

**HERITAGE AND HOPE  
OUR STORY AS A DIOCESAN FAMILY  
DIOCESE OF LAS CRUCES**

IV. SHARED LIFE AND FAITH: Small Christian Communities

God works in human events, calling us forth individually and in community to *service* as co-creators, co-liberators, and co-sanctifiers. We are an immigrant church along the United States-Mexico border and a microcosm of the Church in transition throughout the rest of the United States. As a servant Church, we recognize that our contribution will be in direct proportion to the intensity of our purpose and the consistency of our efforts. We identify as our mandate the pursuit and promotion of relationships that encourage solidarity with the poor, the dignity of the human person, and the common good of our neighborhoods and communities.

The practical expression of "church" is the *communion* of communities whose identity and mission flow from the power of the Holy Spirit received in baptism. Baptized in the mystery of Pentecost, these communities historically assumed varied expressions as the gospel took hold in different cultures. In each instance, the small, developing Christian communities were challenged to deepen their faith, to evangelize, and to structure themselves to meet the pastoral needs of their time and place. The life testimony of these early disciples attracted and invited others to follow the way of Jesus.

We see the Diocese of Las Cruces as a "community of disciples" composed of many small Christian communities, each bearing the imprint of the Holy Trinity – each called to celebrate the risen Christ, to evangelize, to develop pastoral leadership, and to advocate for justice and peace.

Returning to Biblical roots ushers in a new way of being "church," one rich in the hope and the seed that will transform parish life. As a diocese, we choose to foster small Christian communities and to provide them with resources for continued growth wherein faith-filled disciples find a time and a place to share experiences of God's action in their lives – to listen to the Holy Spirit, and to act in Jesus' name. Through this dialogue and openness to the work of the Holy Spirit in our human situations, we strengthen the bonds of community and profoundly enrich our common worship in the Eucharist.

March 25, 1999