

Script for “The View from 20,000 Feet” on Syrdio.org

Commentary to accompany the Power Point: “The View from 20,000 Feet”

To frame our mindset, we offer this thought from German Theologian Father Karl Rahner S.J., “The God who is the source of creativity is the inspiration for our planning. Planning is always an expression of Hope.” This expression of hope will bring with it a new way of seeing parish life. The diminishing number of priests and professed religious, the increased cadre of deacons and lay ecclesial ministers, the shift of business and industry away from the Northeast, and changing population trends point to parish structures that will be very different than those that served the local church 50 to 60 years ago. These transformations will bring with them new ways of experiencing parish life. They will require a new way of seeing. Thus, we plan. Planning is an expression of our hope.

Introductory comments:

- On October 1, Bishop Cunningham received the most recent results of the most recent phase of the pastoral planning process. The plan was the result of a two-year consultation process. The collaboration had three phases. First, 150 focus sessions were sponsored to invite comments about the future of our parishes. The information shared and gleaned from these sessions may be found on the website. Next, PCA Planning Groups were invited to engage in, “Seeing Natural Bridges: A Collaborative Visioning Process.” This four-session series engaged parish leadership in considering inter-parish collaboration, parish identity in the future, engaging Mass schedules, future parish staffing, parish linking and cluster, the core responsibilities of every parish, and issues related to finance and sustainability. The diocese noted that there was a great deal of synchronicity in the parish reports. Thus, it sent a set of specific questions for the response of the PCA planning groups. This process involved the gift of time and wisdom generously given by many people. Bishop Cunningham and his diocesan staff are grateful for all the efforts that provided him with the insights that he received on October 1.
- If you are wondering about the term “Pastoral Care Area” or “PCA” we want to clarify the term for the reader. A Planning Group is generally formed by a group of neighboring parishes and consists of representatives for each parish. Their purpose is to address inter-parish planning for the future. The membership is fixed as the clergy, the two lay-trustees of each parish and two officers of the parish pastoral council. The consistent presence and participation of these representatives who have particular importance to the parish religious corporation and/or to the canonical life of the parish is important. Members represent the parish in meetings of the PCA planning group. To gather input for the planning meetings they are free to hold meetings with groups of parishioners or staffs to assure clear communication throughout the process.
- The reports from the Focus Sessions and PCA Planning Groups formed the largest part of the materials presented to the Diocesan College of Consultors. This group of advisors to the bishop also received a full financial overview of each parish, and, importantly, an overview

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of the sacramental and community life of each parish. The source of all of the materials was from the parish. The consultants have received copies of every written note or letter that has been received and summaries of conversations as well. The insights that were gained blended with a singular concern about the future. The Consultants noted that in the time from 1974 to today, the diocese has experienced a decline from 400 to 115 of the active number of priests. With the changes in the demographics of age and living situations, and the evolving situation in business and industry, the diocese is much changed during the last 40 years. Thus, the dialogue which began in 1983 continues. May it suffice to say that given the trends, every parish will be impacted by these changing realities?

- The Bishop has also made it clear that his goal is not to close parishes. He has been equally clear that parishes may be differently configured in the future, and they will use different models of pastoral leadership. These new parish structures will include parish clusters, linkages, the development of core parishes and oratories. Perhaps other imaginative possibilities will surface during our continuing collaborations. Transformation due to changes will evolve over time and as necessary. Again, the changes that are being presented will not occur immediately. We will grow into them.

About the Power Point Presentation that you are about to view:

- As the consultants discussed the volume of materials documents presented to it, Msgr. John Putano noted that it would be helpful to visual learners to find a way to create graphs and charts that would tell the story. Later, with the help of a college student, he created a power point presentation as an overview of the Southern Region. Its impact on its viewers was significant. The College of Consultants asked that the power point be expanded to overview the entire diocese. The consultants are aware that the diocese covers over 5600 square miles in seven counties, and that their responsibility is to assist the bishop in providing a Catholic presence in all of the areas of the diocese.
- The diocese has seven counties that are organized into four regions. The Southern Region consists of Broome and Chenango counties. The Eastern Region contains most of Oneida County and all of Madison County. The Western Region, where roughly 50% of the Catholics of the diocese live is formed by Cortland and Onondaga Counties, and a small part of Oswego County. The Northern Region is formed by Oswego County. **The “View from 20,000 Feet,” provides a quick distillation of the Church’s presence in all four regions.** The presentation will provide the viewer with a sense of what each of the 27 PCA planning groups are dealing with. In that manner, it will also show that decisions made that affect Oswego also have an impact in Southeast Broome County, and decisions made in Western Broome impact Utica and the area to its north.
- For many, our future will consist of parishes acting in clusters, linkages and similar patterns. The importance of moving into this style of parish leadership is found in the pattern of reversibility. Significant trend-lines in the numbers of priests and residents/worshippers have

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created the new patterns of parish life. If the trend-lines reverse, the structures may reverse, as well.

