

May 31, 2008

**Diocese of Buffalo Announces Final
Decisions to Restructure Parishes**

Parishes in the Vicariates of Southeast Buffalo (South Buffalo and Kaisertown-Sloan Clusters), Northern Erie, and Eastern Erie will be realigned, and Campus Ministry parishes to develop strategic plan as part of the “Journey in Faith and Grace” strategic planning and spiritual revitalization initiative

The Diocese of Buffalo said today that a number of parishes in the Vicariate of Southeast Buffalo (South Buffalo and Kaisertown-Sloan Clusters), the Vicariate of Northern Erie, and the Vicariate of Eastern Erie will be restructured as part of the “Journey in Faith and Grace,” a parish-based strategic planning and spiritual revitalization initiative launched in June 2005 by Bishop Edward U. Kmiec, bishop of Buffalo.

These changes represent the final in a series of decisions to reimagine parish life throughout the eight counties of Western New York in response to changing times and emerging needs.

Announcement of the mergers is being delivered to affected parishioners at this weekend’s Masses.

Bishop Kmiec said the announcement of the pastoral restructuring phase of the journey is now 100-percent complete as decisions have been made on all of the 275 weekend worship sites in the diocese when the process began in 2005. Including today’s announcement, 77 weekend sites will no longer be used, leaving 198 worship sites in the Diocese of Buffalo.

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“As we reach this important milestone in our Journey in Faith and Grace, I am reminded of the words in the Book of Ecclesiastes that there is an appointed time and purpose for everything,” said Bishop Kmiec. “For the past two years, this process has indeed been a time to uproot what was planted; a time to build; a time to weep; a time to embrace; a time to seek; and a time to recognize that whatever God does – through us, his disciples and true believers – endures forever.

“Now is a time of healing, of reconciliation, and revitalization. My invitation to the people of our diocese moving forward is to come to our new faith communities and help us gather the stones that have been scattered. We have planted new seeds for our faith to grow. Bring your gifts and your enthusiasm to help us nourish our new parishes and strengthen the existing ones. Let your light shine as we continue to build the Kingdom of God in Western New York.”

The latest round of changes involves 64 parishes and one mission. As a result of parish mergers and linking, 58 worship sites will continue to be used for weekend services. The changes were approved by the diocesan Strategic Planning Commission and the diocesan Council of Priests prior to being forwarded to Bishop Kmiec for his final review and approval.

In the Vicariate of Southeast Erie (South Buffalo and Kaisertown-Sloan Clusters), nine parishes will either merge or link to form seven parishes, and two parishes will remain independent with one of them engaging in collaborative efforts with other parishes. All of the existing worship sites will continue to be used.

Following is the final restructuring in the Vicariate of Southeast Erie:

South Buffalo Cluster

- **St. Agatha and St. Ambrose parishes in South Buffalo** will merge to form a new parish using both church sites. The merged parish will then link with **Holy Family Parish in South Buffalo** for approximately one year. The priests involved will work collaboratively as they minister to both parishes. Masses will be realigned and parishioners will be encouraged to worship at all three sites. At the end of approximately one year, the parishes will merge to form a single parish that will use one or two sites as they will have determined. It is recommended that the parishes be assisted by an outside facilitator.
- **St. Martin of Tours and St. Thomas Aquinas parishes in South Buffalo** will link with one pastor and a parochial vicar. If financially possible, both sites will continue to be used.

- **St. John the Evangelist Parish in South Buffalo** will merge with **St. Teresa Parish in South Buffalo**. St. Teresa's site will be the primary worship site, the residence for the pastor, and the site for parish offices and all parish activities. The St. John the Evangelist site should be actively marketed but the church could be used for one weekend liturgy and for weddings and funerals while an alternate use for the buildings is sought. In the spirit of good stewardship, it would seem best to use only one rectory and to heat minimally the buildings at St. John the Evangelist. At the end of one year, whether or not an alternate use for St. John's has been found, the merged congregation should worship together at St. Teresa Church and all sacraments should be celebrated there.

Kaisertown-Sloan Cluster

- **St. Andrew Parish in Sloan** will remain an independent parish, but should engage in collaborative efforts with the other parishes of the cluster.
- **St. Casimir and St. Bernard parishes in Buffalo** will link and share a pastor. The continuance of the St. Bernard site will be determined within two years based primarily on the parish's ability to reverse its financial situation while still maintaining vibrant parish life according to the Journey in Faith & Grace criteria. If St. Bernard Parish is unable to show a significant improvement in its financial situation within two years, or if the parish were to become insolvent prior to the end of two years, the parish will merge into St. Casimir Parish and use only the St. Casimir site.
- **Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish in Cheektowaga** will remain an independent parish for the time being, but it should engage in collaborative efforts with St. Bernard and St. Casimir parishes in order to prepare for the possibility of linking or merging sometime in the future.

