



# DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

*Office of the Bishop*

November 12, 2010

Dear friends in Christ,

RE: Interim Report - *Our Faith, Our Future*

As a diocese, we have reached an important milestone in continuing the work of Christ Jesus in His church. I reviewed and reflected on *Our Faith, Our Future* pastoral plan, for Big Rapids, Grand Haven, and Northwest Lakeshore deaneries. This document is the result of extensive data collection, multiple regional consultations, and analyses of future oriented models which will strengthen the vitality of Catholic parish life in our diocese. The time and effort contributed by so many in this process is truly edifying. I am most grateful for your commitment to the church and our future.

Following consultation with the diocesan Presbyteral Council (comprised of priest representatives from all nine deaneries of the diocese), I wish to make the following observations:

- The plan effectively achieves the objectives originally established for this planning process.
- The document contains important recommendations enabling us to address the current factors which impact the vitality of parishes and vibrancy of faith life.
- The proposed recommendations and timelines, while providing important directives, will need further study and development as efforts towards implementation and special circumstances are further examined.
- The actions to implement any recommendations must be clearly outlined to incorporate consultation with the respective parishes, deaneries, and my office.

With this understanding, I gratefully receive the plan. After prayerful consideration, I give approval to move forward. *Our Faith, Our Future* pastoral plan is meant to be a living document, able to adapt over time, and provide consistency and guidance in making decisions with long-range implications.

I offer my full endorsement for the vision for vital parishes as a vision for all our parishes, whether accomplished individually or in concert with other parishes. Furthermore, we must work together both locally and on a diocesan level to implement the goals which will strengthen and vitalize our parishes and schools.

The following summary highlights important directions adopted for the diocese. The plan offers additional explanation, so the following must be viewed in light of the entire plan.

I am most grateful to those who have participated in this planning process. The implementation of this plan and our efforts to carry out the mission of Christ Jesus in the future will require the collaborative efforts of everyone in the Diocese of Grand Rapids. We must work together, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to realize "*Our Faith, Our Future*".

With good wishes,

Fraternally yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley  
Bishop of Grand Rapids

## **Big Rapids Deanery**

**Sacred Heart Parish, Ewart, and St. Agnes Parish, Marion.** The present cluster model with Ewart and Marion will continue until a transition in the pastoral assignment. At that time, these parishes will be clustered with St. Philip Parish, Reed City. The staffing plan for this newly formed cluster needs to be further developed.

**St. Anne Mission, Paris.** This chapel of **St. Philip Parish, Reed City** will remain open as a mission. At the time of the clustering of Ewart and Marion with Reed City, St. Anne will become a seasonal chapel.

**St. Mary Parish and St. Paul Campus Parish, Big Rapids.** While retaining their separate identities, a formalized cluster arrangement shall be established. The cluster will be served by one staff team and a shared plan for future development and centralizing services. A written plan shall be submitted for approval to accomplish this goal. Consideration should be given to exploring a merged parish with the two sites. St. Mary School must develop and follow a strategic plan, reaching to surrounding communities to ensure long-term viability.

**St. Michael the Archangel Parish, Remus.** As a stand-alone parish for the time being, St. Michael should work with surrounding parishes to identify areas of ministerial collaboration. St. Michael School must continue to follow and update their strategic plan.

**Christ the King Parish, Howard City and St. Francis de Sales Mission, Lakeview.** Merged into one parish. St. Francis de Sales will be a second site with Mass on a weekly basis. A written plan shall be submitted for approval to accomplish this goal. The merged parish/mission shall be known as “Christ the King—St. Francis de Sales” Parish or a new name could be selected, if requested by the parishes. This merger is subject to further study as part of strategic planning in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area.

**St. Margaret Mary Alacoque Parish, Edmore, and St. Bernadette of Lourdes Parish, Stanton** shall be merged maintaining these two parishes, with the understanding that Stanton will serve as the long-term principal site. For now, the parish business office and staff shall remain at Edmore. A long-range master facility plan for the Stanton site should be developed and submitted for approval. The merged parishes shall be known as “St. Bernadette—St. Margaret Parish” or a new name could be selected should the parishes request that option.

## **Grand Haven Deanery**

**Our Lady of the Lake Parish and St. Francis de Sales Parish, Holland** shall remain as separate and distinct parishes for the immediate future. The two parishes are expected to review services and ministries to the Hispanic community and explore areas of greater collaboration. A written report, outlining the plans for greater collaboration, shall be submitted for approval. Corpus Christi Elementary School, operated by both parishes, should develop a comprehensive strategic plan for operations and development.

**St. Patrick Parish, Grand Haven, and St. Mary Parish, Spring Lake** shall remain as separate and distinct parishes for the immediate future. The two parishes shall be expected to review services and ministries to the Hispanic Community and explore areas for greater collaboration. To ensure the long-term viability for St. Mary School, the two parishes should look to greater collaboration, develop a strategic plan and review the school governance model. To accomplish these goals, a written plan shall be submitted for approval.

**St. Anthony Mission, Robinson Township** shall be merged with St. Patrick Parish, Grand Haven. Through a written implementation plan following input from St. Anthony Mission, the continued use and/or disposition of the mission's facilities shall be coordinated. This plan is to be submitted by July 1, 2011 for approval by the bishop.

As population projections become a reality, the need for a new parish or mission in the Port Sheldon Township area will be determined.

As population projections become a reality, the need for a new parish in the township areas located between the cities of Holland and Hudsonville will be determined.

**St. Mary Parish, Marne, and St. Michael Parish, Coopersville** shall form a cluster with one pastor and staff. A written plan shall be submitted for approval to accomplish this goal.