Our Journey begins: [The opening slides and a preview of their contents]

Slide 1: The first slide is a map of the entire diocese of Syracuse. This 5600 square mile, seven-county area, was established as a diocese on September 12, 1886. Every bishop is to show concern for all the people who live within the diocese. Similarly, each pastor is charged to care for the Catholic community of his parish and for all the other people who live in its area, particularly in the ministry of charity.

The maps and area information that you are viewing have been focused to highlight the ministry of our parishes. Kindly be mindful that each area is served by many other Church-related ministries including health care (nursing homes, hospitals, and rehabilitation center), education (Catholic Schools, Faith Formation and colleges/universities), specialized presence to new immigrants and language groups, youth and young adult ministries, Catholic Charities, and ministry to the imprisoned. Each of these ministries is important. Nevertheless, the focus of this presentation is parish based.

The presentation will note that five pastoral re-alignments that were announced in 2007 remain to be implemented. At the appropriate time, the changes for these parishes will be applied. As the current presentation identifies future re-organization, we note that every plan will be reviewed either every three years or whenever there is a change in the parish leader. Virtually all parishes will be in a parish linkage or parish cluster within the next 2 to ten years. Oratories and devotional chapels will continue the presence of a number of parishes. Parishes staffed by multiple priests will be rare. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the gifts needed to be the local church are present in abundance.

We begin in Broome County.

Our journey begins in the Southern Region of the Diocese. The region is served by six pastoral care areas, five in Broome County and one in Chenango County. This region provides a good prism for the changes taking place in our diocese and the entire northeast.

1. Western Broome County, or the Endwell, Endicott, and Maine area (S-PCA-1) is one of the two areas in the Southern region where change is possible.

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2. The slides for each pastoral care area will fall in the same order. Thus, we will take a few moments in this area to familiarize the reader with the slides and what to look for in them.
3. Each PCA will begin with a map of the area along with the location of the parishes, and where possible, a sense of the distance between parishes. In looking at the map, you may notice that Our Lady of Sorrows Vestal has joined the parishes on the other side of the river. There are six parishes in a comparatively small geographic area. This density of parishes will have an obvious impact on the way that the area are served in the immediate future.
4. The second slide in each set is the priest slide. It reveals the priests, their ages, and their status. The left column is significant. It reveals those priests under the age of 70. It is likely that in the course of the next ten-years the number of available priests will continue to diminish. Now that the viewer is aware of the ages, you may want to track that factor as we move through the presentation.
5. We call the third slide the “capacity slide.” At the base you will see the name of each parish and next to its name a number in parenthesis. The number is the number of Masses celebrated at that parish each weekend. Notice that each parish has two columns. The column on the left, regardless of its color, reflects the seating capacity of each church. The column on its right is usually the 2013 October Count which was available to the authors of “Seeing Natural Bridges.” Simple math points to one of the big challenges facing us. The numbers suggest that if ‘full, conscious, active’ celebrations of the Eucharist are the key to our Catholic life, then we clearly have too many Masses. Note the first parish has a seating capacity of 538 and enjoyed a substantial worshipping community of 777 people. Now divide the 777 by the number of Masses to reveal an average attendance of 260. We are not picking on this parish. You will see a similar trend in virtually every parish in the diocese. We have about 50% more capacity than we need to be effective.

Two concerns may be simply stated here. First, people tell us that they love celebrating in full churches. It gives them a deeper sense of community and a higher sense of participation. Second, when you look at the diminishing number of priests, one recognizes that if all of the people of the diocese are to have the possibility of Mass on the weekend, there are too many Masses in each parish. Translated, this means that priests are not available to support one another or to be where they might be needed to sacramentally support parish life in all parishes. The next step in planning; asks for two Mass schedule plans; (1) a schedule that allows priests to cover for each other in the event of sickness, travel, or annual vacation; (2) a PCA plan that will go into effect as the number of available priests diminishes. This element of planning may seem simple until you realize most parishes can likely abide with two Masses on a weekend, but virtually everyone wants a 4 pm or 5 pm on Saturday and a 10 am on Sunday. Let the planning begin.

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A diocesan-wide change in Mass schedules will present the challenge of a new catechesis for parishioners. Many may be more loyal to their preferred Mass time than to the nearness of the church. We are certain that the shifting of Mass schedules will provide many opportunities for dialogue and virtuous action.

