

**Guidelines and Resources**  
for  
**JOURNEY IN FAITH & GRACE**  
**A Strategic Planning Process**  
for the  
**Diocese of Buffalo**  
**2005-2007**

**Most Rev. Edward U. Kmiec, D.D.**  
**Bishop of Buffalo**



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**A PRAYER  
FOR OUR JOURNEY  
IN FAITH AND GRACE**

God our Father,  
We are one Church in praise and in prayer.  
Send the Spirit to us, members of the  
one Body of Christ.  
We ask for vision and courage as we grow  
in Faith, in Hope, and in Love.  
Thank you for the gifts of yesterday.  
Today and tomorrow give us gifts of  
unity and peace.  
Make us signs to our world  
of fidelity to your Word.  
With Mary and Joseph we ask this  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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# JOURNEY IN FAITH & GRACE

## Diocesan Strategic Planning Commission

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## Diocesan Mission Statement

"At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task." (*The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, #4*)

As the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo comprising the eight counties of Western New York, we seek to read the signs of our times in the new millennium. We do this

- empowered by the Holy Spirit through the grace of our baptism
- sensitive to the yearnings of the human spirit
- conscious of the profound power of goodness and truth
- respectful of the ministries and institutions inherited from generations of the faithful.

We are called to see the Eucharist as the source and summit of our lives and to invite others to share this vision by our witnessing to the power of the Gospel. With special concern for those who are poor, and a strong sense of social justice, our Church has a significant and unique presence in our community through the service of all generations within a culturally and economically diverse population.

As we journey in faith and grace on this mission, we share the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time in a spirit of gratitude for God's gracious love revealed in Jesus the Lord.

## Diocesan Vision Statement

The Buffalo Diocese will be a vibrant, welcoming, Eucharistic-centered faith community reflective of God's love for us all and our love for our neighbor mirrored in justice, compassion, understanding, holiness, solidarity, and peace. The laity will exercise their baptismal call to ministry and, in accord with their charism, competence, and training, will work collaboratively with the clergy to minister to the People of God. Restructured parishes and schools will give evidence to the good stewardship of our resources while creating vibrant parish communities and academically excellent, fiscally sound schools. The diocese will continue to read the signs of the times and make every effort to respond to emerging needs.

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## **Diocesan Core Values**

### **Eucharistic Community / Prayer & Worship**

Through prayer and worship, especially celebration of the Eucharist, Catholics are nurtured and transformed. The Eucharist is the source and summit of Church life; the Eucharistic assembly is the visible expression of the Church.

### **Evangelization and Faith Formation**

It is only by being firmly grounded in the faith that Catholics can live the Gospel and proclaim it to others. The diocese will engage in a spiritual renewal to stimulate in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for the faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they will freely share it with others.

### **Respect for Every Human Person**

The dignity of human life is linked to its origin and destiny in God and God's love. The Church will promote respect for the life and dignity of every human being, from conception to natural death.

### **Concern for Families – the Domestic Church**

The family unit, whether traditional or non-traditional, shapes the society in which we live. The diocese will continue to promote the sanctity of marriage and family life, to minister to the needs of every generation, and to seek out new ways to involve youth in the life of the Church.

### **Justice, Peace, and Preferential Option for those who are Poor**

The Church's contribution to culture is to form human hearts for peace and justice. Despite social or economic disparity, we are all members of one human family with gifts to give and to receive from one another. The diocese is committed to a just social order that will give hope to those involved in oppressive situations. Every diocesan policy will be viewed on the basis of its impact on the poorest and most vulnerable members of society.

### **Common Good and Solidarity**

Personal interests need to be aligned with those of the larger church community; local churches and schools need to see their future in light of what will be best for the entire diocese. We all journey together in solidarity and hope.

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### **Cultivating Unity in Diversity/ Respect for Culture**

All persons have a right to cultural identity, a duty to develop themselves culturally, and a responsibility to help everyone participate equally in cultural life. The Church, which is not tied to any particular culture, will work to promote a sense of unity and harmony within our culturally diverse community.

### **Stewardship, Respect for Resources**

All that we have is a gift from God. As good stewards, we will show respect for the created world and the resources available to us. We will use our time, talent, and treasure wisely, responsibly, and for the benefit of all.

