



OUR FAITH, OUR FUTURE



The Diocese of Grand Rapids is embarking on a planning process that is needed to establish a well-defined

direction for future decisions and to facilitate change that leads toward a stronger, more vibrant church. Some of the key issues, outlined by Bishop Walter A. Hurley, facing the parishes and schools are:

- Fewer priests with increased demands for their service and leadership
- Finances that are stretched and sometimes inadequate to sustain a full range of ministry or fund quality Catholic schools
- Aging physical facilities with deferred maintenance or looming capital costs
- Challenge of sustaining the one parish/one school model
- Shifts in demographics and values among the wider Catholic population

For the Church in the Diocese of Grand Rapids to realize its goals, it must strategically follow a clear direction over many years toward a vision that is widely understood and embraced. Pastoral planning will build upon the strengths of parishes and Catholic schools and address fundamental issues that have a long-term impact on their vitality and vibrancy. It will also address many long-range strategic questions at the local level, deanery level and diocesan level. The benefits to the parishes, schools and the diocese are:

- A fresh discussion, awareness and common understanding of parish and school vitality
- Objective data researched and presented to understand the challenges facing the Church in the Diocese of Grand Rapids and examine options for the future
- Involvement of clergy, laity and key decision-makers in the planning process
- Good stewardship of finances, facilities, personnel and other resources
- Consensus support for a realistic plan to minister to the current and future population
- Plan to sustain and enhance the viability of Catholic schools
- Parishes and schools working together toward a common vision
- Greater potential for successful implementation because ownership for the plan was cultivated through the process

In the following months, each edition of *Grand Rapids Faith Magazine* will provide updates on the strategic planning process through a special report: **Our Faith, Our Future.**

Community Prayer Service

Please join the Grand Rapids religious community in a special prayer service to celebrate local heroes

**September 11, 2009
11 a.m.**

**Cathedral of Saint Andrew
Grand Rapids, Michigan**

Local law enforcement, fire department and emergency medical response representatives will be present to receive the blessings.

The prayer service will be followed by refreshments on the Piazza Secchia.

