

Types of Parishes in the Diocese of Rochester

The following are representative types of parishes and faith communities in the Diocese of Rochester. While most planning groups are homogeneous with respect to types of parishes, this is not always the case.

1. Rural parishes

These parishes generally have fewer member households than the diocesan average. Given the way in which these parishes are part of the fabric of local communities and contribute to the quality of life within them, they play a distinctive role in the lives of those who live in rural areas. While the declining number of priests may result in a decrease in the number of these parishes, there will continue to be rural parishes. The important considerations will focus on the quality and scope of parish life and its impact on the larger community. Those who live in rural areas travel as an inherent part of their life. Increasingly they will have to travel longer distances to participate in parish life in the same way that they travel to participate in civic, commercial, and entertainment activities. This will pose special challenges as the population of rural areas ages with resulting decreases in mobility.

2. Urban parishes

There are different kinds of parishes within urban Rochester: those serving populations that are socially and economically vulnerable and those whose members principally live either within or outside the parish's boundaries.

Urban parishes serving populations that are socially and economically vulnerable are often not able to generate the financial resources required to support the scope and quality of ministry needed by those they serve. Resources from other parishes and from the Diocese are required to insure the effective presence of the Church. In addition, the activities of these parishes may look more like missionary activities than the work of settled, prosperous, and growing suburban parishes. The role of the priest in such a setting must emphasize a ministry of presence that requires an astute understanding of the multiple cultures involved along with fluency in the languages of ordinary communication. The priest also serves as the primary trainer and motivator of volunteer and professional ministers who will provide the actual ministry.

Urban parishes whose members principally live within the parish's boundaries are located within older urban areas of Monroe County. Their members typically live within the geographic boundaries of the parish. The socio-economics of these parishes ranges from the working poor to

affluent, often within the same parish. Typically, however, their members are middle class, working families who live in neighborhoods that are dealing with demographic changes. The parish can be a major stabilizing factor in the development and enhancement of these neighborhoods.

Urban parishes whose members principally live outside parish boundaries often serve as conduits of human and financial resources to minister to those in need in the urban area. If their only mission is to provide a warm, welcoming and effective pastoral presence to their members, that mission can be achieved in parishes closer to the parishioners' homes. However, to the extent that such parishes provide not only that pastoral presence but also meaningful ministry to the city, they contribute to the overall life of the Church and the Diocese. Given the declining number of priests, the establishment or expansion of such parishes without a service dimension should not be encouraged. Some of these parishes that have an ethnic identity may naturally decline over the next 25 years as their older membership dies and the younger generations marry into other groups.

3. Suburban and exurban parishes

These parishes will generally have substantially more member households than the diocesan average. As migration from the central city areas into suburban and exurban areas continues, these parishes will grow larger and more complex. As the population moves beyond second tier and into what are now rural areas, parishes in these areas will experience growth and steady suburbanization. Because of the concentration of population, these parishes can and will be larger. Because of their resources, they will each be expected to develop and sustain formal partnership relationships with rural parishes and parishes serving the urban poor.

4. Parishes located in small cities

Single parishes or groups of parishes are located in and are largely defined by small cities: Auburn, Elmira, Corning/Painted Post, Canandaigua, Newark, Geneva, and other locations. These parishes serve these often very discrete communities. In some cases, groups of parishes serve these communities. Planning should be directed toward maintaining and enhancing ministry to the entire community.

5. Prison ministries

There are 10 prisons within the Diocese of Rochester as well as a jail in each of the 12 counties. The New York State Department of Corrections supports chaplains at each of the prisons in the system. Jail ministry is typically the responsibility of the parish within which the jail is located or of a group of parishes in the county. Programs reflect the populations in

jails and prisons and range from short term transitional programs to longer term, more stable communities. Typically the chaplain at a prison is a deacon or a layperson. Priests in the area provide sacramental ministry. In the future, only those priests whose talents and experience are especially suited to this ministry are likely to be assigned to prison ministry. Over time, Mass for inmates will not be celebrated on Sunday but on other days of the week.

