

Bishop Michael Warfel's Vision delivered August 11, 2010 at the first meeting of the "Developing a Culture of Stewardship" Meeting

One of the speakers for the recent conference in Billings, *Affirming a Culture of Life*, was Joan Rosenhauer, who works for CRS. In her talk she quoted Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta who once said, "God doesn't call us to be successful. God calls us to be faithful." She went on to say that she thought that Mother Teresa, with all deference, didn't quite get it right. She noted that it is when God's people are faithful, that they are most successful.

God desires that we are successful (effective) in how we live our faith. I once was watching an NBA play off game and in the crowd in the first row were Bill Gates & Paul Allen. Together the announcer noted that they were worth about \$80 billion. I thought, now if they could be my parishioners, thinking that they could make huge donations. After thinking a bit, I thought differently. In many ways, judging what others should give is a cop-out! It is not really up to me to say what others ought to be doing with their resources. It is up to me to discern what I should be doing with my resources. Of course, this is not to say that others shouldn't be challenged in this regard.

In this light, I do have a vision for life in the Diocese which requires all of God's people to discern the gifts they have received from God and put them at the service of the kingdom of God. It would be my hope that the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings would be a diocese:

- Where people would know welcome and hospitality at each parish and mission.
- Where comfort would be shown to those who are afflicted and challenge to those who are too comfortable, too complacent, too faithless.
- Where liturgy is celebrated in a way that informs the mind with the fullness of the Gospel message and inspires hearts through music, song, artistic environment and excellent preaching, preaching that makes real connections with daily life.
- Where sacraments are readily available and that all Catholics are able to receive them throughout all stages of their life.
- Where the poor and vulnerable, the needy and the marginalized are not only received into our parishes, but sought out.
- Where social justice is embodied in all members of the diocese.
- Where religious and spiritual formation and education is provided from the earliest years on into and through senior years.
- Where all members of the diocese know themselves as disciples.
- Where stewardship has become a way of life to the point where all initiatives and programs of the parishes and diocese are fully funded from our own resources and that there is no need for outside funding.

- Where evangelization is understood as a responsibility of all the baptized and efforts to invite people into the Church is fruitful; that the Rite of Christian Initiation be fully celebrated.
- Where parishes and diocesan ministries are fully staffed and adequately funded, including just salaries.
- Where people respond generously to calls to religious life and priesthood.
- Where Catholic schools flourish and receive strong support from parishes and local communities.
- Where we no longer live but Christ lives in us, to paraphrase St. Paul (Gal 2:20)