In the Vicariate of Northern Erie, six parishes will merge to form three parishes using four worship sites. Nineteen parishes will remain independent, with a number of them beginning to discuss collaborative ministries and efforts. The mission to Korean Catholics in Tonawanda will remain. A total of 23 existing worship sites will continue to be used. Following is the complete restructuring in the Vicariate of Northern Erie:

- The following parishes will remain independent:
 - **St. Amelia Parish in Tonawanda**
 - **St. Christopher Parish in Tonawanda (merged with St. Edmund, Sept. 1, 2007)**
 - **St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Tonawanda**
 - **St. Paul Parish in Kenmore**
 - **St. Pius X Parish in Getzville**
 - **St. Stephen Parish on Grand Island**
 - **St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Swormville**
 - **Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Harris Hill**

- **Our Lady of Peace Parish in Clarence** and **St. Teresa Parish in Akron** will remain independent parishes for the time being. They should begin to collaborate ministerially in view of the fact that they may need to share a priest sometime in the future.
- **St. Augustine Parish in Clarence Center** and **Good Shepherd Parish in Pendleton** will merge to form a single parish, possibly with a new name, but using both church sites. The primary site and pastor's residence will be in Pendleton.
- **St. Timothy Parish in Tonawanda** will begin a collaborative ministerial relationship with **St. Andrew Parish in Kenmore** in order to prepare for the possibility of linking or merging sometime in the future. An inter-parish team of pastors and lay representatives, chaired by a facilitator, will be formed before the end of 2008 to initiate this collaborative endeavor.
- **St. Andrew Kim Mission to Korean Catholics in Tonawanda** will remain a mission of St. Andrew Parish in Kenmore.
- **St. John the Baptist Parish in Kenmore** and **Blessed Sacrament Parish in Tonawanda** will remain independent parishes for the time being, but they will begin to discuss collaborative ministry since it is possible that they may one day share a pastor.
- The parishes of **Christ the King in Snyder**, **St. Benedict in Eggertsville**, **St. Gregory the Great in Williamsville**, **St. Leo the Great in Amherst**, and **SS. Peter & Paul in Williamsville** will remain independent parishes, but they will form an active collaborative relationship. These parishes recognize that collaboration is the key to their future and the way to maintain a vibrant Catholic community in Amherst. Collaboration will be pursued in areas of parish life and ministry as well as Catholic school education.
- **Mother of Divine Grace Parish in Cheektowaga** will merge into **Infant of Prague Parish in Cheektowaga**. The Mother of Divine Grace site will be closed and the disposition of the buildings will be left to the discretion of the merged community at Infant of Prague Parish.
- **Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Cheektowaga** will merge into **St. Aloysius Gonzaga Parish in Cheektowaga**. The Immaculate Heart of Mary site will be closed and the disposition of the buildings will be left to the discretion of the merged community at St. Aloysius Gonzaga Parish.

Parishioners of Mother of Divine Grace and Immaculate Heart of Mary will be welcomed at both Infant of Prague and St. Aloysius Gonzaga, or other communities to which they may wish to affiliate.

The mergers in the Cheektowaga area will be undertaken by the end of 2009. Infant of Prague and St. Aloysius Gonzaga parishes will engage in collaborative efforts in order to prepare for the possibility of linking or merging sometime in the future.

In the Vicariate of Eastern Erie, 10 parishes will merge to form five parishes using six worship sites. Eighteen parishes will remain independent, with a number of them beginning to discuss collaborative ministries and efforts. A total of 24 existing worship sites will continue to be used. Following is the complete restructuring in the Vicariate of Eastern Erie:

- The following parishes will remain independent :
 - **St. John the Baptist in Alden**
 - **Sacred Heart of Jesus in Bowmansville**
 - **St. Philip the Apostle in Cheektowaga**
 - **Immaculate Conception in East Aurora**
 - **Our Lady Help of Christians in Cheektowaga**
 - **Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Elma**
 - **St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows in Elma**
 - **St. Mary of the Assumption in Lancaster**
 - **Nativity of Our Lord in Orchard Park**
 - **St. John Vianney in Orchard Park**
 - **St. Vincent de Paul in Springbrook**
 - **Fourteen Holy Helpers in West Seneca**

- **St. Barnabas and Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament parishes in Depew** will remain independent parishes but they should collaborate with one another, looking toward the future when they might be linked or merged.