6. Campus ministries

There are 20 regionally accredited institutions of higher education in the diocese. These institutions enroll a total of almost 80,000 students. They reflect the rich diversity of American higher education. Only nine of these campuses have full time campus ministry staff and these range from seven to one. Currently only four priests are assigned full time to these campus ministries as chaplains. Deacons and professionally prepared laypersons provide leadership at the other five. It is likely that the number of priests assigned to campus ministry will decline. To respond to any such decline and to spread campus ministry to the other campuses will require the use of deacons and laypeople supported by sacramental ministers from parishes near each campus.

7. Hospital ministries

Only those priests whose talents and experience are especially suited for hospital ministry will be assigned as hospital chaplains. Deacons and trained laypeople will provide pastoral care supported by priests in the regional with regard to sacramental celebration. Sunday Masses will likely not be celebrated in hospitals.

8. Migrant Ministries

These specialized and valuable ministries serve those who come to the Diocese as seasonable agricultural workers. These workers are Spanish speaking from Mexico, Central or South America and French speaking from Haiti. These ministries are part of planning groups. Pastoral Planning will work with the Department of Parish Support Ministries to devise processes that involve members of these communities in the planning process. The nature of their circumstances makes it difficult for them to participate directly in the planning and yet many planning decisions will have direct and often substantial impact on their life in the Church.

Parishes and Faith Communities of the Future

Bill Pickett
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As we move through a future of unknown opportunities and challenges, we must keep our focus on the creation and sustenance of vital parishes and faith communities. The following is a picture of what such vital communities might look like.

Faith Community

The very first image that will come to our mind when we hear the word “parish” is “faith community.” It will be as Ezekiel told us: the dead, dry bones can be enlivened and made to look alive but until the Spirit enlivens them, they remain lifeless. A parish can have church buildings, geographic boundaries, history, members, priests, staff, liturgies, but unless it is a community of faith it does not live the life of the Spirit. Not every faith community will be a parish but only a faith community can be a vital parish.

We will see a parish as a community of the baptized, those who have committed themselves to follow Jesus Christ as Redeemer. Through baptism each of us is incorporated into the Body of Christ. We enter a new life in the Spirit. In a mysterious but no less real way, we “no longer live but Christ lives in” us. When Jesus promised that he would be with us to the end of time, he was confirming that as long as his followers were in the world, He would be there, in and through them.

Before it is anything else, a parish is a specific embodiment of Christ. It is the body of Christ in a particular place and at a particular time. The reality of the life of Christ expresses itself through the manifold and diverse human beings that make up the body. What will such a community look and act like?

Baptism and Eucharist

It will focus on and find its identity in the two great sacraments: Baptism and Eucharist. Baptism will not be seen as simply a rite of initiation or as a social and family event but as a life-generating event in the life of each baptized person and of the community. Each time a person professes faith in Jesus Christ as savior and redeemer and undergoes the sacramental death and new life of baptism, the entire community participates again in the on-going incarnation of Jesus. Every baptism takes place within and before the faith community so that the baptism of each is seen and celebrated as incorporation into the Body of Christ and as sacrament of the ongoing incorporation of all members.

The continuing life of the Body of Christ is energized and fed by the Eucharist: “In this action of praise and proclamation, offering and receiving, we know Jesus present in the midst of the assembly, in the proclamation of the Word and in the bread and wine, now the Body and Blood of Christ. In this eucharistic action we are fed and nourished so as to go out into the world to be the presence of Christ, to live Christ’s dying and rising in our worlds of family and friends, work and play, neighbor and stranger.” (*Centrality of Eucharist: From East to West a Perfect Offering*, Bishop Matthew H. Clark) This

sacramental mystery is the fundamental sign of our common life in Jesus. As a sacrament it is both sign and cause of that life and the unity based on it. Because of this focus on Baptism and Eucharist, churches are filled to overflowing for the Easter Triduum. Often, the Easter Vigil is celebrated with neighboring parishes. Although it is not practical for entire communities to gather together for the Easter Vigil, they often do so for other important celebrations. For example, in Rochester more than 15,000 people gather each year at the War Memorial for Pentecost as an expression of the reality of unity.