6. The next slide covers Sacramental Ministry in the parish. This reveals the ministry that generally must be engaged in by a priest. The data on the number of Baptisms, First Communion, Confirmations, Marriages and Funerals is provided annually to the diocese by each parish for inclusion in the National Catholic Directory (The Kenedy Directory). When you compare these statistics over the last 40 years, the decrease in sacramental activity except for funerals, is notable. [The reader will find a comparison in the Kenedy Directory file in the “Focus Session” materials element of the website. When you view the directory information, you may note that as the sacramental ministry in the life of parishes has decreased and the ministries that do not require ordination have increased, parish leadership has changed. We are challenged to provide a larger pool of dedicated, trained lay-ecclesial ministers, to work in collaboration with the ordained to provide the work of ministry.

The right column is the most recent Mass Count (2013). Each October, a Mass attendance census is taken by each parish and provided to the diocese for the purpose of planning. The change in attendance is also significant, as is the reality, in many locations, of an aging population.

7. The next slide in each case will reveal the current Mass schedule. Looking at these slides will confirm that based on the current Mass schedules, priests are not able to support one another in ministry nor are they free to assist a parish that may need a priest on a given weekend.
8. In some instances, the planning groups have already proposed a Mass schedule that provides the possibility of mutual assistance. If such a schedule has been approved by PCA it will appear here.
9. Finally, the series may conclude with a “recommendations” slide. In this presentation this slide will generally refer to the re-alignment of a parish into a neighboring PCA. Usually, realignment recommendations are made to the bishop to achieve a desired pastoral balance.
10. You now have a sense of what you are looking at in each slide, and the presentation will accelerate.
11. The Western Broome PCA (1) enjoyed an exceptional level of collaboration and reality-based planning. As you see on this slide (slide 9) the planning recommended, the College of

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Consultors concurred, and the Bishop authorized that as the future emerges that eventually Most Holy Rosary Maine will be linked to Holy Family in Endwell; St. Joseph and St. Anthony will be linked; and Our Lady of Good Counsel and St. Ambrose will be linked.

A linked parish involves the collaboration of two parishes with a single pastor or parish leader. Organizations, staffs, programs and other activities may be combined to the extent desired. Although a linkage is subject to review, it is intended to provide stability in parish leadership. This stability may be demonstrated by shared staffs and the proportional use of resources for jointly planned activity.

S-PCA-2A

12. As we approach Southeast Broome County, the viewer may immediately note a strikingly new model of parish leadership. Its four parishes are in a communion of parishes known as a cluster of parishes [slide 10]. The cluster is led by parish life director, Barbara Kane, who is a well-trained, very experienced, and highly respected leader in the Church in the Southern Tier. Barbara and the parishes that she leads are supported in sacramental ministry by the work of three assisting priests.

A cluster is formed by three or more parishes led by a single parish or parish life director. Organizations, staffs, programs and other activities may be combined to the extent desired. The cluster provides stability in parish leadership. This stability may be demonstrated by either site specific or shared staff and the proportional use of resources for jointly planned activity and staff members.

The Code of Canon Law allows the diocesan bishop to apply Canon 517.2 in assuring pastoral leadership for parishes by appointing qualified lay ecclesial ministers or deacons to act in the role of a pastor. When a Parish Life Director is appointed s/he reports to a supervising or “canonical” pastor. Sacramental Ministry is provided by assisting priests.

13. These parishes have been working together for several years. They were mentored into this collaboration by Fathers Catucci and Bunger. The role of the priest or a parish life director as a change agent is an important factor in maintaining healthy dynamic clustered parishes.
14. Reviewing these slides [10-14] you may notice that these are small rural communities. Much of the diocese is made up of smaller rural communities. These rural faith communities are very important to the life of these smaller rural communities. 38 of our parishes and 8 missions are located in rural communities. A Catholic presence is important in these areas.

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The pastoral situation in Southeast Broome County under the leadership of the Parish Life Director is only one year old. It needs time to continue the development of its ministries. No transition in leadership or in assisting priests is possible at this time.

