

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

October 28, 2014

Dear Frs. Hogan, Kreinheder, Wurz, Larkin and Baccaro,

We stand united; united in our Catholic Faith. Together, we are united as priests and deacons to share the Good News with all of the people of our diocese. As your bishop, I thank you for your priestly ministry. I also thank you for your on-going participation in the diocesan pastoral planning process. Karl Rahner urged us to remember that the God who is the source of creativity is the inspiration for our planning. He said, "Planning is always an expression of hope."

The pastoral care areas of the diocese have made recommendations to me based upon the lived experience of their area of the diocese. The College of Consultors has joined me in reading and discussing every report from each PCA. We have also considered the other materials that you have shared with diocesan offices. A review of the sacramental ministry, finances and programs of each parish has taken place. The College of Consultors raised the questions of community, faith life, mission, out-reach, sacramental life, and sustainability for each parish and each PCA. These deliberations facilitated a diocesan-wide understanding of the faith and the human dynamics at work in our midst. I too have read all of the materials. I have prayerfully weighed and reflected upon the needs of each parish and PCA as we strive to proclaim the Good News.

I have frequently and publically mentioned that I have no desire to close parishes. However, I must be candid, every parish will change in substantive ways. There are many new models of parish life to be experienced. Pope Francis reminds us, "God is not afraid of new things. That is why he is continually surprising us, opening our hearts in new and unexpected ways. He renews us: he constantly makes us 'new.' A Christian who lives the Gospel is 'God's newness' in the Church and in the world. How much God loves this 'newness'." [Homily for the Mass of Beatification of Pope Paul VI, 19 October 2014]

As we move forward, note that the instructions to you that are contained in this letter will evolve in a natural way. I need your commitment to helping our parishioners grow into a new way of being faith communities. Formerly, the diocesan focus was on the development of a parochially based mode. Now our vision must shift to one of mutual support and a PCA vision.

The directions that follow derive from hours of dialogue at all levels. The remaining announcements of 2007, the recommendation of PCA planning groups, the observations of

pastors, and the responses to the "Natural Bridges" process frame the direction that I now share with you.

1. Every pastoral care area is to provide me with a Mass schedule that allows the priests of the area to 'cover' for each other as celebrants. Church building capacity and the number of worshipers should be the major element in setting a Mass schedule. Specialized needs may be considered. Each PCA may schedule one Sunday evening Mass, which may be rotated among the priest celebrants of the PCA.
2. Each PCA will develop a Cluster Council that will assist in setting a vision for the work of the parishes as 'collaborators.'
3. Each Cluster council will be attentive to the unique needs of its area. It will investigate, ponder and propose initiatives to serve the people of the area.

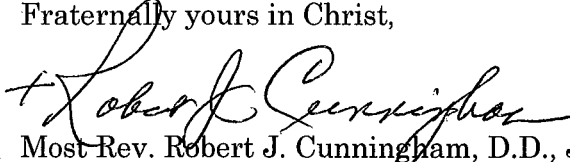
Herein follow, my specific directions to your parish and those of your PCA:

1. The announced 2007 decision that the parish of St. Peter and its mission of Sacred Heart in Scriba should be merged into the parish of St. Paul at the retirement of the pastor of St. Peter/Sacred Heart.
2. The announced 2007 decision that the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Minetto should be modified in the immediate aftermath of the retirement of its pastor. The rationale recognizes the reality of the Fultonians who are worshiping in Minetto.
3. Please work to build a future cluster relationship for the parishes of St. Stephen, St. Joseph, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help, with St. Joseph taking the lead as the key parish. An example of the Mass schedule may be one Mass on Saturday at St. Joseph and Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and one Mass at each Church on Sunday.
4. St. Mary's will continue its relationship to Hannibal. However, the situation of Our Lady of the Rosary Hannibal should be monitored. Its long-term future should involve its development by Catholic Charities as a rural outreach and faith formation site with the Church placed in the category of Oratory. If it becomes an Oratory, Holy Trinity, Fulton may be able to care for the community.
5. Given the current trend-lines, the planning group members for St. Mary's, St. Joseph, and St. Stephen with professional facilitators should tackle the question of whether St. Mary's or St. Joseph will provide the eventual site for the Oswego, west side parish.

6. A PCA Mass Schedule should be developed that reflects a reduction to three FT Priests. If the number of priests continues to diminish, there may come day when the area is served by two priests.
7. Given the number of parish facilities, the sustainability of parishes should be regularly monitored.
8. Saint [Mother] Marianne Cope served as the Principal/Superior of the school at St. Peter's twice. Please recommend a fitting memorial to her service.

Our journey continues. In deep personal ways, you understand the real change that has transformed Church life in the Northeast. Faith is deeper than these changes. Faith is stronger than change. 'Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.'

Fraternally yours in Christ,



Most Rev. Robert J. Cunningham, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Syracuse

[click the link below for additional information]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

EASTERN REGION

PCA-4, 6, 7 & 8

WESTERN REGION

PCA- 1, 5, 10 & 12

NORTHERN REGION

PCA- 1

SOUTHERN REGION

PCA-1 & 2B

All campus ministries support the planning efforts of their PCA's. However, all campus ministries, except for Colgate University which is responsible to its University Chaplain, report to the Diocesan Director of Campus Ministry.

EASTERN REGION

PCA-5

Christ our Hope and St. Mary of the Snows Mission have a natural collaboration with neighboring parishes.

WESTERN REGION

PCA-2

Explain ways which 2 priests are to cover all five parishes.

PCA-3 & PCA-5

Exploring whether these parishes should be collaborating together.

PCA-12

Explain ways which all available priests in this PCA would be able to collaborate to assist in the Chittenango area.

SOUTHERN REGION

PCA-3

1. Msgr. John Putano will become the administrator of St. Cyril and Methodius Parish in addition to being the pastor of the linked parishes of St. Patrick and St. Thomas.
2. Fr. John Donovan will become the administrator of Holy Trinity Parish in addition to serving as pastor of St. James.
3. Holy Trinity and St. Cyril and Methodius will function as linked parishes, each with a separate administrator; the feasibility of continuing this arrangement will be evaluated after one year.