### **Loving Compassion, Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

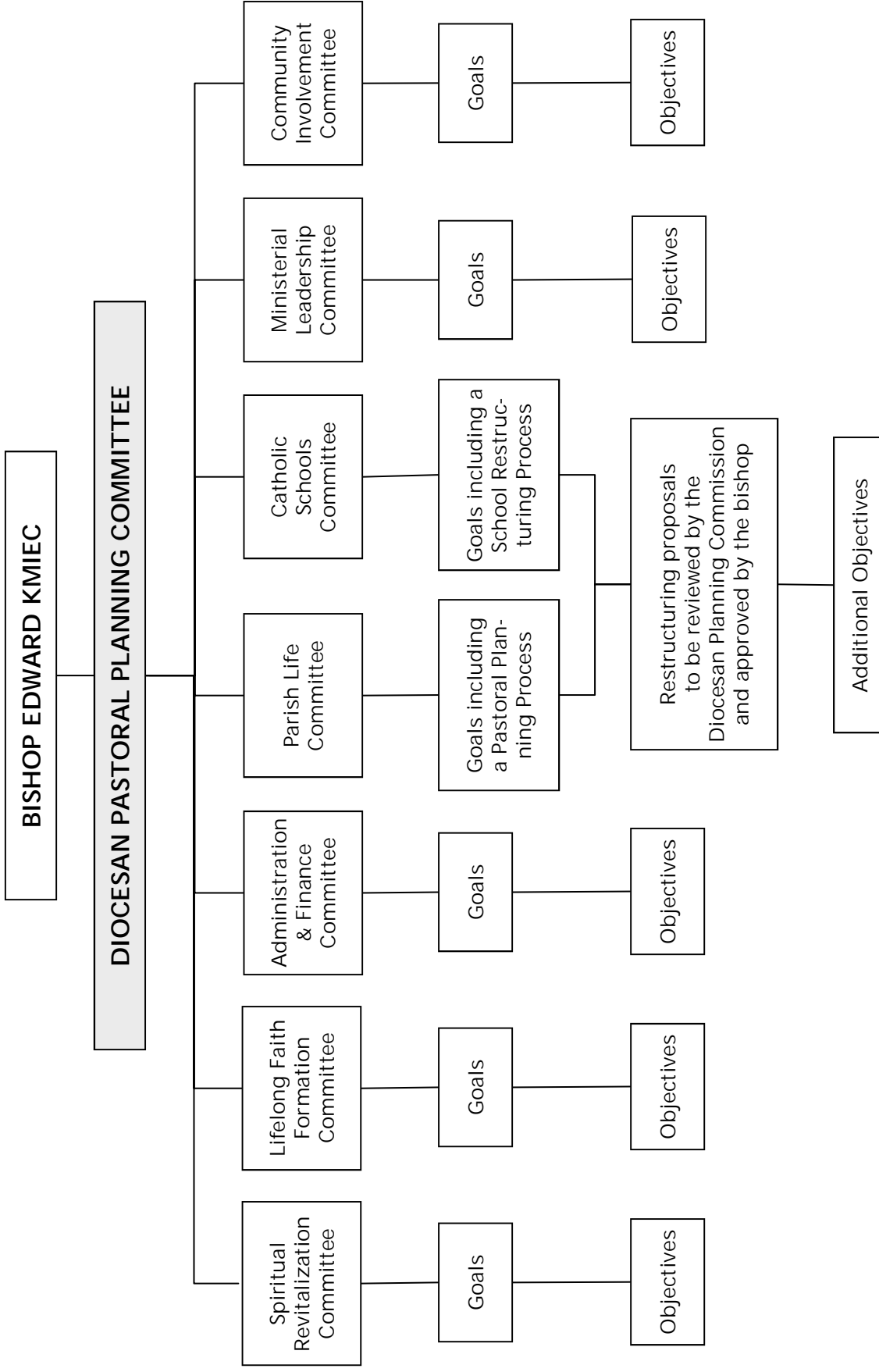
The Gospel message of Jesus emphasizes the compassion and forgiveness of a loving God. In this time of transition, which may be troubling for some, the Church will strive to build human relationships through compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

### **Honesty, Integrity and Accountability**

All aspects of the Church, including its administration, its stewardship of Church assets both human and financial, and its communication with the faithful as well as with the general community, shall be conducted with honesty, integrity, and a spirit of accountability.



# DIOCESAN STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



The Diocesan Commission is advisory to Bishop Kmiec who will review all goals and objectives and all restructuring proposals. Implementation will be dependent on the approval of the bishop.

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## **Timeline and Tasks for Parish and School Restructuring**

### **November 1, 2005 – February 28, 2006: Parish Discernment**

- Formal discussion/discernment by parish council, expanded council, or other group of active parishioners. The pastor, in consultation with key parishioners or staff, will decide the composition of the group. Discussion/discernment materials will be provided by the diocese.
- Parishioners will be invited to pray for the success of the discernment process.
- Parishioners will be kept informed about the reasons for pastoral/school reorganization.
- Parishioners will be kept informed about the formal discussions in their parish and proposals to be made to a Regional Cluster and/or Vicariate Council.
- The diocese should be notified as soon as possible of any schools considered non-viable for 2006-2007.