S-PCA-2B

15. Now we move back into Binghamton and Vestal, [Slide 15] this time on the south side of the Susquehanna River. The three parishes and Binghamton University are pastoral highlights for this presentation. However, a hospital adds significant ministry to the mission of the parishes.
16. The priest slide [16] highlights the maturing (aging) of clergy, and the capacity and sacramental ministry slides provide evidence that an adjustment to the Mass schedules is necessary.
17. Note that the area has presented two plans for eventual application. First, the PCA planning group foresees the day when a lay ecclesial minister will lead the Newman community at Binghamton University. When this transition occurs, the pastor of St. Vincent – Blessed Sacrament will become the ‘assisting priest’ for the University. The group also provided a Mass schedule to be followed when the number of priests is reduced to three FTE, and the second with a reduction to two. The pastor of Sts. John and Andrew in Binghamton and Our Lady of Sorrows will continue their collaboration with St. Vincent – Blessed Sacrament and Binghamton University. As change occurs their mutual efforts will become ever more essential to the church in the area.
18. As you have viewed the first 20 slides, the themes are convincingly consistent, indeed, they are becoming the dominant patterns of our future. Priests need to work differently. Mass schedules will change. Clusters and on-going planning will be the new normal. We need to identify and train potential new leadership. We will all need a new way of seeing.
19. Now that the pattern of the commentary is set, we now will do a quick survey of the other PCA dynamics in Broome County.
20. **In Binghamton’s S-PCA-3 [Slide 21 to 25]** notice that five parishes are entrusted to the care of three generous priests. This situation needs time to develop into a true collaboration. No further reconfiguration is possible. No practical change in the number of priests assigned is possible. You can see this as you travel through the slides.

Religious Orders are subject to the same trends that diocesan priests have experienced. A diminished number of Conventual Franciscan Friars and the merger of two Franciscan Provinces initiated a review, by the Franciscans of the best ways to utilize their ministerial resources. Their Summer 2014 analysis caused them to move on from their time-honored ministries at four

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diocesan parishes including Sts. Cyril and Methodius and the Church of the Holy Trinity. The best ways to provide leadership for these four parishes is part of an on-going study.

21. In S-PCA-4 – there are three parishes located east of the Chenango River and north of the Susquehanna. Two of these parishes are linked and have recently received a new pastor. The planning team is looking forward to collaboration. No further reconfiguration is possible. The slides for St. Francis of Assisi, St. Paul and St. Mary of the Assumption begin to tell the story of a potentially rich collaboration particularly in the care of the urban poor and new immigrants. [Slides 26 to 31]

22. Chenango County is the home of S-PCA 5 [slides 32-37]. Chenango County is home to a small city and many small rural communities. Pastoral planning here is challenging due to the mileage distances and the nature of life in rural communities. Seasonal weather variation adds to the challenge.

Two parish communities are led by pastoral coordinators Pat Houghton and Mary Wentlent. One local priest and a cadre of retired pastors act as assisting priests. The area currently enjoys the ministry of four active priests.

In their pastoral planning the local PCA Planning Group has provided a model for two parish clusters in the northern part of the county [Norwich (2 churches), Oxford, New Berlin, and Sherburne]. At first, and as long as possible, it is hoped that these two clusters would have the ministry of three priests (and two if necessary). The third cluster will evolve in the southern part of the county [Bainbridge, Afton, Greene]. Our rural people have a special relationship to the life of a rural parish and we need to find a way to support that life effectively.

23. The Southern Region is a microcosm and a mirror of the planning and transitioning in the remainder of the diocese and in the entire northeastern United States. The challenges are increasing for all Catholics including for the priests and deacons ordained for the service of the diocese.

24. We now journey to the Northern Region [slide 38], which consists of two PCA’s one based in Oswego and the other in Fulton.

25. Our first stop is in the greater Oswego area [slides 39-43]. The Oswego based PCA guides planning for six parishes, two missions, and Hall Newman Center. The city has more than enough capacity and infrastructure to serve its worshipping community. Five full-time active priests currently serve the parishes.

Two active pastors are over age 80. Their eventual retirements will trigger significant change for the area. In 2007, the diocese announced the realignment of many parishes throughout the diocese. A number of these, as planned, would occur upon the retirement of pastors. Two of

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the parishes and a mission designated for amalgamation in the 2007 announcements are in this PCA.

As the reader examines the slides for this area you will see that the area, based on the number of priests available for diocesan service, will shift to three priests, with the possibility of two in the distant future. The Eastside will be consolidated as announced. The Westside, with its multiple parishes will need to engage in further meaningful consultation.

St. Mary’s, St. Joseph, St. Stephen, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and the mission in Hannibal will need to engage in meaningful dialogue. Hall Newman Center will continue to have the pastor of St. Paul’s as its ‘assisting’ priest.

26. The Fulton based N-PCA2 [slides 44-48] consists of three parishes located in Fulton, Mexico, and Pulaski, a span of twenty-eight miles. This collaboration is less than a year old. It is served by two priests. As it matures, no further realignment is possible.

27. The future of the Our Lady of the Rosary Mission Hannibal remains the subject of discussion. Currently aligned to Oswego, its future likely will include being a site for rural outreach and Faith Formation for the Hannibal School district. Its function as a mission is one part of the on-going discussion.

