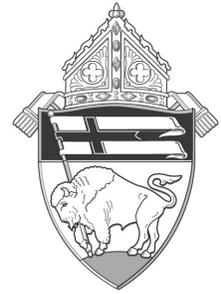

Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



July 1, 2007

Diocese of Buffalo Announces the Third in a Series of Recommendations to Restructure Parishes

Parishes in the Central and East Buffalo, Riverside/Black Rock, and Southern Cattaraugus vicariates will be realigned 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 Central and East Buffalo, Riverside/Black Rock, and Southern Cattaraugus vicariates 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 latest in a series of recommendations to reimagine parish life throughout the eight-counties of Western New York in response to changing times and emerging needs.

Announcement of the mergers were delivered to affected parishioners at weekend Masses yesterday and today.

"I have a great sense of confidence in the Journey," Bishop Kmiec said. "Good work is being done at the parish and vicariate levels and by the Strategic Planning Commission. We're learning along the way. We have come at this with all sincerity and honesty, and I have trust in the recommendations. I keep praying for understanding and acceptance from our faithful.

"It is difficult to ask people to change, but when parishes come together, wonderful things can happen. There is more vibrancy, more parish life and more opportunity to grow together as a stronger, more resilient faith community. Stronger lay leadership emerges, laying the foundation for a new Church with greater potential."

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Sister Regina Murphy, SSMN, diocesan director of research and planning, said the latest round of changes includes a total of 41 parishes merging or linking to result in 19 parishes following the restructuring. According to Sister Regina, 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 Central Buffalo Vicariate, there are currently 14 parishes. Following the mergers, there will be six, with two of the parishes possibly linking or merging by January 2012. Following is the complete parish restructuring in the Central Buffalo Vicariate:

- The parishes of **Visitation, St. Agnes, and St. Francis of Assisi** will merge to form a new parish with a new name located at the St. Francis of Assisi site. The buildings and property of Visitation Parish and St. Agnes Parish will no longer be used with the exception of St. Agnes convent which will continue as the residence of the Sisters of St. Francis. The Lovejoy interfaith food pantry and outreach could be moved to St. Francis of Assisi Parish. The disposition of the remaining buildings at St. Agnes and Visitation will be left to the discretion of the merged parish.
- **St. Gerard and St. James Parishes** will merge into **Blessed Trinity Parish**. St. James and St. Gerard churches will no longer be used. Gerard Place will remain as an active ministry at the St. Gerard site. Disposition of unneeded buildings will be left to the discretion of the merged parish. The pastor of Blessed Trinity Parish will become the sacramental minister for St. Lawrence Parish.
- **Most Holy Redeemer Parish** will merge into **St. Lawrence Parish**. Most Holy Redeemer church and rectory will no longer be used and the disposition of the buildings will be left to the discretion of the merged parish. St. Lawrence Parish will remain under the care of a Pastoral Administrator or Pastoral Administrator team, as at present. Sacramental ministry will be provided by the pastor of Blessed Trinity Parish. Ministerial collaboration between the two parishes is encouraged.
- **Queen of Peace Parish** will merge with **St. John Gualbert Parish** at the St. John Gualbert site. Catholic Charities will continue to lease the former Queen of Peace Convent as a site for resettlement transitional housing. Disposition of the remaining buildings and property at Queen of Peace, which include the church and rectory of the previously merged Holy Name of Jesus Parish, will be left to the discretion of the merged parish. The possibility of linking St. John Gualbert with another parish in a neighboring vicariate will be pursued.
- **St. Mary of Sorrows Parish** will merge into SS. Columba-Brigid Parish following the celebration of St. Mary of Sorrow's 135th anniversary on September 15, 2007. The buildings and property of St. Mary of Sorrows will no longer be used and their disposition will be left to the discretion of the merged parish.

- **St. Ann Parish** will merge into SS Columba-Brigid Parish. The buildings and property at St. Ann's will no longer be used and their disposition will be left to the discretion of the merged parish.
- **St. Martin de Porres Parish** and **SS. Columba-Brigid Parish** will remain independent parishes while working collaboratively to develop common programs and activities. By January 2012, they should be able to discern whether they should become a linked or merged parish sharing a single pastor but using both sites.