Diversity and Richness

Faith communities will more clearly reflect the diversity and richness of the larger community. As geography has become less relevant to everyday life, so too parish membership has moved away from a focus on geographic area and its often unintended socio-economic bias and sameness. While communities continue to meet in churches for weekly celebration of the Eucharist, the communities are larger on average and more diverse. Suburban residents who would have been members of suburban parishes in the past have joined smaller, urban parishes blessed with large worship spaces, vital social ministries, and dedicated leadership but with inadequate local resources. The presence of these “suburban” families will provide the venue for a diverse community working together to be Christ to the larger community. In rural areas, members of geographically dispersed communities come together for Sunday Eucharist in a way that builds upon the identity of the communities in which they live and enlivens the larger community and its commitment to the life of its smaller constituent villages.

Parishes near campus communities include those communities in Sunday Eucharist. Those near prisons and jails include the incarcerated faithful who are not able to be present physically. Priests serving such parishes collaborate to provide regular Eucharist at local prisons and jails. Because these Eucharists are primarily on weekdays rather than Sundays, parishioners join with the prison communities in these celebrations just as they regularly volunteer in the pastoral care of these communities. Those who are ill or infirm are remembered as well. Many are present through telecommunication. But importantly, each week members of the community visit all those who are not able to be present physically. These visits often, but not always, include Holy Communion.

The importance of Baptism and Eucharist will have led to a desire to celebrate both those sacraments in ways that contribute to the vitality of the Church and to join with all those in a regional area who are incorporated in the Body of Christ.

Hospitality and Sense of Welcome

All parishes are noted for their hospitality and sense of welcoming. “All are welcome here” is the byword of parishes. The only requirement for membership is faith as expressed in the Creed. Socio-economic status, age, race, color, sexual orientation,

disabling conditions, health, addictions, gender are irrelevant to full and complete membership and yet all these differences are recognized and celebrated as evidence that the Spirit of Christ is actively present in the community.

“Ever the same; ever new”

These faith communities have developed an amazing ability to sense and respond to change. Their members understand the need for both stability and adaptability. The communities are “ever new and ever the same” because they have developed ways of thinking about what must always stay the same and what must always be in transition.

It is the gospel, the “good news,” that always stays the same. The good news of Jesus Christ as expressed in scripture and through the long tradition of faithful people never changes. As the history of the Church has taught them, however, the believer must understand this good news and live it in a human and physical environment that constantly changes. While the core message never changes, reflecting the eternal nature of God and God’s love for us, that message also reflects the ongoing incarnation of God as human and of the incorporation of believers into the Body of Christ. This ongoing incarnation and incorporation will reflect and interact with the world as it is at any specific time.

Study and Learning

These parishes and faith communities are known as places of study and learning. From childhood through one’s final days, the members have an almost unquenchable thirst to learn about God, Jesus Christ, the Church, and human spirituality. As they creatively struggle to bring the good news to their world, they seek understanding and comfort from the Scriptures and from the long tradition of faithful people who have struggled as they do. They leave no stone unturned in their desire to know and appreciate the vast and diverse tradition of the Church. They look at Scripture and tradition as the means by which they can construct the Church suited for their time and their place, just as their ancestors in faith did in their own circumstances. They turn to the past not to find “the right answer” but to create their own answers in ways that flow from the history of God’s relation with humanity. Some members have obtained certification and/or advanced education so they might lead others in this learning process in a wide variety of settings: religious education for children, sacramental preparation, youth ministry, and adult faith formation as members progress through life stages.