- **St. Josaphat and Resurrection parishes in Cheektowaga** will remain independent but should form a collaborative relationship, looking toward the future when they might be linked or merged.

- **Queen of Martyrs and St. John Gualbert parishes in Cheektowaga** will remain independent parishes but should form a collaborative relationship, looking toward the future when they might be linked or merged.

- **St. George Parish in West Falls and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish in Colden** will merge to form a new parish, possibly with a new name, at the West Falls site. The disposition of the buildings and property in Colden will be left to the discretion of the merged parish.

- **Our Lady of Pompeii Parish in Lancaster** and **SS. Peter & Paul Parish in Depew** will merge to form a new parish, possibly with a new name, and eventually using the single worship site of Our Lady of Pompeii. The merged parish may use both worship sites until July 2009 to allow the communities a time of transition as they become a single worshipping community. The disposition of all buildings and property will be left to the discretion of the merged parish.
- **St. Augustine** and **St. James parishes in Depew** will merge to form a new parish, possibly with a new name, using a single worship site. The merger of the two communities will be effective soon after the celebration of the 100th anniversary of St. Augustine Parish in July 2009. Unification efforts will begin in 2008 with various parish organizations coming together for meetings and special events. It is understood that during the time preceding the actual merger, the parishes will discern the future use of their facilities. The diocese will be given at least a preliminary idea about facility use by the end of 2008.
- **St. William** and **St. Bonaventure parishes in West Seneca** will merge to form a new parish, possibly with a new name, using St. William's church as the worship site. Disposition of the remaining buildings and property will be left to the discretion of the merged parish.
- **St. Catherine of Sienna Parish in West Seneca** will merge into **Queen of Heaven Parish in West Seneca**. The St. Catherine of Siena site will no longer be used and its disposition will be left to the discretion of the merged parish.

When parishes merge, the parishioners may attend the new merged parish or any Catholic parish of their choice.

Campus Ministry Parish

- **Alfred State SUNY College of Technology & Alfred University**
- **St. Bonaventure University**
- **Buffalo State College State**
- **Canisius College**
- **Daemen College**
- **D'Youville College**
- **Hilbert College**
- **Niagara University**
- **SUNY Fredonia**
- **Trocaire College**
- **University at Buffalo**
- **Villa Maria College**

Parish Restructuring
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The Campus Ministry centers will establish a strategic plan which creates both a shared sense of mission and a system for assessing effectiveness within the Catholic student population across campuses, with special concern for outreach evangelization and catechesis of the college student. Attention should be given to supporting the Campus Ministry programs at Catholic institutions for higher learning in order to promote a more consistent mission for Campus Ministry and increased collaboration with Campus Ministry at the public institutions.

Additional recommendations have been offered to the Campus Ministry Parish for their consideration and there will be continuing dialogue with the diocese regarding several Campus Ministry concerns.

All parish recommendations are carefully evaluated in terms of demographic information, Catholic population analysis, sacramental and fiscal data, and pastoral planning. In some cases, reconfiguration decisions include research and planning that predates the Journey.

The “Journey in Faith and Grace” is designed to identify the religious, spiritual, and education needs of the Catholic faithful throughout the diocese, and determine how those needs can best be met. It is an effort to create parish communities that are much more than a place where Sunday liturgy is celebrated. Its goals are to establish faith communities that provide formation programs for the sacraments, religious formation for both children and adults, and outreach to those in need; to provide for greater lay involvement, good pastoral leadership, and financial stability; and ensure that parishes will have the membership, leadership, and resources necessary to be vibrant centers of parish life.

Glossary of Terms

A **merged parish** occurs when two or more parish congregations join together to become a single parish congregation.

Linked parishes are two parishes, and in rare cases three parishes, which share the same pastor. The parishes remain separately incorporated and are separate communities of faith.

A **mission** is a church serving a community of people who are under the care and administration of a particular parish. Ordinarily, missions do not have a large enough congregation or sufficient resources to support full parish life. Missions are often founded in the hope that they will develop into full parishes, and they are often reevaluated if that does not happen.

An **oratory** is a sacred place that exists for the convenience of some community or group of the faithful. An oratory does not have regularly scheduled liturgical services, and the liturgical functions that can be celebrated there are determined by the local bishop. A neighboring parish is usually responsible for an oratory.

A **pastoral administrator** is a lay person, a vowed religious or a deacon who will participate in the pastoral care of a parish entrusted to him or her, and whose provision of pastoral care is supervised by a priest moderator.