

September 29, 2004

Rev. Roy Kiggins
130 Exchange St.
Geneva, NY 14456

Rev. William Laird
97 W. Bayard St.
Seneca Falls, NY 13148

Kathleen O'Connell, RSM
25 Center St.
Waterloo, NY 13165

Dear Friends:

As your parishes form a new planning group, "Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium: Phase Two" begins in your communities. I appreciate your willingness and that of the lay representatives who will serve on the new Geneva/Seneca Falls/Waterloo Planning Team, to undertake the complex but vitally important work awaiting you.

As the Diocese of Rochester continues to respond to the circumstances caused by a declining number of priests, we project that there will be three priests available to your planning group from 2005 through 2015. These "projected priests" may not, however, all necessarily be priest pastors. Since all pastoral leadership positions in our diocese are now open to pastoral administrators, one or more could be sacramental ministers serving with a pastoral administrator on either a full-time or part-time basis. Your pastoral plan should address how your parishes will be configured and priests utilized to provide the sacramental ministry required by the parishes, Geneva Memorial Hospital, migrant ministry, and colleges of your planning group. You will also need to determine a provisional weekend Mass schedule with three priests available to preside.

Catholic schools have always been highly valued in your area and rightly so. I write this letter several weeks before your orientation workshop because of my upcoming ad limina visit to Rome. Therefore, I do not know the status of the consolidation process of St. Mary and St. Patrick Schools when you read my words on October 16th. I am uncertain what exact form this consolidation for the 2005-2006 school year will take but recognize that it is necessary to ensure a high quality, fiscally sound academic program for our young people. The relationship between the schools and the parishes throughout this transition will be of utmost importance. Strong leadership, along with ongoing collaboration and clear communication, will not only assist with the consolidation of the schools but build a solid base of support as your parishes plan together. In looking to the

long-term future, it will be important to examine the strengths and challenges of all of the schools within your planning group to determine what is needed and possible to keep Catholic school education an option for families within this region of the Finger Lakes. I ask that you also continue to support and collaborate with DeSales High School as the regional Catholic high school.

Your parishes have taken many steps toward increased vitality but much remains to be done. St. Francis DeSales and St. Stephen have grown slowly but surely toward greater unity and have truly become the Roman Catholic Community of Geneva in action as well as in name. I commend the collaborative ministries you have developed, including youth ministry and faith formation—a model, perhaps, for future collaborative ministries between St. Mary and St. Patrick. You have moved to one pastoral council serving both communities, worked with Catholic Charities to develop social ministry and the local Hispanic ministry, and broached the possibility of using the St. Francis DeSales convent as a center for this ministry. I recognize that Fr. Kiggins' leadership and your careful work bringing the two communities together have improved both the quality of ministry in Geneva and your ability to pay bills in a timely manner. I ask that you continue the movement already begun toward consolidating your communities into one parish while maintaining whatever facilities you need.

There are several additional issues which I ask you to address in your pastoral planning. Please work together to continue to build the quality of your ministry even in light of financial constraints. I realize that St. Patrick has carefully improved its financial condition. All four of your parishes have enhanced their staffs through diligent effort. I remain concerned about the precarious financial condition of St. Mary's, which continues to have difficulty paying its bills. My understanding is that a bequest received several years ago is essentially gone, and fundraisers--primarily by school staff and families--are critical to the parish's continued existence. I expect that the consolidation of St. Mary and St. Patrick Schools will help this unfortunate situation but careful attention will need to be paid to ensure the long-term viability of St. Mary parish.

Please become familiar with our diocesan document "Sacramental Celebration and Campus Ministry" and its implications for ministry with Catholic students at the two residential colleges located within your planning group. Assess what is needed and possible at Hobart/William Smith and build on your initial contacts with the college. I ask that you also develop a plan for ministry at the N.Y. Chiropractic College for the time when Fr. Murphy is no longer available. Shannon Loughlin, diocesan director of young adult and campus ministries, can serve as a resource in your deliberations.

You may want to consider other collaborative efforts within your planning group. For instance, it might be beneficial to offer joint catechist formation.

Your planning will likely be difficult as you weigh the needs of the various parishes and special ministries; yet your work is essential so that we can maintain a strong Catholic presence in your part of the Finger Lakes. I offer my prayers and my support to you. Karen Rinefierd, serving as your planning group liaison, will work with you to ensure that you receive any necessary help from the various offices of the Pastoral Center as you create different aspects of your pastoral plan.

With every good wish, I remain,

Your brother in Christ,

+Matthew H. Clark
Bishop of Rochester

Copies: Ms. Shannon Loughlin
Margaret Mancuso, SSJ
Ms. Karen Rinefierd