Our Journey now continues in the Eastern Region. The Eastern Region consists of two vicariates. The western portion based in Rome and the eastern portion, based in Utica each has consisted of four PCAs.

28. The area that has been known as E-PCA 1 [slides 50-55] has extended from Cleveland/Constantia on its west to Taberg on its east, a 23 mile span. Recently the parish and mission at the center of the area were re-aligned, as St. John in North Bay and Our Lady of the Lake in Verona Beach (Sylvan Beach) were entrusted to the pastoral care of the pastor of St. Agatha in Canastota. In considering the possibilities for the priestly care of the area, it was determined that the area would be further redefined. Cleveland and Constantia will now become part of the W-PCA 6 along with Central Square and the Route 11 Corridor. Camden and Taberg will join with the Rome area parishes in E-PCA-2. The pastoral possibilities become evident as one reviews the slides. Also of note, Cleveland and Constantia are part of the Central Square School System, and Camden and Taberg share in the Camden School System. More information is provided on each of these parishes later in the description.

29. The Rome area PCA [E-PCA-2, slides 56 to 61] is additionally expanded by the re-alignment of Holland Patent. The parishes of Rome, like the parishes of Binghamton, Oswego, Syracuse, and Utica were settled by successive waves of European immigrants whose faith

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is reflected in the churches that they built. At the current time, the infrastructure of the parishes that their faith built provides a significant resource challenge for the current populations and faith communities.

As the future evolves the preservation of the churches that they built will require multiple-parish ministry. A smaller number of priests will be responsible for the pastoral care of the area. A linkage of Camden and Taberg will serve the western part of this PCA. It is likely that the Rome parishes, Lee Center, and Holland Patent will be served by two or three priests, based upon their availability. The area is currently served by six full-time priests; four of these dedicated pastors are over the age of seventy.

As the years evolve, a new pastoral leadership style will also be necessary. Pastors will need to plan collectively and for the area rather than parochially. The slides tell the story.

30. The next PCA is based in the Madison County City of Oneida [E-PCA-3, slides 62-66]. Currently the area is served by four pairs of linked parishes and one parish with a dual mission. It is served by five FTE priests. Two are over 70; one is 80+. One of the 2007 announced decisions is in this area. Upon a retirement there will be three linkages and one other parish. To serve facilitate parish life the area will need to effectively engage deacons and lay ecclesial ministers. The consultants envision a future that will involve two, three parish clusters and the one parish with two roles, one as a territorial parish and the other as the site for the authorized use of the Extra-ordinary Rite.
31. We now move into the rural sections of Madison County [E-PCA 4, slides 68-72, a mileage span of 12 miles]. Currently the area is served by a parish linkage [St. Bernard’s and St. Joseph’s], a parish with a mission [St. Mary’s and St. Joan of Arc]. There are two significant sites of higher education: SUNY Morrisville and Colgate University. The area is served by two FTE priests. This area will need to continue to be served by two FTE priests. A new model of parish life will be needed to provide effective ministry to the parishes and colleges of the area.
32. Now we move to the northernmost area in Oneida County, to the Villages of Boonville and Forestport, E-PCA-5 [slides 73-78]. It has consisted [a 22 mile span] of St. Leo-St. Ann in Holland Patent and Christ Our Hope in Northern Oneida County (Boonville and more). Christ Our Hope parish spans 17 miles including Boonville, Forestport, and the summer mission at Otter Lake, and has much in common with its neighboring parishes in the Diocese of Ogdensburg.

At the request of the planners and due to its location, it will be a singular pastoral unit. Holland Patent will, as noted before, be re-aligned to the Rome PCA. We currently need a priest for Christ Our Hope in Boonville/Forestport.

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33. Welcome, now, to the City of Utica [E-PCA 6, slides 79-84]. The city and the area around it have experienced significant change: reduced population, new immigrants, the loss of business and industry, the impact of the loss of Griffiss Air Force Base. These challenges have seen the merger of four parishes. The city [north, east, and west] is now served by seven parishes. The slides tell the story of some of their ministries. As the data for this area has been reviewed one parish, Holy Trinity elects to form a future linkage with Sacred Heart-St Mary’s in New York Mills and therefore will join E-PCA-7. It is projected that St. Peter and St. Mark in North Utica will become linked. Likewise Historic St. John and St. Joseph – St. Patrick will form a new collaboration as they serve the needs of the poor and new immigrants in their area, and as they celebrate their common link to Saint Marianne Cope. St. Mary of Mount Carmel – Blessed Sacrament and St Anthony & St. Agnes parishes, due largely to their funeral ministries, will remain individual pastoral units while collaborating within the PCA.
34. [E-PCA-7 slides 85-89] Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of the Rosary, and the faith communities of New York Mills and Whitesboro form the area presented for review. This area has seen the merger of three parishes into the others as St. Anne and St. Stephen the Protomartyr merged into St. Paul’s in Whitesboro, and Sacred Heart merged into St. Mary in New York Mills.

