

December 19, 2006

Mr. Michael Ratigan
934 Winona Blvd.
Rochester, NY 14617

Mr. Robert Spatola
143 Dake Ave.
Rochester, NY 14617

Dear Robert and Michael:

Please accept my thanks for your leadership of the pastoral planning process for the Irondequoit Planning Group. I also extend my gratitude to all those who have been involved, especially Mark Bovenzi and Steve Caso and all who have served on the planning group. I am glad that the St. Ann's Community will continue to support the Irondequoit Senior Ministries Program and to collaborate with the rest of the Irondequoit Catholic Community.

Your task was challenging, made necessary by the changing demographics and needs of your area as well as the declining number of priests available to serve within your communities. Your organized and detailed efforts along with excellent facilitation of listening sessions have resulted in a path forward that is both realistic and hope-filled. I especially appreciate the way in which you used your successful Senior Ministry as a model to develop a regional youth catechetical ministry, adult faith formation and liturgical training. Your creative Plan sets out ways to ensure a vital, healthy Catholic community for Irondequoit into the future.

Thank you for finding a way to address the declining number of priests while also offering a healthier ministry for the priests serving in Irondequoit. Your proposed Mass schedule is very respectful both to the communities and to the assigned priests while also honoring the retired priests as gifts in your area.

Your plan calls for the clustering of St. Thomas the Apostle, St. Salome and Christ the King parishes in 2007 with St. Cecilia and St. Margaret Mary continuing as single parishes. Your commitment to the needs of all seems to undergird the recommendation to cluster three parishes rather than propose a different configuration. I have reviewed the two letters (Appendices 3A and 3B) from the Pastoral Council members of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish. There were many opportunities for parishioners to provide input within the planning process by serving on the planning group and participating in listening sessions. I am aware of the timing, nature, and extent of information communicated to parishioners through newsletters. I have also been kept informed of the details of the planning process and the exemplary way in which both parish and ministry representatives have participated. The plan you have submitted to me demonstrates the ability to see the larger picture and to plan for the needs of the Irondequoit Catholic community rather than for single parishes or ministries. While I understand the concerns voiced by some

members of the St. Thomas the Apostle pastoral council, I accept your recommended parish restructuring.

You state that in 2009 the IPPC along with the Diocesan Office of Pastoral Planning will revisit and evaluate the long-term vision of all five parishes becoming one cluster. Because it is essential that the members of the parishes understand what this change would entail, the IPPC will be responsible for providing excellent communication. You will need to develop a process to evaluate the long-term vision and make any needed adjustments. It may be best to begin developing that process much sooner than 2009. Oftentimes when parishes prepare to cluster, a great deal of work must be done to foster relationships among parishioners. The health of the new cluster of Christ the King, St. Salome, and St. Thomas the Apostle along with the state of your envisioned regional shared ministries may be indicators of how the proposed 2012 five-parish cluster would succeed.

The list of ministries you intend to share regionally is quite extensive and challenging. I expect that it will take quite a bit of time, talent, and persistence to accomplish your goals in the wide variety of ministerial areas. Knowing that your "Regionally Shared Ministries" list is titled "Examples," I do ask that you ensure the continuation of the Senior Ministry and make your vocation efforts a priority even as you pursue additional areas of shared ministry.

I approve your plan as written and look forward to hearing of your progress as you begin to make the vision of this plan a reality. In this era of rapid change of course, all plans must be considered changeable as the needs of the area and the availability of personnel change. Deb Housel will continue to work with your planning group as you begin implementation. She will be an important source of information on the process of clustering and will aid in the transition period during the coming months. Please know that you, the members of the planning group, the parishioners of all five parishes, parish staffs, and your priests will be in my prayers.

With every good wish, I remain,

Your brother in Christ,

+Matthew H. Clark
Bishop of Rochester

Copies: Rev. Peter Bayer
 Rev. Richard Beligotti
 Rev. Robert Bradler
 Mr. Bernard Grizard
 Rev. Timothy Horan
 Mrs. Deborah Housel
 Rev. Kevin McKenna
 Rev. Norman Tanck, CSB