

BACKGROUND



THE PASTORAL PLAN OF THE DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE

WHAT IS THE PASTORAL PLAN?

The “Pastoral Plan” is a proposed plan of strategic actions by the Diocese of La Crosse in which the institutions of the Diocese – primarily the parishes – are organized or re-organized in ways that would allow for the greatest possibility of providing effectively for the pastoral and spiritual needs of the Catholic faithful of the Diocese into the 21st century.

WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO DO A PASTORAL PLAN?

In 2005, the Center for Applied Research for the Apostolate (CARA) of Georgetown University released its study of the various Roman Catholic Dioceses of the United States. The report projected a decline in the number of priests in the Diocese of La Crosse as well as demographic shifts in the Catholic population of the area over the next 20 years. The question immediately arose as to what practical measures could be adopted to plan appropriately for the projections while allowing for continued pastoral and spiritual care of the Roman Catholics of the area. It became clear that there was a need for a comprehensive pastoral plan for the Diocese of La Crosse.

HOW WAS THE PASTORAL PLAN CRAFTED?

In response to the data from the CARA report and to promote good stewardship, Bishop Jerome E. Listecki, Bishop of the Diocese of La Crosse, began a process of consultation to study effective measures of organization by which the 165 parishes of the Diocese could be prepared should the CARA projections become a reality. A Pastoral Planning Committee was formed and charged with crafting a proposal for re-organization. For nearly two years, the Committee embarked upon study and extensive consultation with the people and entities in the Diocese, including the clergy of the Diocese, the deaneries (ecclesiastical groupings of parishes), parishes and parish representatives, Diocesan personnel, the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Diocesan Finance Council, and other consultative bodies.

In June of 2007, the Pastoral Plan Committee presented to Bishop ListECKI a final proposal for his study and review. Over 10 months, Bishop ListECKI reviewed every aspect of the plan and announced in April of 2008 that he would accept the Pastoral Plan on May 8, 2008.

WHAT IS THE PROPOSED PASTORAL PLAN?

The Pastoral Plan seeks to avoid, as much as possible, the closure of church buildings and sale of any ecclesiastical property unless absolutely necessary. It also seeks to avoid placing unrealistic burdens upon the clergy to provide pastoral care to unusually large groupings of parishes.

Under the new Pastoral Plan, a “Parish,” which before was understood to have one church building to one parish, will now contain one “*Parish Center*” but could also contain, depending on the circumstances, other sites and buildings including “*Liturgical Satellites*,” “*Church Building*” sites, “*Oratories*,” and “*Private Chapels*.” The amount of pastoral services available will be dependent upon the designation of the site, which in turn will be determined as much as possible in response to the pastoral need of the particular area. These pastoral services can range from extensive pastoral services (Mass and other liturgies, catechesis and religious education, etc.) such as at Parish Centers to occasional prayer services and gatherings such as at Private Chapels.

It is important to keep in mind that, unlike “clustering,” these individual sites will no longer be individual parishes. Rather, a “parish” could now be realized in a variety of sites and buildings.

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP TO BE TAKEN IN THE PASTORAL PLAN?

With the acceptance of the Pastoral Plan by Bishop ListECKI on May 8, 2008, Phase I of the pastoral planning process is completed.

Phase II is a process of establishing practical protocols and strategies to be used in implementing the Pastoral Plan. In this Phase, issues that will be studied include, among others, financial and property matters, personnel and training, review of legal and canonical aspects, education about the pastoral plan itself, etc.

It is the hope of the Diocese of La Crosse that through the Pastoral Plan, we can more effectively be able to serve Jesus Christ and his body the Church in providing for the pastoral and spiritual care of the Catholic faithful of the Diocese. It is our prayer that, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the Pastoral Plan can serve as an opportunity of grace for the people of the Diocese, all for the greater glory of God.

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May 2008*