**

**What is expected of me?**

## Resources Available for ADULTS

***Institute for Pastoral Ministry (IPM)*** offers a variety of classes for adults who are seeking knowledge and spiritual enrichment. Additional Information at [www.rcbo.org](http://www.rcbo.org)

***On-line Adult Faith Formation*** from the University of Dayton. VLCFF is an Internet distance learning program with more than 25 classes in English and Spanish. For information go to [www.rcbo.org](http://www.rcbo.org)

***"Catholic News Service"*** reports the news which affects Catholics in their everyday life. Available at [www.Catholicnews.com](http://www.Catholicnews.com).

***"Magnificat"*** is filled with spiritual insight, exquisite art, and invaluable inspiration, in an easy-to-read, pocket-sized worship aid. An annual subscription provides 14 issues, one per month and a special issue for Holy Week and Christmas. [www.magnificat.net](http://www.magnificat.net)

***"Information for Growth (IFG)"*** is an instrument designed to assist individuals in assessing their level of religious knowledge and spirituality. Available at [www.ncea.org](http://www.ncea.org).

***"Vatican 2 Today"*** and ***"Catholic Update"*** concisely explores one key topic of importance to Catholics each month in a simple, four-page format. Both publications are available from [www.AmericanCatholic.org](http://www.AmericanCatholic.org)



My name is Jack. I am in my mid 30's and have worked for the same company since college. Lately I have been really struggling. It just seems like the people I work

with have no morals. One of my friends is having an affair with his assistant and wants me to cover for him. The company wants us to sell a product they know is defective. All the CEO seems to care about is the bottom line. I just feel as though nothing in my life has meaning anymore. It's all about the car you drive, the house you live in. Even my kids are pressuring me to buy them \$100 pairs of jeans and shoes. I just wish there was something more to life than accumulating all this stuff. It used to mean a lot to me, but it doesn't anymore.

My name is Evelyn. I am in my 70's, and my breast cancer has come back for the third time. I am terrified of death. I know my body won't last forever, but I am just not ready to think about



facing God. I'm not sure God will even welcome me when I die. I go to church, but I have never felt worthy of God's love. When I was a child, my mother would get upset when I didn't do what she asked. She often said that I was so bad, God probably forgot to put a soul in me. One time she got so angry with me and told me God would never forgive me and that I would burn in hell. I just can't get that out of my head. I am too embarrassed to talk to someone about it. How could I possibly explain that. What am I going to do? I'm not sure I have much time left.

Here are a few things to look for and pray for:

**1. Finding Christ working in ourselves.**

Our faith is real when we let Christ take hold of us and when we trust him even at times of doubt and worry.

**2. Committing to a faith that grows as we do.**

The faith that we experienced as a child will not serve us as an adult. It changes as we do.

**3. Loving our faith.**

Real love for the church exists beyond our expectations, disappointments and frustration. Faith consists in reacting before God as Mary did – with an unconditional “yes” to God.

**4. Discovering an overflowing faith.**

A living faith touches others. It gives without counting the cost. An overflowing faith knows what's really important and takes the time for it.

**5. Becoming grateful for the gift of faith**

The center of our Catholic life is the Eucharist - the Body and Blood of Christ given to us as a means of worshipping the Father out of *gratitude* for the gift of his Son.

**SEEK TO RENEW AND DEEPEN  
YOUR FAITH  
YOUR BELIEFS  
AND YOUR PRACTICES**

**A FINAL INVITATION**

*"I am inviting you to work with me in renewing the Catholic faith in Orange County. We all need to work together to become the wise, loving and giving Catholics that our Lord has called each of us to be."*

Tod David Brown

*Bishop of Orange*

**Resources Available  
for Parents & Families**

**"Take Out - Family Faith on the Go"** a monthly mini-magazine that gives families ideas for connecting their Catholic Faith with real life. \$24 per year. Available from [www.osv.com](http://www.osv.com).

**"Question of the Week"** from Resources for Christian Living (RCL) helps families break open the Sunday readings each week with a question geared for adults and one for children. Available at [www.wholecommunitycatechesis.com](http://www.wholecommunitycatechesis.com).