### **March 1 – July 31, 2006: Cluster Meetings**

- Large Vicariates should divide into regional planning clusters.
- Cluster membership will consist of the pastor and at least two parishioners. The exact number can be decided by the pastors involved and may depend on the size of the cluster. If there is a parish school, or a regional school in the cluster, the principal(s) should be invited to attend.
- The cluster representatives will review the ideas and suggestions from the parishes regarding the reconfiguration of parishes and schools. The cluster group will then engage in its own discernment process.
- The cluster will send a cluster proposal to the Vicariate Council regarding parishes and schools within the cluster.
- Cluster participants will keep their parishioners apprised of the work of the cluster. A common bulletin announcement or insert is advised.

### **August 1 – December 31, 2006: Meetings of the Vicariate Council**

- Membership on the Vicariate Council should follow diocesan guidelines but could be expanded at the discretion of the vicar.
- The Vicariate Council will review the proposals from the regional clusters (or from the parishes in those cases where the vicariate was not large enough to necessitate regional clusters).

- Proposals for restructuring must meet diocesan criteria. Adjustments to proposals should be made in dialogue with the planning cluster or individual parishes.
- A common bulletin announcement should be issued by the Vicariate Council in order to keep parish and school communities informed.

**January 1, 2007 – December 31, 2007: Diocesan Review of Proposals**

- The Diocesan Strategic Planning Commission will review recommendations for restructuring. Recommendations must meet diocesan criteria. Needed adjustments will be made in dialogue with the Vicariate Council and affected parishes.
- The Diocesan Commission will communicate with the Vicariates regarding exactly what will be recommended to Bishop Kmiec.
- As they are completed, recommendations for restructuring will be presented to Bishop Kmiec for his approval. Parishes will be informed prior to media announcement.
- The implementation schedule will be determined as the process unfolds.



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## The Restructuring of Our Parishes and Schools

For most Catholics, the parish is the most important part of the church because it is there that they express their faith and, together with others, give proof of their communion with God and with one another. At the same time, each individual parish is also in relationship with other parishes in carrying out the mission of the entire diocese, as well as in communion with the larger, universal church. Through its prayer, public worship, sacramental life, and ministries, the parish gives witness to God's presence. The parish is sacramental and God acts through it.

Catholic schools have been a vital ministry of most parishes throughout our diocesan history. These schools have been characterized by Catholic identity and cultural diversity. They have shown concern for spiritual formation and moral values, for academic excellence and global awareness, and for service to the Church and to the nation.

In the many years since parishes and schools were established, the world around them has changed considerably. Effective ministry requires that the church follow the advice of Pope John XXIII and read the "signs of the times." The parish must seek to become ever more fully a people of God, sharing the mission of Christ and developing the structures necessary for supporting its community life and carrying out its mission. This will entail constant adaptation and renewal in the face of an ever changing environment. Schools, too, will need to be structured in new ways in order for Catholic education to be offered under very different circumstances than when the schools were first founded.



As the Diocese of Buffalo prepares to restructure its parishes and schools, there is a two-fold purpose:

1. To ensure that parishes will have the membership, leadership and resources to be vibrant centers of Catholic life.
2. To foster academically excellent and financially sound Catholic schools that will give witness to Gospel values through their environment, teaching, and activities.

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In order to understand better the need for the restructuring of our parishes and schools, it might be helpful to review some of the specific challenges that face our diocese today.

Population decline and a poor economy have affected every sector of life: financial institutions, health care, schools, private businesses, and local government. We have seen downsizing, outsourcing, merging, and restructuring in both the private and public sectors.

In addition to a net loss of population, Western New York has seen a significant shift of population from the cities to the suburbs. For example, the City of Buffalo has half the population it had in 1950 and has lost 11% of its population since 1990. Yet there are still 55 Catholic churches in the city that, on average, are only 22% filled during weekend Masses.

Parish membership and average weekend Mass attendance have been declining for many years. In just the past ten years, parish membership is down 12% and Mass attendance has declined 13%. Catholic baptisms during the same period declined 33%. Some parishes have neither the membership nor finances to support the ministries necessary for full parish life. A disproportionate amount of the parish budget is often needed to maintain old and underutilized buildings. Where a parish has a school, an average of 50% of the parish income supports the school, leaving few financial resources for the parish's other ministries.