Worship, Preaching, and Prayer

The worship of these communities is active, vital, and attractive. Partially filled churches are seen as almost insurmountable barriers to energetic and life giving worship. Mass schedules have been revised so that, whenever and wherever possible, the entire faith community gathers as one for Sunday Eucharist. The community insists that each liturgy be well planned and well executed. Members of the assembly serve in a wide variety of roles each of which is considered a ministry: hospitality, cross bearers,

candle bearers, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, ushers, cantors, musicians, choristers, sacristans, bread bakers, and others. Members prepare for these ministries by training and praying together in a regular fashion. Individuals prepare for each liturgy, and the assembled participate actively in each liturgy. Visitors often comment on the spirit of the community evident in the liturgy itself.

Preaching is varied, focused, and well executed. Those preaching prepare by meeting regularly with members of the assembly to discuss the Sunday readings and the themes and issues that arise from them. These sessions insure that preaching addresses the experience of the baptized in their efforts to be in the world but not of the world. Those who preach regularly receive feedback on both content and delivery to assist them in their continuous improvement.

The community looks for reasons to come together in prayer and liturgy in addition to Sunday Eucharist. Members have a variety of liturgical and devotional opportunities to come together in public, liturgical prayer. The communities are also known as prayerful communities, not just for their commitment to public prayer but also for their devotion to personal prayer and small group faith sharing. Prayer ties the parish together and is the foundation for community in the midst of a wonderful diversity.

Exuberant Presence in the World

As important as all of the above is, these parishes and faith communities extend beyond the church into the world as the Body of Christ. The most important characteristic of this extension, this presence, is its exuberance. It is as though they really have no choice; the vitality of their faith naturally overflows into the world with a commitment to gospel living. They are clear examples, both as individual members and as entire communities, of Paul's insight that baptism brings us into a new life and that "now not I live, but Christ lives in me." This new life of Christ becomes the life that the Church and the faithful express.

The parishes are vivid examples of the Beatitudes in action. Each parish pursues a varied agenda of social justice and action. Through a variety of organizations and mechanisms they give evidence that Jesus--the Christ into whom they have been incorporated—is present and active in the world working for justice and mercy for the weak and vulnerable among us. Each member understands his or her call to express God's love for all in their own personal lives and work. As individuals they are involved in a variety of secular organizations that work for peace and justice. The parish itself is also involved in direct action or in supporting individuals and organizations that work for peace and justice. Parishes continually review the most recent information on the human and spiritual conditions within the communities they serve. They make the best possible use of socio-economic information and regularly update parish information through a parish visitation program. Based on this information they creatively design ministry programs that address the current needs of the community and are willing to change those ministries as human and spiritual conditions change.

Collaboration

Each parish has a strong and active identity that is achieved through collaboration with other communities. Just like an emotionally healthy person, autonomy provides the basis for effective and life giving relationships with others. So vital parishes easily and creatively collaborate with other parishes and faith communities. They celebrate their faithful union with other parishes in the Diocese and through the Diocese with the worldwide Church. This union is one of faith, love, and mercy and does not focus solely on uniformity in thought and practice. There is a graced ability to accept others, live comfortably with ambiguity, and focus on the important things that bring people of faith together rather than separate them.

Sense of Joyfulness

In the end, it is joyfulness that seems to characterize these communities best. There is a pervading sense of joy based on faith that God exists and loves us, that Jesus saves us, and that together we work for the Reign of God that has been established but has not yet fully flowered. It is a joy that is not based on a lack of problems, challenges, difficulties, disagreements, disappointments, and sorrows; there are plenty of these. Rather, it is a joy based on faith, a joy that thrives in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In the end, the only way to explain such a community is to see it as an incarnation of God and the Spirit of life and love.

Demographic Overview of the Diocese of Rochester

The Diocese of Rochester extends from the southern shore of Lake Ontario, through New York's Finger Lakes region, and to the New York-Pennsylvania border. Established in 1868, the diocese encompasses 12 counties and is home to approximately 350,000 Catholics belonging to nearly 200 faith communities.

