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## Phase Two of pastoral planning gets underway

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TOMAH – Phase Two of the diocese’s pastoral plan began following a meeting of the steering committee Oct. 7 at St. Mary’s Parish in Tomah.

The plan’s first phase involved the compilation of a contingency plan that could gradually reduce the number of parishes in the diocese from 165 to 75 without closing a single church building. Members of the planning committee visited each deanery and listened to input from parishioners. They then worked to come up with a plan to help the diocese respond proactively and responsibly to the priest shortage and changing demographics.

The initiative came in response to changing demographics in the diocese and Georgetown University’s 2005 study that showed the diocese might have as few as 82 active priests by 2025.

Following a special prayer service on May 8 of this year, Bishop Jerome E. ListECKI marked the completion of Phase One by approving a version of the plan which was then posted to the diocesan Web site, [www.dioceseofla-crosse.com](http://www.dioceseofla-crosse.com).



**Monsignor Richard Gilles**

[crosse.com](http://www.dioceseofla-crosse.com).

At that time, the bishop emphasized the plan will only take effect when and where it is needed, and only following the completion of Phase Two – a period during which protocols and policies for the plan’s implementation will be formulated.

Bishop ListECKI established a steering committee for the second phase, and this committee of priests, religious and laity met Oct. 7 to establish five subcommittees addressing specific areas where issues could arise when the plan is implemented.

Those subcommittees are:

- Financial and Incorporation Protocols, headed by Andrew Gaertner, director of the diocesan Office of Stewardship and Development. This subcommittee will be responsible for devising protocols for dealing with the assets of parishes as they begin to work closely with other parishes.

- Staff Development and Formation, headed by Sister Marlene Weisenbeck, president of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. This subcommittee will examine staffing issues that could arise, especially in regard to training, funding and management.

- Transitions in Parish Life, headed by Father Thomas Lindner, pastor of the Newman University Parish in Stevens Point. This committee will study the elements of parish life that will need to be reshaped as the pastoral reality changes, and will guide the process of bringing together parishioners from different parishes.

- Governance and Consultation, headed by Benedict Nguyen, diocesan chancellor. This group will consider the rewriting of “On Consultation in the Parish and Deanery” to incorporate the work of

the other subcommittees, and will deal with other canonical matters arising from pastoral planning.

- Communications and Public Awareness, headed by Father Woodrow Pace, pastor of St. Mary’s Parish in Neillsville. This subcommittee will tackle the task of keeping people informed regarding progress prior to and during implementation of the plan.

Each subcommittee will include a number of clergy, religious and laity who have expertise in that particular area. According to Monsignor Richard Gilles, diocesan vicar general and steering committee chairman, the subcommittees will include both members of the diocesan curia and people from throughout the diocese.

He estimated that Phase Two would take approximately one year, but declined to give a specific date for its completion.

“This really goes right to the heart of the pastoral plan,” Monsignor Gilles said about the work of the steering committee and its subcommittees. “We want to be able to serve the people of God in the best way possible while keeping in mind the structure of the Church.”