Catholic elementary school enrollment has declined 25% in the past ten years. Schools are operating at 64% of capacity and tuition covers only 50% of per pupil cost. Parishes with schools strain to subsidize their educational ministry often at the expense of other parish needs. Financial constraints do not allow parishes to pay administrators or teachers a salary commensurate with their credentials. The average starting salary for an elementary teacher with a BA is \$17,600 (2004-2005).

The Diocese of Buffalo is also experiencing the same decline in priestly vocations that has been experienced throughout the western world. The number of active diocesan priests serving in the diocese has declined 30% since 1995 and that decline is projected to continue. There are also fewer religious order priests serving in the diocese than there were ten years ago.

Although our diocese has made some modest adjustments over the past 15 years, a more intensive process of restructuring is necessary in order to ensure that parishes and schools will be able to carry on effective ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In a spirit of good stewardship, we need to restructure in order to have the number of parishes and schools that are truly needed and that our resources can support.

### Comparative Diocesan Statistics

Statistics for the year Published in the year	1984 <u>1985</u>	1994 <u>1995</u>	2004 <u>2005</u>	% Change <u>1985-2005</u>	% Change <u>1995-2005</u>
Total Civic Population	1,639,420	1,628,713	1,573,477	-4.0%	-3.4%
Total Parishes and Missions	296	290	274	-7.4%	-5.5%
Catholic Population	813,498	760,935	702,884	-13.6%	-7.6%
Total Registered Households	na	237,337	209,436		-11.8%
Total Registered Individuals	na	612,402	549,908		-10.2%
Practicing Households	na	163,861	161,387		-1.5%
Average Weekend Attendance	na	272,398	232,116		-14.8%
Number of Weekend Masses	na	1,012	871		-13.9%
Seating Capacity of Churches	na	135,606	132,580		-2.2%
Avg % of Seating Filled on WE	na	59%	55%		-4.0%
Baptisms	10,450	8,648	5,140	-50.8%	-40.6%
Marriages	4,442	3,102	2,055	-53.7%	-33.8%
Deaths	5,991	7,321	6,911	15.4%	-5.6%
Total Active Priests-Dioc & RO	802	550	398	-50.4%	-27.6%
Active Diocesan Priests	478	355	238	-50.2%	-33.0%
Religious Order Priests	324	195	160	-50.6%	-17.9%
Parochial Elementary Schools	125	88	76	-39.2%	-13.6%
Parochial Elementary Enrollment	28,080	23,076	17,218	-38.7%	-25.4%

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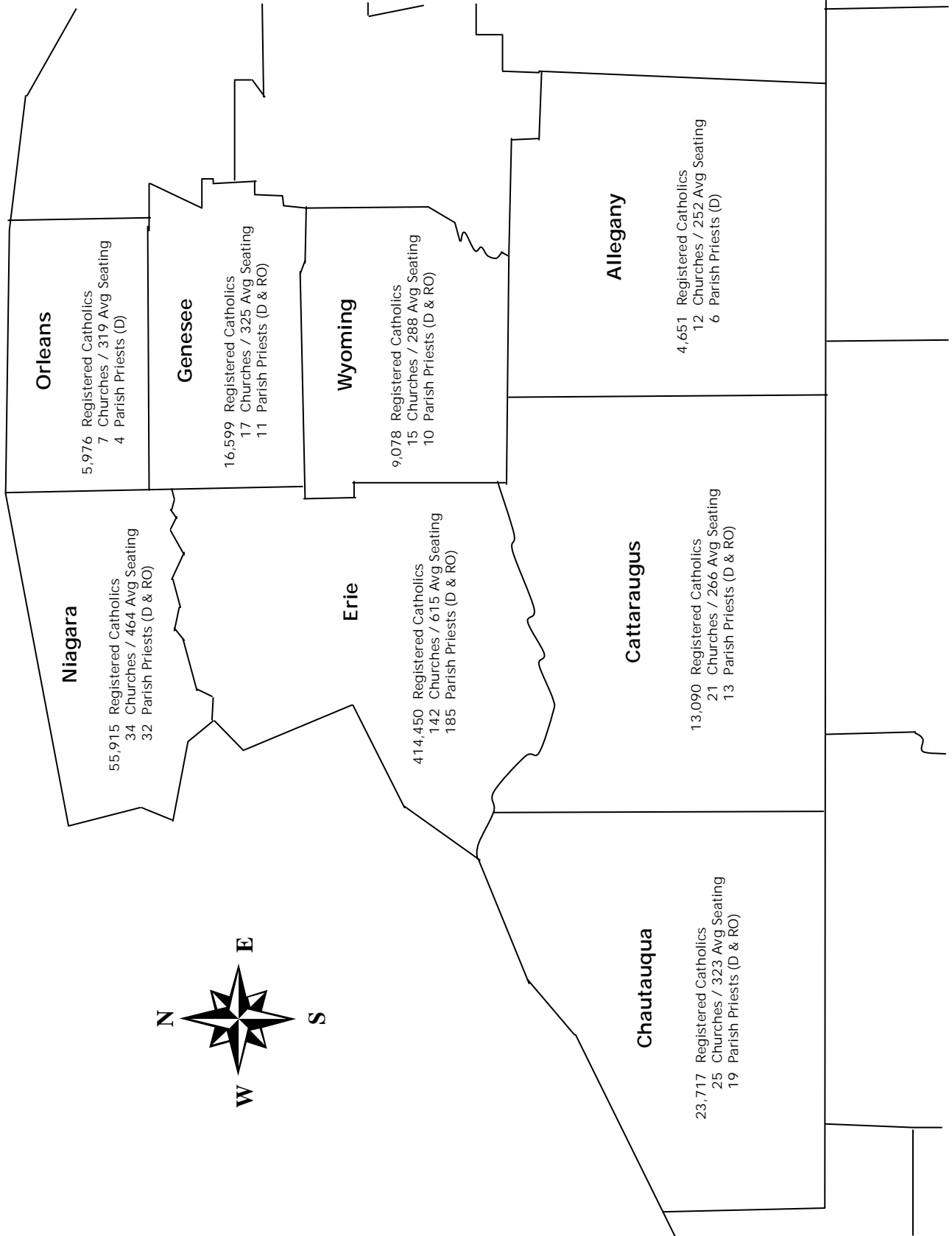
## Diocesan Guidelines for the Restructuring of Parishes