**"Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts."** Designed for busy families, this resource helps parents take advantage of the ordinary opportunities in family life to share faith. Available from [www.findingGod.org](http://www.findingGod.org). Click on the **parent tab**.

**Sadlier's "Family Faith Page"** is filled with ideas for living Catholic faith at home. Parents can subscribe to an email newsletter at [www.cyberfaith.com](http://www.cyberfaith.com).

**"At Home with our Faith"** is a newsletter for nurturing the spirituality of families. It has additional materials on its web site. [www.homefaith.com](http://www.homefaith.com)

**Life-long learning** is an accepted standard in many other areas of our life - in our profession, parenting, nutrition & exercise, etc. Why has it been so difficult for adults to understand this same principle in regard to faith? *"The faith formation of adults...is the principal form of catechesis, because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form."* Catechesi Tradendae #43

The General Catechetical Directory sets forth six tasks of life-long faith formation:

- Knowledge of the Faith
- Liturgical Life
- Moral Formation
- Prayer
- Communal Life
- Missionary Spirit

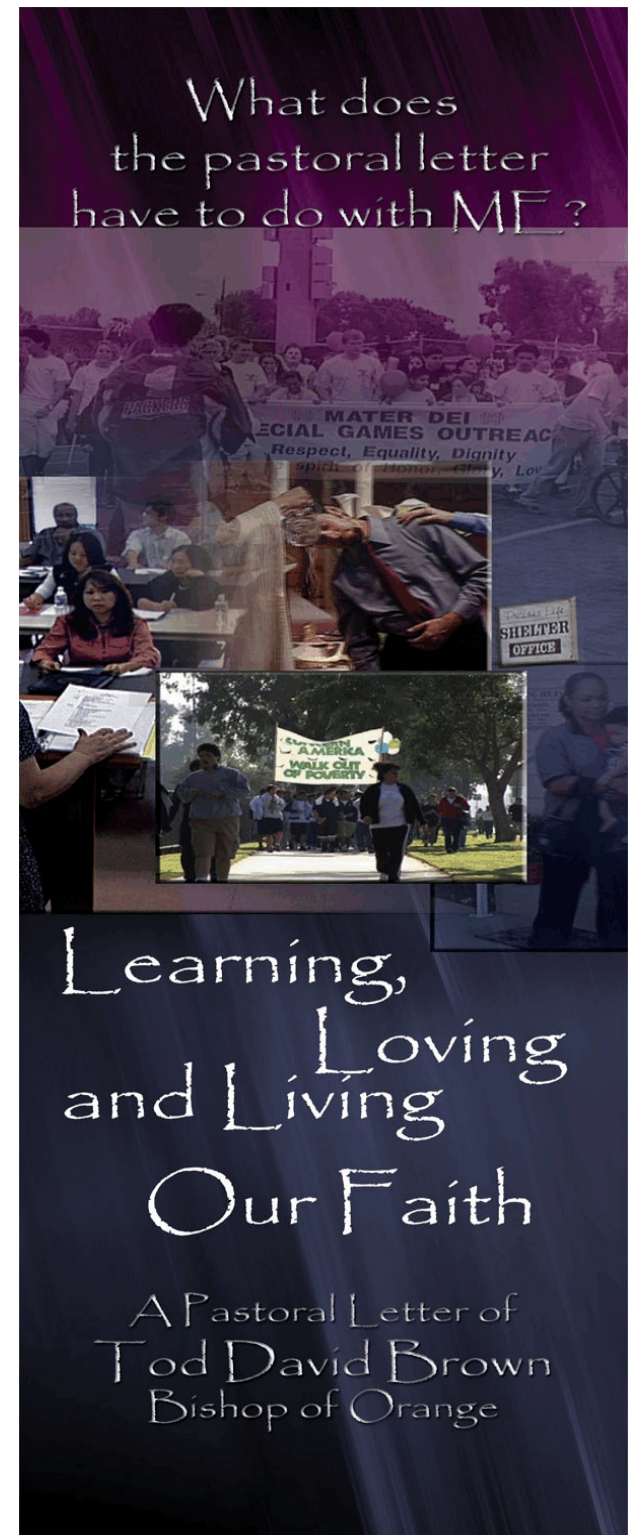
General Directory for Catechesis #84-87

*"Many baptized Catholics are still without any explicit personal attachment to Jesus Christ; they only have the capacity to believe that was placed within them by Baptism and the presence of the Holy Spirit."*

Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae #19 of Pope John Paul II on Catechesis in Our Time

**Diocese of Orange**

Marywood Center  
2811 East Villa Real Drive  
Orange, California 92867  
714-282-3000



What does  
the pastoral letter  
have to do with ME?

Learning,  
Loving  
and Living  
Our Faith

A Pastoral Letter of  
Tod David Brown  
Bishop of Orange



## What is a “Pastoral Letter?”

A Pastoral Letter is an official teaching of a local bishop on a particular issue or topic. While the bishop teaches on many levels, including his own preaching, his direction of diocesan priests and other officials, and any other public proclamation, the Pastoral Letter is a significant expression of the bishop’s teaching role.

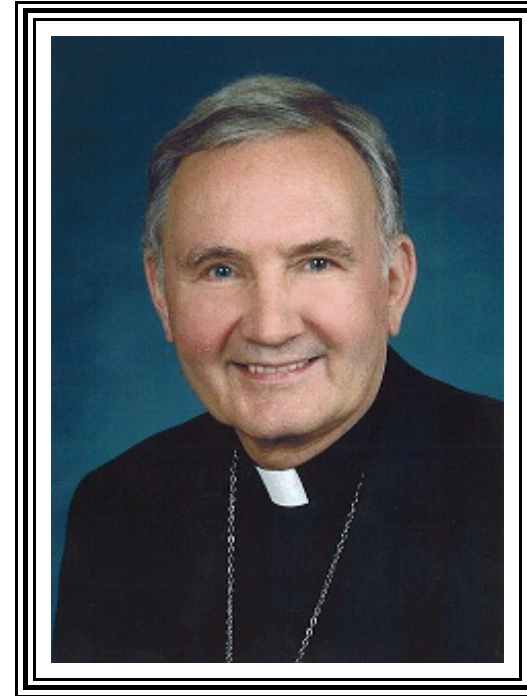
Pastoral Letters are rare - in many cases they are years apart during any bishop’s tenure - and thus a *pastoral letter invites careful attention on the part of the faithful.*

## Who should read it?

A Pastoral Letter is *addressed to the entire Catholic population* of the diocese. Everyone should read it. Its name, “pastoral” refers to the bishop’s role as “shepherd,” and thus the content is meant for the entire “flock.” In modern times, these terms may seem somewhat quaint, but people in every age seek guidance.

## What will I see in my parish?

Your pastor and other parish catechetical leaders are certain to take seriously the content and recommendations in the Pastoral Letter. Most parishes already offer opportunities for adult faith formation. You can expect your parish to continue, and to broaden these offerings. You can ask your pastor or staff *what adult faith formation opportunities are available*, and what might be coming soon.



**Bishop  
Tod  
David  
Brown**

*was installed as the third Bishop of Orange in September of 1998. He was born in San Francisco and has*

*one brother living in Orinda, CA. He attended St. John’s Seminary in Camarillo where he received his BA and received an STB from North American University, Rome. In addition he holds masters degrees in biblical theology and education from the University of San Francisco. Bishop Brown was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Monterey in 1963. He served as vicar, pastor, chairman of the Divine Worship Commission, Chairman of the Presbyterial Council and a member of the Diocesan Board of Education in addition to Chancellor, Moderator of the Curia, and Vicar General. He was ordained and installed as Bishop of Boise in 1988. Bishop Brown currently serves as the Chairman of the BCEIA Subcommittee on Interreligious Dialogue. Previously he served as the chairman of the Committee on the Laity and the Committee on Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs.*

**LOOK INSIDE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PASTORAL LETTER AND WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU!**

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