Due to their common ethnic roots, planners have asked for Holy Trinity, Utica to collaborate (toward linkage) with Sacred Heart-St. Mary in New York Mills. This will occur. The area also has two higher education venues SUNY Polytechnic Institute (formerly SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica-Rome) and Utica College, as well as, St. Luke’s Medical Center. The relationship between Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of the Rosary will continue to evolve. The PCA, with the leadership of the pastor of St. Paul’s and the chaplain to the colleges, will work to find effective ways to provide for the future of campus ministries.

NY State has announced an important and developing story as the nano technology industry develops a major presence in the Utica Area. Planners will continue to monitor this developing and promising story.

35. [E-PCA-8, slides 90-94] The other New Hartford parishes St. John and St. Thomas, St Patrick’s – St. Anthony’s Chadwicks, St. Mary’s Clinton, Hamilton College and Annunciation in Clark Mills form the remaining Eastern Region PCA. The slides effectively tell their story. The planners have recommended that two clusters or hubs of three units be designated. One hub based at St. John’s would join with Chadwicks and St. Thomas. The other Clinton-based hub would work with Hamilton College and Clark Mills. Recent pastoral changes in the area may modify the evolution of these parish clusterings.

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Our “View from 20,000 Feet” is offering a compelling view of the challenges that we face in offering effective ministry to the People of God. As you will see in the following slides, and from the commentary, the Western Region has the most focused collaborative work to do in preparing for the future. Forty to fifty percent of the Catholic population of the diocese lives in the Western Region.

Now, we arrive in the Western Region. The Region consists of parts of two vicariates. It has thirteen Pastoral Care Areas spanning from a Cortland based PCA, Onondaga County, and part of Oswego County and elements of others. Forty five percent or more of the Catholics of the diocese live in the Western Region. As the dominant region by size, the Western Region may face the biggest challenges of this phase in the reconfiguration process. The slides will paint a fascinating picture.

36. W-PCA-1 is centered in Cortland County but it enjoys the presence of Whitney Point and DeRuyter, as well. Today the pastoral care area has an amalgamated parish [St. Stephen – St. Patrick] whose pastor also ministers at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission. In addition, the parishes of St. Mary and St. Anthony and the Newman Center at SUNY Cortland have recently been covered by one priest. The more northerly part of the area is served by St. Margaret, St. Lawrence. Currently the sacramental ministry is supported by two full-time priests, and two priests who are engaged in other ministries.

Of the nine worship sites, fifty percent of the regular Mass participants in Cortland County worship at St. Mary’s, another twenty plus percent worship at St. Margaret’s.

At a point in the future, the area will be served by a smaller group of priests. At the point that the area is served by two priests the challenge of supporting the rural ministries will come into significant highlight. The first step may be three clusters. What realistic steps will follow that configuration?

In addition to the college, there are a number of other significant ministries to be considered. Health care ministry is a significant issue when the hospital, rehabilitation center and nursing homes present their spiritual needs.

37. Moving north we enter Southern Onondaga County [Slides 102-106]. The faith communities of LaFayette, Pompey, and Tully [known together as the Church of the Nativity] and the faith communities of South Onondaga and its mission at Otisco present the next ministerial challenge to the future. The area of the faith communities is 9 by 15 miles. It is currently served by three priests. At some future point the impact of the diminishing number of priests will impact the area. It is likely that the number of priests will be reduced to two, and perhaps, eventually, there is the possibility, that one priest may serve the area with

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weekend assistance. What configuration will serve the area best? Certainly a sustainable (and hopefully affordable model) can be assisted by trained pastoral associates or parish life directors or the conversation about a new worship site could be revisited. The choices are difficult.

38. Skaneateles, Jordan, and Marcellus [W-PCA-3, slides 107 – 112] provide the next parish grouping. To date this has been a fruitful collaboration of three pastors and parishes. As one looks to the future, it is necessary to anticipate a reduced number of priests. Given the fact of northeastern winters, one reconsiders the structure for the future. Skaneateles and Jordan are each parishes on the diocesan boundary with Rochester. Given distances, here a triangle, the sides of which are 9 x 7 x 12 miles, it seems prudent to prefer linkages over a three parish cluster.

On the one hand, Skaneateles and Marcellus could be linked, but that would leave Jordan without a potential linkage. Thus, it appears that Marcellus could be well served as a member of W-PCA-5 [Onondaga Hill, Fairmount, and Camillus]. The slides paint one picture, the recommendations paint another. Further collaboration with diocesan planners will attend this area.