- At the heart of our process is the desire for a diocesan-wide spiritual renewal, a desire to be faith-filled and holy in order to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. All deliberations and decisions should be within this context.
- A parish must be more than a place where the Sunday liturgy is celebrated. In addition to quality Sunday liturgies, a parish should have formation programs for the sacraments, religious formation for both children and adults, lay involvement, outreach to those in need, good pastoral leadership, and financial stability.
- Ordinarily, an individual priest should not have sole responsibility for more than two parishes. If a priest needs to assume responsibility for two or more parishes, there should be a single parish office and appropriate support staff. Parish functions should be consolidated.
- Consideration will be given to the canonical directives regarding the number of Masses that a priest may celebrate each day. Ordinarily, a priest is permitted to celebrate one or two Masses per day. Where there is a genuine pastoral need, a priest may celebrate a third Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation. Parishes should adjust their Mass schedules according to pastoral need and in collaboration with neighboring parishes.
- Factors such as the parish's historical, cultural, or ethnic identity need to be considered in a restructuring effort. However, such considerations cannot be the sole or primary determining factor when deciding whether to continue, close, or alter a parish.
- In those places where there are neither an adequate number of people nor sufficient temporal resources to support a parish in achieving its mission, and where there are other parishes nearby, reorganization is both appropriate and necessary.

- Most quasi-parishes, commonly known as missions, were established at a time when distance was a hardship and there was the hope that a growing population might eventually result in a mission becoming a parish. Where transportation and the custom of traveling distances to meet other needs are present, and where the church population has not shown an increase, serious consideration should be given as to whether a mission is necessary.
- Decisions will attempt to promote the common good of the entire diocese and evidence a deep concern for what will best serve future generations.



# CATHOLICS, CHURCHES & PRIESTS BY COUNTY 2005



## PROJECTIONS OF ACTIVE DIOCESAN PRIESTS FOR THE YEAR 2015

There will be approximately 100 fewer active diocesan priests available for ministry in the year 2015. The following is a projection by vicariate of how priests might be distributed ten years from now. In this model, priests would be distributed proportionate to the average weekend attendance per vicariate, with adjustments made for distance and the availability of retired priests. Parish restructuring proposals should be based on these numbers. Religious Order priests may also be available, but nationwide, their numbers are diminishing at a greater rate than diocesan priests, and their availability cannot be presumed.

Vicariate	Diocesan Priests 2005	Diocesan Priests In 2015	Net Change
Allegany	7	5	-2
Central Buffalo	17	3	-14
NW Buffalo	18	8	-10
SE Buffalo	15	7	-8
S Cattaraugus	8	4	-4
N Chautauqua	12	5	-7
S Chautauqua	9	5	-4
E Erie	35	28	-7
N Erie	37	31	-6
W Erie	24	15	-9
Genesee	11	6	-5
E Niagara	8	5	-3
W Niagara	16	7	-9
Orleans	4	3	-1
Tri-County	6	4	-2
Wyoming	7	3	-4
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>-95</b>

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## Models of Parish Restructuring and Leadership

Considering the reduced number of priests who will be available for ministry in future years, there will need to be fewer parishes as well as new models for organizing and staffing those parishes.