The 2000 census shows the following population changes by county from 1990 to 2000:

County	1990	2000	Change	Pct Change	Pct of Total
Cayuga	82,313	81,986	-327	-0.40	5.50
Chemung	95,195	91,070	-4,125	-4.33	6.11
Livingston	62,372	64,328	1,956	3.14	4.31
Monroe	713,968	735,343	21,375	2.99	49.32
Ontario	95,101	100,224	5,123	5.39	6.72
Schuyler	18,662	19,224	562	3.01	1.29
Seneca	33,683	33,342	-341	-1.01	2.24
Steuben	99,088	98,726	-362	-0.37	6.62
Tioga	52,337	51,784	-553	-1.06	3.47
Tompkins	94,097	96,501	2,404	2.55	6.47
Wayne	89,123	93,765	4,652	5.21	6.29
Yates	22,810	24,621	1,811	7.94	1.65
Total Diocese	1,458,749	1,490,914	32,165	2.20	100.00
New York	17,990,455	18,976,457	986,002	5.48	
USA	248,700,000	281,400,000	32,700,000	13.15	

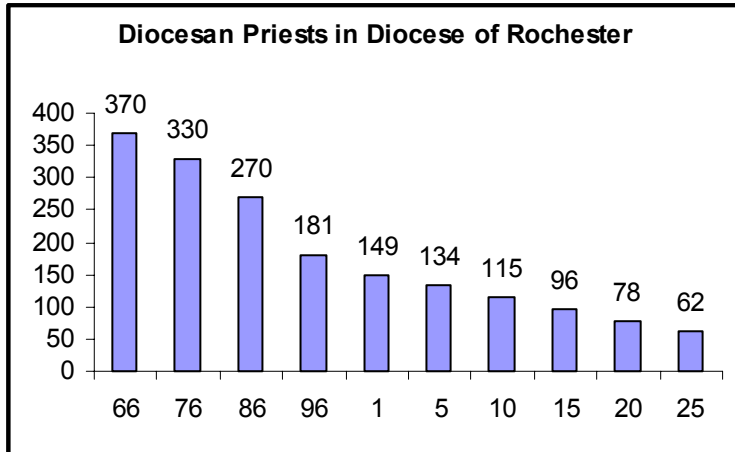
Recent census information and other sources show the following for the Diocese as a whole:

1. Lack of overall population growth although shifting of some population to Rochester suburban areas may create limited local growth.
2. Increased aging of population.
3. Increased racial and ethnic diversity.
4. Continued concentration of existing population into suburban areas.
5. Economic growth reflecting regional rather than national trends.
6. Catholics will continue to reflect the demographic and social trends of the overall population.

Information from Census 2000 suggests that the 12 counties of the diocese are in the process of depopulation. Over the next 20 years even those pockets of relative growth may show decline. Overall, the population will decline, become older, and less affluent. These facts could be significant factors in the scope and nature of parishes in addition to the number of priests.

Projections of Priests and Permanent Deacons October 2002

In 1996, the Diocese contracted with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to provide a projection of the number of diocesan



priests. This projection was updated in 2001. The table on the left presents the results of this projection and the past number of diocesan priests in the Diocese of Rochester. In 1966, there were 370 non-retired diocesan priests available to serve the Catholics in the 12 counties of the Diocese. By 2001 this number had declined to 149 and will decline to 62 by 2025. Planning

Groups are using 5 and 10 year projections. By 2008, there will be 122 diocesan priests and by 2013, 104.

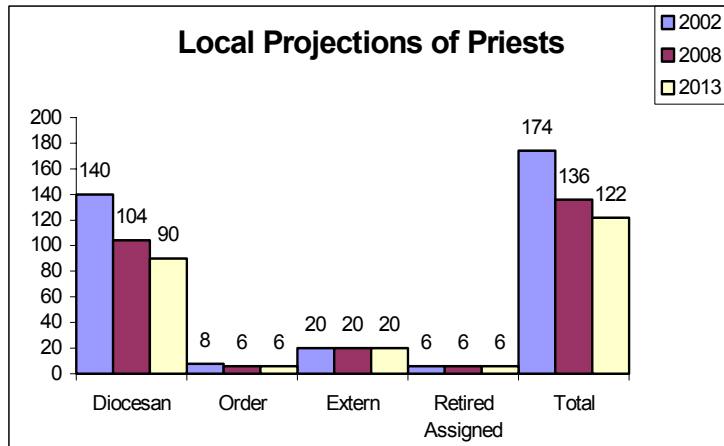
These projections are based on the following assumptions:

- Retirement age of 70.
- Fifteen ordinations every 10 years (the current rate).
- Some priests continue in active service after they reach 70 years of age.
- The number of incardinations (priests from other dioceses becoming a full member of the priesthood of the Diocese of Rochester) is equal to the number of priests who resign the priesthood. This has been true for the five years: 1996-2001.
- National mortality rates for priests is applied by age group.

Even if different assumptions are used for retirement age or doubling the ordination rate, there is little substantial impact on the overall decline.

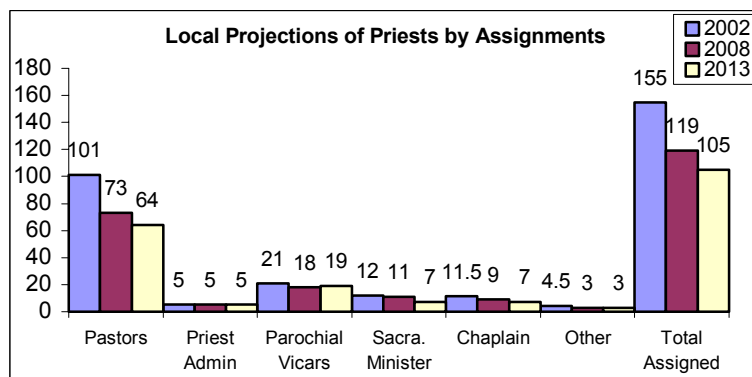
In addition to these projections from CARA, the pastoral planning office has made some local projections using a different methodology. These projections focus on the total number of priests to be available for pastoral service in the diocese including externs (priests from other dioceses), priests who are members of religious orders and who are assigned to serve in parishes, and retired priests who have accepted part time assignments to provide sacramental ministry to parishes and faith communities.

Based on these projections, the diocese will experience a decline from the current level of 174 priests available for service to 136 by 2008 and 122 by 2013. These projections



assume that every diocesan priest will retire when he reaches 67 and that the number of extern priests and retired assigned priests stays the same. In line with the universal law of the Church, no diocese may recruit extern priests; thus it is difficult to project the exact number that will be available in the future. Over the past six years, however, the number of extern priests serving in the Diocese has increased.

As more priests reach retirement age, there will be more opportunities for them to take part time assignments as sacramental ministers. In some case, teams of two or three retired priests may take such assignments. While the number of such priests or teams may well increase beyond the current six, it is difficult to project the exact number. Because these priests will serve in such capacity for a limited number of years, retired assigned priests will reach a steady state over the next ten years, stay stable for a



while, and then decline. The exact numbers will be function of a set of decisions made by individual priests.

Pastoral planning also did projections for priests by assignments. As the chart indicates, the Diocese will experience a significant decline in the number of priest pastors by 2008 and somewhat less

rapid decline between then and 2013. By 2008, the Diocese will have a net reduction of roughly 25 percent in the number of priest pastors. While the number of sacramental ministers is held constant in the projections, these assignments will increase but only as a function of any increase in the number of externs and retired assigned priests.

Permanent Deacons provide a variety of increasingly important ministries. These include sacramental ministry for Baptism and Marriage as well as presiding at funerals.

Using an assumption of five new deacons ordained each year, the number of deacons will increase slightly through 2008 and then begin a rather precipitous decline to 2013. Early deaconate classes were larger than the current five per year. As these large classes reach retirement, the number of deacons will begin to decline unless the annual ordinations begin to increase. Even with a doubling of the current ordination rate,

however, the total number of deacons will decline.

Number of Permanent Deacons