39. Next we approach the “westend” of the City of Syracuse [slides 113 to 117]. Currently the area [W-PCA-4] is served by one fully merged parish (St. Charles-St. Ann) two linkages [Solvay-Lakeland and St. Patrick-St. Bridget/St. Joseph], and two other parishes, Transfiguration and the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. Currently served by 6 priests, it will likely grow into a future where it is served by three. Planning for the evolution of two clusters of parishes will assist the planning here.

40. W-PCA 5 [slides 118 to 122] is formed by Holy Family (the largest parish in the diocese), St. Joseph on the Hill and St. Michael-St. Peter. The area also includes Onondaga Community College, UpState Medical Center at Community General, and Van Dyn Nursing Home and other health care facilities.

Let the slides tell the story. A meaningful collaboration could easily incorporate Marcellus, and a number of leadership strategies could be utilized here. The impact of the reduced number of priests on its long-term future is clear, particularly with regard to the sacramental life of the parish.

41. The next area is Western-PCA-6 [slides 123 to 127]. We refer to this PCA as the Route 11 corridor. Of course, it is more than that. Currently it is the 18+ mile area from Mattydale to Central Square. It currently has one fully merged parish (Divine Mercy), three other parishes, and two schools. Joining this collaboration will be Cleveland and Constantia which share a common school district and other activities with Central Square. [Central Square to Cleveland is 15 miles; Central Square to Constantia is 7.5]

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Sacred Heart and St. Rose of Lima parishes are among the largest parishes in the diocese.

The current area is served by seven diocesan and two extern priests when its newest member (Fr. Mathis) is included in the count. The PCA may be open to expansion. One challenge will be dealing with the density of Catholic worshipers and a diminishing number of diocesan priests. By necessity, the current number of 9 full-time priests is likely to be significantly reduced, which will require a change in leadership strategies.

42. We journey now to the Liverpool/Phoenix corridor [W-PCA-7, slides 129-133]. Included in this area are one linkage and three collaborating but free-standing parishes. As the slide indicates of the four full-time diocesan priests, only one is under the age of 70. As you look at the capacity/worshiper and sacramental density slides you will immediately see the challenges in developing a three-parish cluster in the north that would follow the development of the two-parish linkage in the south. What other choices/options are present? Consultors recommended that Immaculate Heart of Mary and St. Joseph the Worker continue to evolve their linkage, that Pope John XXIII and Christ the King work toward creating a linkage, and that St. Stephen’s link with Elizabeth Ann Seton.

43. Baldwinsville follows [W-PCA-8, slides 134-139]. In the past, the two parishes of St. Augustine and St. Mary were linked. In a technical sense they remain so. They are now linked to diocese by the presence of a pastor with a diocesan office.

One day the linkage of St. Augustine and St. Mary will likely be re-established. Some suggested that this could become a two priest, three parish cluster, others offer other ideas.

The next step may be found in the re-established inter-parochial link collaborating with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton as it establishes a linkage to St. Stephen’s.

44. We now move into the historic Northside of the City of Syracuse [W-PCA-6, slides 140 – 145]. St. John’s is the oldest parish in the city, and much of the historic salt industry occurred within its borders.

The area currently includes the Franciscan Church of the Assumption, and the parishes of St. John the Baptist, Our Lady of Pompey/St. Peter, and St. Daniels. In the 1950’s up to 23,000 people would attend Sunday Mass in the six original parishes, three of which are now merged. The reader will note from the density slides that the area has changed. The area which was once a melting pot of Irish, German, and Italian immigrants is now a melting pot for an entirely new wave of immigration. The area is culturally diverse. The planning group has asked that the three city based Northside neighbors Our Lady of Pompey/St Peter, St. John the Baptist and Assumption collaborate together as a cluster. To

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accomplish this will mean that St. Daniel’s will develop a relationship with St. Margaret’s in Mattydale.

45. The Southside of the City of Syracuse [W-PCA-10, slides 146-150] is our next focus.

The home of the Cathedral and St Thomas More Chapel at Syracuse University & SUNY ESF are counted here with the six parish communities that serve the area. The area also includes three hospitals and numerous other health care facilities.

The diocese is concerned about the needs of the population of the Southside. A portion of the area is counted among the ten most significant urban poverty locations in the nation. Before more decisions of long-range consequence are made about the parish infrastructure to be used by the faith communities in the heart of the inner city, it is necessary to visit a key issue, human needs and poverty.

The needs of the people of this area have particular implications for the parishes at the heart of the near west and near south side. Specifically, the neighborhoods of St. Lucy’s and St. Anthony’s and Most Holy Rosary parishes seem to have special needs.

