

I had the privilege attending the National Convocation for Catholic Leaders in Orlando as part of the Hartford delegation. It was hosted by the U.S. Bishops and attended by over 3,500 delegates from across the country. The event was an astonishing success and gave me great hope for the future of the Catholic Church in our country. I took detailed notes during each of the plenary sessions, Masses, speeches and workshops I attended. I wanted to share some of my observations with you:

- The main theme of the convocation was that every baptized Catholic must become personally committed to bringing the joy of the Gospel to every person they encounter.
- We live in an unprecedented time in history and the message of Jesus Christ is desperately needed. The situation is urgent but we walk in faith and boldness.
- If anyone says “I already do enough” or “that’s not really my thing” we will not be successful. There is no one else to pass this work of reaching people off to. We must each enter what the Holy Father calls “a permanent state of mission” to encounter every ‘neighbor’ in our lives.
- This will require a fundamental re-commitment on the part of each Catholic to deepening their relationship with Jesus and becoming more docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This begins by committing ourselves to daily prayer.
- We must leave the safety of our comfort zones and **go out** to those who are neglected, forgotten, lonely, suffering and poor. This does not only mean the materially poor. We must each identify what we are afraid of and what holds us back from being fearless witnesses for the Gospel. Will we abandon Jesus as he works on the peripheries and margins of our society?
- In order to win our culture back for Jesus Christ, we do not need more or better church programs, we need to live intensely Christian lives. Nobody is attracted to vanilla Christianity; only radical Christianity lived joyfully moves the hearts of people.
- Being a Catholic Christian is not for the faint of heart.
- Archbishop Christoph Pierre, the Vatican ambassador to the U.S., concluded the convocation by saying he would report to Pope Francis all that he had witnessed at the convocation and tell him that “the Holy Spirit is alive and working in America.”

The Bishops’ website (www.usccb.org) has a full recap of the convocation, including material on practical real-life ways we can live a more intensely Christian life. I highly recommend watching Bishop Robert Barron’s keynote address also – it was a powerful and inspirational assessment of the difficulties we face as American Catholics as well as the unprecedented opportunities we have to bring the love of Jesus Christ to every man, woman and child in our nation.