

My dear friends,

In July 2009, I announced that as a diocese we would be embarking on a pastoral planning process entitled *Our Faith, Our Future: A Plan for the Diocese of Grand Rapids*. Since the fall of 2009, pastors and parishioners from parishes in our diocesan deaneries have been meeting and evaluating the specific strengths and needs of the Church in their areas. The deaneries which have completed the planning process have submitted their recommendations to me for approval. (Plans are available at dioceseofgrandrapids.org) I thank all of you who have worked and continue to work on the *Our Faith, Our Future* process. We have made some progress in the implementation of the approved recommendations. Two such recommendations were to fully merge St. Stanislaus and Sacred Heart parishes with St. Simon Parish in Ludington and to close the St. Stanislaus and Sacred Heart churches.

On Thursday, May 18, and Friday, May 19, I joined Father Wayne Wheeler, pastor, and Ludington area parishioners for closing liturgies for St. Stanislaus and Sacred Heart churches respectively. Father Thomas Schiller, Father Dennis O'Donnell and Father Norman Droski, former Ludington area parish pastors, and Father Wheeler concelebrated the closing liturgies with me. Both closing Masses provided parishioners and clergy the opportunity to bid their church homes goodbye in a special way and paid tribute to the rich history that enveloped both faith communities.

Many of the parishioners, who were present at the closing liturgies, had deep roots in their former parish community. Some attended the parish school. As we gathered to pay tribute to a mission completed and to recognize the sadness, it was also a time to be excited. New beginnings offer new hope and new promises.

The parish communities of St. Stanislaus and Sacred Heart will now fully merge with St. Simon Parish in Ludington completing a process begun eight years ago and continued as part of *Our Faith, Our Future* pastoral plan.



>> Joined by an honor guard from the Knights of Columbus, concelebrating clergy and Bishop Hurley, members of the parish at Sacred Heart Church carry sacred and symbolic objects from the church sanctuary during the closing procession of the last Mass held there on May 19.



>> Bishop Hurley talks with Sacred Heart parishioners following the closing Mass for the Victory Township parish.



In addition, the following is part of *Our Faith, Our Future*, and will be effective July 1, 2011:

- 1) Christ the King Parish in Howard City and St. Francis de Sales Mission in Lakeview are merged with St. Francis as the primary worship site and St. Francis as a secondary site. The new name is Christ the King-St. Francis de Sales.
- 2) St. Patrick Parish in Grand Haven and St. Anthony Mission in Robinson Township are merged with St. Patrick Church as the parish church. After seeking the permission of the Bishop with the consent of the Finance Council of the Diocese and the College of Consultors, St. Anthony Church building may be sold at some future date. The new name for the merged parish is St. Patrick-St. Anthony.
- 3) St. Ann Parish in Baldwin and St. Ignatius Mission in Luther are merged with St. Ann as the primary worship site and St. Ignatius as a secondary site. The new name for the merged parish is St. Ann-St. Ignatius

>> Holy Communion during the closing Mass on Thursday, May 18 at St. Stanislaus in Ludington.



>> Bishop Hurley embraces St. Stanislaus parishioner Rose Forman as she presents him with a photograph of St. Stan's original church building during the offertory procession. The picture was one of several symbolic gifts brought forward during the parish's closing Mass.

When parishes merge, all councils, finances and sacramental records are merged at the new canonical parish. There is one pastor, staff, parish council and finance council that may serve multiple sites.

Our Lady of Aglona Latvian Community:

On Sunday, June 26, I will celebrate the closing Mass at Our Lady of Aglona Church located on Broadway Street in Grand Rapids. Several years ago I was approached by the parish leadership indicating various problems with the building and the aging population's difficulty in using the facility. The church building is being sold. The Latvian Catholic community, although very small, wishes to stay together and will have Mass at the Latvian Community Center as long as there is a priest available. They are a people of great faith and I am pleased we can make the accommodation.

Catholic Services Appeal (CSA):

I want to thank those who have so generously supported the annual Catholic Services Appeal (CSA). With the 2010 campaign completed, \$666,276 has been returned to 85 parishes which exceeded their targets. The amounts returned varied from several dollars to \$56,000. Thank you.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Bishop of Grand Rapids

from the bishop