The **single parish with its own pastor** will be possible only in parishes with very large congregations. The pastors of these large parishes ordinarily will not have the assistance of a parochial vicar as is sometimes possible today. The parish should determine which parish ministries require a priest and which could be performed by a deacon or lay ministers. The parish should then hire the support staff needed, especially pastoral associates and a parish business manager.

In urban areas where there are many churches, the **merging of parishes** is an advisable option. Mergers take many forms. There is no limit to the number of parishes that might merge to form a single parish. The merged parish might use a current church site or build a new church in a central location. In some cases the merged parish might use the church on one site, but other parish buildings on another site. In a merger, the assets and liabilities of the participating parishes are united and become the responsibility of the merged parish.

There are currently many situations in the diocese where there are **linked parishes**. These are situations where one priest is given the responsibility for two parishes, and in a couple of cases, three parishes. To pastor more than two parishes has often proven detrimental to the health of the priest and is therefore not a recommended option. For a linked situation to work successfully, the pastor should be assisted by a pastoral associate, and parish organizations and activities should be combined to the extent possible. The mass schedule should be adjusted so that the pastor would be able to abide by the canonical directives concerning the number of masses to be celebrated on a weekend.

An option especially appropriate for small rural parishes would be to become an **oratory** affiliated with a larger parish in a neighboring municipality. All records and financial operations would transfer to the larger parish that would assume responsibility for the oratory. The weekend liturgies would be celebrated at the larger parish, but the oratory could be used for weddings, funerals or other occasional services. The oratory might also be the site for local devotions, catechesis, or other activities. Having an oratory, as opposed to closing a church, provides for a continuing Catholic presence in a rural area. The success of this option often

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depends on the strength of desire of the local Catholics to assist in the upkeep of the oratory and to maintain some activity there. A large parish might be responsible for several oratories and become like a “hub” church with several outlying oratories. This is the practice in many areas of the world where there is a shortage of priests.

Most restructuring models result in the closure of some buildings. Sometimes the **closure** of one or more parishes is the best solution for a particular situation. If a church closes (not through merger) the parish trustees are responsible for paying liabilities and disposing of the assets of the parish. In the case of linked or merged parishes, one or more buildings may close because they would not be needed and they may be rented or sold.

Restructuring might also use more than one form of reorganization. For example, if there were four parishes in relatively close proximity, they might merge to form two parishes that would then be linked with one pastor.

No matter which option is chosen in order to restructure the parishes of the diocese, there is no question about the need for more and more **deacons** and **lay ecclesial ministers**. This will require both spiritual formation and theological education, especially if a deacon or layperson were to assume responsibility for the day to day activity of a parish as a **parish life coordinator**. A recent national survey on lay parish ministers found that for the first time in the history of our country there are more paid professional lay ministers in our parishes than there are priests. The need for professionally trained ministers will only increase. Deacons and laity are encouraged to avail themselves of the education and formation offered by the diocese.

YOU  
HAVE NOT  
CHOSEN  
ME†  
I HAVE  
CHOSEN  
YOU†

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## **Criteria for a Vibrant Parish**

### **Prayer and Worship**

Liturgies should be quality celebrations: good prayer, homilies, music. There should be congregational participation and an adequate number of trained lay ministers. The worship space should be aesthetically pleasing and liturgically appropriate.

### **Spirit of Community**

The community should exhibit in its coming together a spirit of hospitality, a tangible spirit of friendliness, an openness to diversity, and a respect for the needs of all groups in the assembly.

### **Lay Leadership and Involvement**

There should be active and responsible involvement of many parishioners in advisory and ministerial roles, and all approved liturgical roles should be open to both men and women. Lay leaders should receive appropriate education and formation.

### **Faith Formation**

The parish, individually or collaboratively, should provide religious education for all age levels and also offer the opportunity for participation in the RCIA. There should be active sacramental preparation programs and a viable youth ministry program. Support should also be given to the parochial or regional Catholic elementary school.

### **Pastoral Ministry**

The staff should meet regularly to pray together, share their experiences, and plan for parish ministry. Staff and members of the parish should be willing to take the time to heal, console, listen to and help people in need.

### **Outreach**

The parish does not work simply to sustain itself. It should be a visible expression of Christian community service incorporating charitable works, evangelization, and social justice activity – helping to gain human dignity for all within the community. The parish should also be supportive of the missionary activities of the Church both near home and in distant lands.

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### **Collaborative Administration**

Pastoral leadership should encourage the fullest possible collaboration of clergy, religious, laity, men and women, in their common mission.