There are practical models for approaching the needs of the people. Cathedral is engaged in this effort. The Northside Franciscan Ministries and the Cathedral’s efforts offer models and direction for significant initiatives to serve the people of these neighborhoods with a strong Catholic presence. The area has a number of priests and other leaders with the practical experience to design and deliver meaningful services. It seems that Catholic Charities, the Foery Foundation, the Brady Center, the city of Syracuse, historically Black churches, civic organizations and others may provide strategic alliances to serve the people of the area.

As one reads the slides, one notices that the greatest contribution of the Church to these neighborhoods will not be found in the sacristies. Saint James and Our Lady of Lourdes are already destined to become the parish of Our Lady of Hope, and All Saints has many insights to help to support this process of strategic planning for the heart of our city.

46. We now head to the eastern part of the city and the county parishes near it [EPCA 11, slides 151 to 155]. A rich history underlies the development of Eastwood, East Syracuse, Bridgeport/Minoa, DeWitt and Father Dougherty’s landmark, St. Vincent de Paul Church. St. Matthew’s, St. Mary, and St. Francis of Assisi parishes have recently experienced significant leadership change.

We note that clustering of St Matthew with St. Francis, Bridgeport and St. Mary, Minoa, is recent and needs time to mature. The long pastorate of the Order of Franciscan Minor at Bridgeport and Minoa is deeply appreciated. Their new relationship with St. Matthew is only a few months old.

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Holy Cross, among the largest parishes in the diocese, is served by one priest. It is not possible to reasonably expand his ministry. A future shared relationship, a linkage, between Blessed Sacrament and St. Vincent de Paul is a viable opportunity for collaboration.

47. We now arrive at the final pastoral care area in this presentation. The Eastern Onondaga County PCA [W-PCA-12, slides 156 to 160] includes four dynamic parishes. The density numbers tell the story of this PCA; moreover these parishes are among the many in our diocese that enjoy the presence of trained and experienced lay ecclesial ministers and volunteers.

The reduction of one priest, in this area is likely. The method for moving forward will likely create a link between two parishes. Fortunately, the planning group acknowledges that all the ordained of the area will need to collaborate and assist in the future event that Cazenovia and Chittenango link. Beyond this, given the current size of the parishes no other re-alignment is anticipated at this time. However, for all parishes this is a perfect time to train and situate future leaders.

End of slides

Concluding comments:

What was next?

First, there were three of these sessions on “The View from 20,000 Feet,” for clergy.

Next, there were eight sessions, scheduled at various locations in the diocese for members of planning groups. Special sessions for diocesan employees and the principals of Catholic Schools were also scheduled.

In November, Mark Mogilka, the director of Stewardship and Pastoral Services in the Diocese of Green Bay Wisconsin, will offer four opportunities for planning groups to explore a “Toolkit for the Future.” These sessions will examine the best practices and skills that are needed to build health parish linkages and parish clusters.

Following these initial sessions, each PCA planning group will meet in a session with one of the three diocesan planners. On the agenda for that evening, which will be led by the diocesan representative, you will find these topics:

- The specific response to the work of your own planning group, or the Bishop’s challenge to the group if that work was incomplete.

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- The challenges for collaboration within the PCA
- The steps for the creation of a Cluster Planning Council
- A directive has been given to design a new weekend Mass Schedule that will achieve three measurable goals:
 1. Each parish will prepare a Mass schedule that follow the general rule that each parish will have the goal of gathering the full assembly. If the Church is not at least ½ full for a Mass rationale must be offered to retain that celebration, if it prevents priest from assisting one another in covering the Mass schedule of the area.
 2. If the parish/pastor has already down-sized or adjusted the Mass schedule, attention need only be given to the time of the Masses.
 3. The priest in or related to the PCA will be able to assist in covering one another for vacations and emergencies.
 - Each PCA is encouraged to have one Sunday evening Mass which rotates the celebrant.
 - Each PCA should encourage pulpit sharing by pastors and deacons so that the entire area becomes familiar with each preacher.
 - Acknowledging the reality that there will be a diminishing number of priests each PCA will develop a plan to identify, train, and designate trained professionals and volunteers to participate in a collaborative ministry at the PCA level.
 - Cluster Councils, as we evolve them, may make recommendations to the diocese about ways to enhance inter-parochial collaboration. [A separate document will be provided at a later date.]
 - **All decisions regarding pastoral alignments will be reviewed at least once in every three year period, and any time there is a change in the office of pastor/administrator/PLD**

We conclude where we began, with the thought of Karl Rahner. “The God who is the source of creativity is the inspiration for our planning. Planning is always an expression of Hope.”

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