In the East Side Cluster of the Southeast Buffalo Vicariate, there are currently nine parishes. Following mergers, there will be four parishes. Following is the complete parish restructuring in the East Side Cluster of the Southeast Buffalo Vicariate:

- **St. Adalbert Parish** will merge with **St. John Kanty Parish** at the St. John Kanty site. The worship site at St. Adalbert Parish will no longer be used. The Response to Love Center will continue to operate at its current location on the St. Adalbert property. The disposition of the remaining buildings and property will be left to the discretion of the merged parish. In two years, the viability of this situation will be evaluated.
- **St. Stanislaus Parish** will remain an independent parish, but this status will also be revisited in two years when St. Stanislaus could be linked or merged with St. John Kanty Parish.
- **Precious Blood, Holy Apostles Peter & Paul, SS. Rita & Patrick, St. Valentine** and **St. Stephen** parishes will merge to form a single parish with a new name at the St. Stephen site. The disposition of the buildings and property at the other sites will be left to the discretion of the merged parish. The Franciscan friars will be asked to provide a pastor for the merged parish and to transfer their ministry from SS. Rita & Patrick Parish to St. Stephen's site.
- **Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish** will remain a single parish and a pastoral administrator will eventually be appointed.

In the Riverside/Black Rock Cluster of the Northwest Buffalo Vicariate, four parishes will merge to form two parishes. Following is the parish restructuring in the Riverside/Black Rock Cluster of the Northwest Buffalo Vicariate:

- **St. Francis Xavier/St. John the Baptist Parish** will merge into **Assumption Parish**. The buildings and property at St. Francis Xavier/St. John the Baptist Parish will no longer be used and their disposition will be left to the discretion of the merged parish.
- **St. Florian Parish** will merge into **All Saints Parish**. The buildings and property at St. Florian Parish will no longer be used and their disposition will be left to the discretion of the merged parish.

In the Southern Cattaraugus Vicariate, there are currently 14 parishes. Following the changes there will be seven parishes. Following is the complete parish restructuring plan in the Southern Cattaraugus Vicariate:

- **Holy Family Parish in Machias** will merge into **St. Philomena Parish in Franklinville**. The buildings and property in Machias will no longer be used. As previously announced on April 29, 2007, upon the retirement of the pastor of St. Mark Parish in Rushford (Allegany Vicariate), St. Mark church will become an oratory for summer use attached to the parish of St. Philomena in Franklinville.
- **St. Pacificus Parish in Humphrey** will merge into **Holy Name of Mary Parish in Ellicottville**. St. Pacificus Church will no longer be used for weekend liturgies but will become an oratory. The Diocese is grateful to the Franciscan friars for their many years of ministry in Humphrey.
- **Holy Cross Parish** and **St. Patrick Parish in Salamanca** will merge to form a single parish, possibly with a new name, using Holy Cross Church as the worship site. The disposition of any unneeded buildings will be left to the discretion of the parish. There may be a delay in implementing a single worship site until Holy Cross church is made handicap accessible.
- **St. Patrick Parish in Limestone** will link with the merged parish in Salamanca. There will be one weekend Mass in Limestone celebrated by the pastor from Salamanca. The pastor should continue to be assisted by an in-resident deacon in Limestone. The vibrancy of the Limestone parish will continue to be monitored. The diocese is grateful to the Franciscan friars who have provided sacramental ministry to Limestone for many years.
- **St. Helen Parish in Hinsdale, St. John Parish in Olean, and Transfiguration Parish in Olean** will merge to form a single parish, possibly with a new name, using St. John's church as the worship site. Transfiguration church will become an oratory. There should be an objective study of the buildings to determine which buildings should be retained and how they will be used.
- **Sacred Heart Parish in Portville** will merge into **St. Mary of the Angels Parish in Olean**. The merged parish will continue to use the Olean site and the Portville church will become an oratory.
- The mission of **St. John the Baptist in Vandalia** will merge into the parish of **St. Bonaventure in Allegany**. The merged parish will continue to be under the care of the Franciscan friars. The future use of the Vandalia site should be determined by the parish following the merger.

Parish Restructuring
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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.

Affected pastors have been provided with written implementation guidelines to assist them and their parishioners in completing the restructuring, including establishing a timeframe and coordinating other transition-related details. In addition, the Spiritual Revitalization Committee of the diocese has produced a booklet that contains an assorted array of rituals that can be used by parishes undergoing transition. This booklet can be found through the “Journey in Faith and Grace” link on the diocesan Web site: www.buffalodiocese.org.

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.