### **Financial Stability**

The parish should be able to support its ministry and contribute to the services and programs of the diocese. The parish should not be overly dependent on special fundraising activities such as lawn fetes or games of chance. Parishioners should be educated in the theology and practice of stewardship.

### **Buildings and Property**

An atmosphere of beauty and cleanliness should mark the church interior as a sacred space. Sacred and precious items should be given appropriate care and security. Parish buildings and grounds should be well maintained and adequate for the needs of the parish.



The pastor and his council or planning committee should work together to complete this form. After they have had a chance to discuss their responses, the form should be sent to the Episcopal Vicar.

Parish \_\_\_\_\_ Municipality \_\_\_\_\_ Vicariate \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by \_\_\_\_\_

**CHECKLIST OF SOME OF THE OBJECTIVE INDICATORS OF A VIBRANT PARISH**

	YES	NO
1. The number of active households is at least 100 if a rural parish, 500 if an urban parish, and 1,000 if a suburban parish.	1.	
2. Ordinarily, the church is at least 2/3 filled for each weekend liturgy.	2.	
3. There is an active parish council.	3.	
4. There is an active finance council that regularly consults with the pastor.	4.	
5. There is an active youth group.	5.	
6. There is a religious education program under a director or coordinator who meets diocesan qualifications.	6.	
7. The majority of the catechists are certified by the diocese.	7.	
8. The parish has an RCIA team prepared to accept inquirers.	8.	
9. There are formal sacramental preparation programs for Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, Confirmation, and Marriage.	9.	
10. There is good music ministry at each weekend service.	10.	
11. There are formal opportunities for adult faith formation.	11.	
12. There are formal opportunities for the parish to engage in outreach to the larger WNY community or to missionary areas.	12.	
13. Over the past two years, total operating receipts have exceeded total operating expenditures.	13.	
14. If the parish sponsors a school, the annual subsidy does not exceed 50% of the regular offertory income.	14.	
15. In the past two years, the parish has contributed, through its assessments, to the support of diocesan services and programs.	15.	
16. A printed copy of the annual parish financial statement is shared with parishioners each year.	16.	
17. There has been painting or renovation of the church interior within the past ten years.	17.	
18. The parish has a regular maintenance schedule for its buildings and property.	18.	

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## **Criteria for a Vibrant School**

### **Catholic Identity**

A Catholic school is a community where all are working together in a Christian endeavor wherein students are enriched with secular and religious knowledge and values. Catholic identity should be interwoven and vibrantly expressed throughout the physical and spiritual environment, the curriculum, and interpersonal relationships. Frequent celebrations of the Eucharist, various prayer experiences and opportunities for service to others should be provided.

### **Catholic Educators**

Administrators and teachers in the Catholic school should be imbued with Catholic values. They should have a love and respect for children and a desire to prepare them for the world in which they live and for the kingdom which God has promised. The principal should be a Catholic in good standing. Those who teach religion as a subject should also be Catholic and in good standing with the Church. Administrators and faculty members should participate in ongoing professional development.

### **Academic Program**

The distinguishing feature of the Catholic school curriculum is the emphasis on Gospel values, the teachings of the Church, and the practice of the Faith. The school should also offer a strong secular academic program with student performance aligned with the New York State Standards. Religion should be integrated into the academic curriculum wherever possible.

### **Governance**

The principal, pastor(s), canonical administrator and diocesan Catholic Education Department staff should provide the leadership needed to make the school vibrant. Individual roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined. Evaluation procedures for administrators, faculty and staff should be in place and implemented.

### **Finance**

The school should have adequate financial resources to cover operating costs. The tuition rate should be high enough to allow for a balanced budget. Current enrollment and enrollment projections should give strong evidence that the school can enroll an adequate number of students to achieve a cost effective operation.

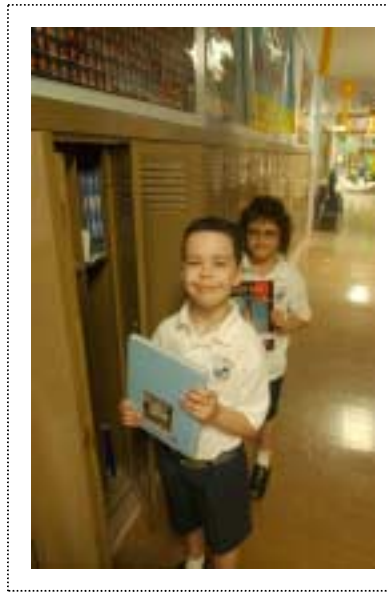
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### Marketing

The school should have an organized and effective marketing plan. Active recruitment of potential students should be ongoing. A five-year strategic plan should be in place and it should be reviewed and updated yearly.

