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## Director's Statement – February 2026

*We are already one.*

*But we imagine that we are not.*

*And what we have to recover is our original unity.*

*What we have to be is what we are.*

—Thomas Merton

In his final prayer before the Passion, Jesus echoes this same longing: “*that they may all be one*” (Jn 17:21). Unity, in the Christian vision, is not something we manufacture through agreement or ideology; it is something we are invited to rediscover through **encounter**—by recognizing one another as members of the same Body.

In the days following our [January 23 Mass for Life](#), I found myself returning to this truth again and again. What struck me most was not simply the beauty of the liturgy, but the life that unfolded afterward—at tables, in conversation, in shared space. Children and retirees. Students and clergy. Advocates focused on the unborn sitting alongside those drawn to social concerns. Bishops, parish leaders, and ministry partners breaking bread together. Our Church did not merely *talk about* a consistent ethic of life—it *looked like one*.



This intuition was affirmed in the early feedback we received related to the day’s events. Half of respondents shared that the gathering was life-giving because it fostered a sense of diocesan community. More than half named the informal time to socialize and meet others across the diocese as especially meaningful. And when asked what they hope to see more of in the future, 62% expressed a desire for Mass followed by meals and/or opportunities for networking and resource-sharing.

These responses reveal something important: we are hungry for communion. This hunger for communion is not something we can simply name, it is something we must respond to.

As you move through this month’s newsletter, I hope you will find concrete opportunities to step into this work of encounter. In the **SERVE** section, we are sharing a newly developed, parish-friendly resource regarding **Gabriel Project/WWMIN**. In the **LEARN** section, you will find two educational offerings: one **unpacking the reality of Human Trafficking**, and another explaining what the Church means when She speaks of **Human Dignity**—a term we often invoke, but do not always pause to

examine. You will also find a host of upcoming events through February and into early March, as well as continued improvements to the newsletter itself, including clearer organization, ready-made social media graphics, and copy-and-paste captions you are free to use in parish bulletins and on your own channels.

Finally, I want to reiterate how grateful I am for your voice. Below, you will find [a brief survey](#)—originally shared with those who attended the Mass for Life—which remains open to *everyone*. Even if you were unable to attend, your feedback is invaluable as we continue to shape the direction of this office and begin discerning future events and initiatives. If you are able, I invite you to spend about five minutes sharing your thoughts. Your insights help ensure that our work remains responsive, rooted in real needs, and oriented toward building genuine communion across our diocesan Church.

St. Paul warned the Corinthians that it is possible to gather as Church and yet miss the heart of the Gospel—especially when our coming together mirrors the very divisions of the world (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-31). Jesus, by contrast, consistently revealed the Kingdom at table. “*Through our choices and behavior at table, we name and identify ourselves...WHOM you eat with defines whom you DON'T eat with*” (Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM). Encounter humanizes us, reorients us, and reminds us why life is worth defending and promoting in the first place.

In a cultural moment marked by polarization, abstraction, and an “us versus them” mentality, the work of protecting and promoting life must begin here. *To serve life, we must first experience life.*

The challenge before us is real. Busyness is relentless. Calendars are full. But the Spirit seems to be inviting us to something both simple and demanding: to make room for one another, to slow down enough to recognize the Body, and to recover—together—our original unity.

Please know of my gratitude for your witness, and of my hope that, as a diocesan Church, we continue to create spaces where life is not only defended but deeply shared.

*Much pax,*

~TD



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