

THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE
THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

Office of the Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia
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Chairman of the Committee for THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

THE NEXT STEP

I wish to share with all of the parishioners of the Diocese of Belleville THE NEXT STEP in THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING.

From its beginning on August 6, 2011, Bishop Braxton stressed that THE PASTORAL PLAN would be implemented in a gradual, organic, and dynamic way, tailored to each situation. Changes would be announced individually, not all at once. A number of these changes have already been announced. The bishop also said THE PASTORAL PLAN will eventually have an impact on every parish in the Diocese. It will require parishes to make difficult decisions that may be painful. The recommended to the PLAN will be more fruitful if most of the ideas are surfaced at the parish level and then Bishop for implementation. However, when necessary the Vicar General and the Bishop would make needed decisions. He reminded us that The PLAN would require an unselfish spirit that looks beyond individual parish boundaries. He stressed that all parishes are required to participate in THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING, without exception.

The Bishop and I are very appreciative of the serious efforts the PARISH PARTNERSHIPS have been making to develop, expand, and implement their STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS, which outline in as much detail as possible the ways in which the parishes involved can coordinate their activities and work closer together in various forms of ministry and communication. These STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS must also indicate as clearly as possible the most fruitful way the faith communities can be served when they have only one priest in the PARTNERSHIPS. In some cases, this may mean that, at some point, two or more parishes will become one community of faith.

In reviewing the documents that have been submitted, we see that a good number of PARTNERSHIPS have developed detailed and very realistic plans. A smaller number of PARTNERSHIPS have developed more general and perhaps somewhat less realistic plans (in some cases because of seemingly insurmountable challenges). A few PARTNERSHIPS seem to have taken only modest steps or none at all. The Next Step of THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING will consist of a series of meetings with the Bishop, the Vicar General, the appropriate Vicar Forane and the pastoral leadership of individual PARISH PARTNERSHIPS. These meetings, which will be held at the Chancery, will begin in February 2016. It is not possible to announce a schedule for the entire process at this time. These meetings will almost certainly take several months or more. An attitude of flexibility and a spirit of cooperation will be required of everyone.

The pastoral leadership of the parishes in the PARISH PARTNERSHIPS must be represented by the parish Pastor, Administrator, or Parish Life Coordinator. Whenever it is possible, the Chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council and the Trustees should also participate. The School Principal should participate when the parish school is involved. Please join me and Bishop Braxton in praying for the fruitfulness of this NEXT STEP in THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING, which has been undertaken for the good of all.

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The agenda will include:

- 1.) If THE PASTORAL PLAN is to be effective, the parishes must focus even more on renewal than on restructuring. Members of parish communities must be invited to a deeper personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Personal conversion and spirituality are fundamental requirements for the renewal of the liturgical life of the parish, which should renew programs of religious education and Christian formation, which lead to pastoral outreach to those in need in the parish and beyond. Simply maintaining the *status quo* is not renewal. How is your PARISH PARTNERSHIP making use of the renewal and evangelization resource book recommended by Bishop Braxton? (Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, and Making the Church Matter by Father Michael White and Tom Corcoran)
- 2.) A review of the STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL that has been submitted to the Diocese.
- 3.) A discussion of how faithfully that STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL is actually being implemented.
- 4.) If there is no real STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL, a discussion of why it has not been submitted.
- 5.) If a STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL has been submitted but is not being implemented, a discussion of why this is the case.
- 6.) A discussion of the degree of actual cooperation between/among the parishes in the PARISH PARTNERSHIP.
- 7.) A discussion of the response of the Christian Faithful to the STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL. Has this process had a positive or negative impact on the attendance, spirit, financial resources of the parishes and the involvement of the Faithful?
- 8.) A discussion of questions, difficulties, challenges that do not seem to have a solution.
- 9.) If there are schools involved, what is the status of the long-term viability of the school(s)? (Mr. Thomas Posnanski, Director of Education, and the principal should be present for school discussion.)
- 10.) A discussion of the long-term plans of the Pastor, Administrator, or Parish Life Coordinator (age, health, retirement plans). What impact will these have on the PARISH PARTNERSHIP? What special skills are needed to serve as pastor of more than one parish? What stresses, tensions and frustrations are experienced?
- 11.) If there is a Deacon in the PARISH PARTNERSHIP, what role is he playing in this process?
- 12.) Are there serious reasons to suggest that these parishes should be merged into one in the coming years? If that is the case, how difficult would this process be? What timetable would you propose?
- 13.) Do the parishes in your PARISH PARTNERSHIP pray the Diocesan Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood at least once a month on Sundays?
- 14.) Are there *fidei donum* missionary priests in your PARISH PARTNERSHIP? How has he been received by the Faithful? Have you given serious consideration to the impact on your STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL if their Bishops or Religious Superiors called them home?
- 15.) Have the parishioners all been kept well informed about THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING and the STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS being developed by the PARISH PARTNERSHIP?
- 16.) What are THE NEXT STEPS that your PARISH PARTNERSHIP should be taking to effectively implement THE PASTORAL PLAN?