**St. Joseph Parish, Wright, St. Catherine of Sienna Parish, Ravenna and St. Francis Xavier Parish, Conklin** shall form a cluster. A written plan shall be submitted for approval to accomplish this cluster. While one merged parish may seem best in the future; for now, St. Joseph, Wright, St. Francis, Conklin and St. Catherine, Ravenna will be clustered and served by one pastor. One Catholic school shall serve these parishes, either in a single location or with one school administration for the right-sized satellite sites.

**St. Luke University Parish, Allendale** should continue to move forward establishing its facilities, parish identity and ministries. A written plan shall be submitted for approval to accomplish these goals.

## Northwest Lakeshore Deanery

**St. Ignatius Mission, Luther, and St. Anne Parish, Baldwin** shall be merged with a long-range master plan evaluating the feasibility of replacing the present St. Ann Church. St. Ignatius shall be maintained as a chapel with weekly Mass offered there as long as possible.

**St. Bernard Parish, Irons, and St. John Cantius Parish, Free Soil** shall continue in a cluster arrangement until a transition in the pastoral assignment. A written description of the present cluster shall be submitted for approval. When the pastoral transition occurs, the parishes will be clustered with Baldwin or Custer.

**St. Jerome Parish, Scottville, and St. Mary Parish, Custer** shall be merged, with one staff serving the cluster. A written plan shall be submitted for approval to accomplish this goal. The merged parish may be known as “St. Mary–St. Jerome” or a new name could be selected should the parish request that option.

**St. Stanislaus Parish, Ludington, and Sacred Heart Parish, Victory** should work towards a formal merger with **St. Simon Parish, Ludington**. A written plan for approval shall be submitted to accomplish this goal. It is anticipated that there will be one site for the merged parish. Ludington Area Catholic Schools must continue to follow and update their strategic plan.

**St. Vincent Parish, Pentwater, St. Joseph Parish, Weare, St. Gregory Parish, Hart and Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Shelby** should form a cluster maintaining four sites at this time. St. Gregory, Hart shall be the main site with the area served by a pastor and associate pastor. A written plan should be submitted for approval to accomplish these goals. Considerable work needs to be done to better integrate the Hispanic and Native American parishioners using the existing churches and centers. Consideration should be given to St. Vincent Parish, Pentwater serving as a “summer” seasonal site, transferring winter activities to St. Joseph Parish, Weare this winter.

**St. James Parish, Montague, and St. Mary of the Woods Parish, Lakewood Club** should work toward a merger of the two parishes. A written plan shall be submitted for approval to accomplish this goal.

St. Mary of the Woods Church will remain open with Mass celebrated each weekend as long as the parish can balance its budget and show a need for Mass and parish services at that location.

**Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Rothbury, and St. John Mission, Claybanks** shall be clustered with **St. James Parish, Montague**. A written plan shall be submitted for approval to accomplish this goal.

**Christ the King, Hesperia** shall merge with **St. Michael, Brunswick**. **All Saints Parish, Fremont** shall cluster with the newly merged **St. Michael Parish, Brunswick**. Christ the King Church will be retained as a chapel for the cluster. A written plan shall be submitted for approval to accomplish this goal.

**Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission, Grant** shall merge with **St. Bartholomew Parish, Newaygo** basing the center for ministry at Newaygo. **St. Joseph Parish, White Cloud** and the newly merged **St. Bartholomew Parish, Newaygo** shall form a cluster. The parish may be called “St. Bartholomew–Our Lady of Guadalupe” or a new name could be selected should the parishes request that option. A written plan shall be submitted for approval to accomplish this goal.

## **Additional notes:**

The following notes apply to all parishes, missions and chapels.

- A cluster arrangement means that each parish remains a separate entity. Each cluster has one pastor. Collaboration and coordination of ministries is expected. Parish councils may combine or meet jointly but each parish must retain its own finance council, although these councils may meet together at the same time.
- A merged parish means that there is one parish council and one finance council although separate committees may be established for a chapel or particular areas of ministry.
- The terms mission, chapel, and seasonal chapel are used interchangeably. They are not recognized nor do they function like a separate, independent parish.
- Weekend Mass will be celebrated in each church (site) of a cluster unless a particular site is designated as a seasonal chapel. Liturgy of the Word services and/or communion services are not permitted on weekends (Saturday or Sunday or holy days) as a substitute for the celebration of the Eucharist. The only exceptions would be the sudden and unexpected illness of the priest or the failure of the priest to come, as scheduled and expected.
- When less than half of the capacity of the church is filled at weekend Masses and multiple Masses are scheduled, consideration should be given to combining Masses. It is also the norm "If there is a shortage of priests, the local ordinary can allow priests to celebrate twice a day for a just cause, or if pastoral necessity requires it, even three times on Sundays and holy days of obligation." (Canon 905).
- When parishes are clustered or merged and are in close proximity, consideration should be given to having only one celebration of the Sacred Triduum.
- Staffing models that include pastoral directors for clustered parishes may be approved in the future, contingent upon the approval of the cluster plan. When appropriate, pastoral directors shall be considered depending on need, the responsible pastor and the financial ability of the parish or cluster to meet the costs involved along with other local and diocesan considerations. Future consideration could include whether the clustered parishes may be better served by a pastor, centralized team and council as opposed to a pastor with a separate pastoral director for one or two parishes.
- Preliminary written plans that are called for should be submitted at least in draft form no later than March 15, 2011. If for some serious reason additional time is needed, it can be requested and will be considered.