### Facilities

The school and its campus should be a safe and healthy learning and working environment. The school facility should be sufficient and appropriate to provide a quality educational program including an adequate technology infrastructure. The buildings should be well maintained, cost efficient, and accessible. The cost of operating the school facility should be reasonable in light of enrollment and finances.



The pastor and his council or planning committee should work together to complete this form. After they have had a chance to discuss their responses, the form should be sent to the Episcopal Vicar.

Parish \_\_\_\_\_ Municipality \_\_\_\_\_ Vicariate \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by \_\_\_\_\_

**CHECKLIST OF SOME OF THE OBJECTIVE INDICATORS OF A VIBRANT SCHOOL**

	YES	NO
1. All students receive instruction in a religion program that follows the diocesan curriculum.	1.	
2. Religion teachers have a degree in Theology or Religious Studies or have completed the diocesan catechist certification program.	2.	
3. The academic program includes instruction in art, music, physical education, technology and foreign language.	3.	
4. Administrators and teachers have appropriate degrees and certification.	4.	
5. School facilities have been maintained and updated to support the academic program.	5.	
6. There is an active Advisory Board.	6.	
7. The last school year ended without a budget deficit that needed to be supplemented by the parish.	7.	
8. Class size ranges from 19-25 students per class.	8.	
9. In the past school year, at least 95% of tuition was collected.	9.	
10. Parish subsidy does not exceed 40% of the school budget.	10.	
11. Other parishes pay their school subsidy as per agreement.	11.	
12. There is a specific building maintenance fund for major repairs.	12.	
13. Tuition assistance is available for needy families.	13.	
14. The administrators and faculty are paid at least 50% of their public school district's salary.	14.	
15. The Pre-K program is self-supporting or makes a profit.	15.	
16. The school has an organized and active marketing and recruitment plan.	16.	
17. A five-year strategic plan is in place.	17.	
18. The school building is energy and cost efficient and is well maintained.	18.	

## An Exercise in Planning

*This exercise should be used by parishes, regional clusters, and vicariate councils. Parish representatives should share the fruits of the parish discussions with the regional cluster. The regional cluster should send their proposals to the Vicariate Council in writing, and the Vicariate Council should send the final written Vicariate proposal to the Diocesan Commission. This should be sent to Sr. Regina Murphy at the Catholic Center by December 31, 2006.*

Before parishes are established in any diocese, there are certain questions that are ordinarily asked by the local bishop:

- Are there enough Catholics in a given area to carry on full parish life?
- Are existing parishes unable to provide for these Catholics?
- Is there sufficient revenue to support the ministry and structures that will be needed?
- Is a priest available to provide sacramental ministry?

If these same questions were asked many years after the establishment of the parishes, the answers would often be quite different.

### Parishes

1. Imagine that there were no parishes in your cluster area. If you were to establish parishes that would meet the criteria for vibrant parish life, how many parishes would be pastorally necessary in order to serve the needs of the Catholic community?
2. Where would they be located?
3. How would they be staffed?

### Schools

1. If there were no schools in your cluster area, how many would be needed to serve the students who are currently seeking a Catholic School education?
2. Where would the school(s) be located?
3. How would the school(s) be financed?

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### Proposal

What proposal can you offer to restructure the parishes of your cluster or vicariate so that the new situation would:

- Provide, through reduction, collaboration, or new models, the number of parishes and building structures needed in a given area
- Create vibrant parishes in accord with the vibrant parish criteria
- Require fewer priests – consistent with the number projected for each vicariate

### School Proposal

What proposal can you offer to restructure the schools in your cluster or vicariate so that the new situation would:

- Provide through reduction, collaboration, or new models, the number of schools needed in a given area
- Have sufficient enrollment to ensure educational viability
- Have sufficient funding from non-parish sources to allow for a parish subsidy that is in keeping with suggested diocesan guidelines

**Every day  
the church gives birth  
to the church**

- St. Bede

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## Some Additional Resources

At the parish level, the pastor or parish life coordinator should make the following information available to the parishioners:

- Parish statistics from the Annual Parish Statistical Report
- Financial information from the Annual Parish Financial Report.
- If there is a school, enrollment information and financial information from the Annual School Financial Report.

For purposes of inter-parish discussion, pastors have been given a folder of information to be copied and distributed to those parishioners participating in regional cluster or vicariate meetings. Materials include statistics for every parish in the vicariate:

- Weekend Mass statistics: church seating, attendance, number of Masses
- Total household and average weekend attendance statistics for 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2004.
- Pertinent financial information regarding parishes and schools.
- School enrollment statistics for the past 5 years

A Guide for Facilitators is also included.