

February 24, 1999

Ms. Diane Gannon and  
Mr. Rick George  
20 Chili Riga Town Line Road  
Churchville, New York 14428

Dear Diane and Rick,

Please express my thanks to your colleagues for their work on a pastoral plan for the parishes of the Southwest Monroe-Northwest Livingston Planning Group. I appreciate their generous willingness to devote the time and effort required for this important process. I also want to thank both of you for the excellent leadership you exercised throughout the difficult process of identifying common concerns and creating collaborative programs to address them. I realize that the needs of the Diocese and other faith communities posed a special challenge for your group and for St. Vincent Parish. The assignment of Fr. Laird to a full time position at the tribunal and the subsequent temporary assignment of Charlotte Bruney to assist during the difficult fall at Corpus Christi complicated an already challenging situation. Please express my thanks for understanding and flexibility to all the members of the team and especially to those representing St. Vincent.

### **Configuration**

Given the special circumstances of pastoral assignments in this group, it is certainly reasonable for the PGLT to continue to work on the exact allocation of the 2.8 full time priest equivalents with the goal of making recommendations by June 1999. At that time, it may be necessary for me to consult with the Priests Council depending on the nature of the recommendation. Typically a recommendation for a permanent pastoral administrator requires that I consult with the Council. In the mean time, however, we will proceed with the appointment of Fr. Robert O'Neil as pastor of St. Christopher Parish. He was appointed priest administrator only because the parish was in the planning process.

February 24, 1999

Page 2

As you point out, the planning group will have experienced a 30 percent reduction in the number of priests since 1996. I understand the difficulties and challenges of such a reduction. I cannot make any commitments about the number of priests available beyond 2003. I hope that further reductions in this group will not be necessary. Many factors will be taken into account two of which will be the number of Catholic families being served and the prior reductions in an area.

### **Facilities and Finance**

Your review of the facilities and finance areas of the parishes did not produce did not produce any specific plans for specific joint activities in these areas because there did not appear to be any issues which admitted of effective collaborative solutions. This is a realistic conclusion. It think it wise, however, that the plan calls for ongoing oversight by the continuation of the finance and facilities sub team in order to provide a forum for ongoing information sharing and for the development of collaborative action if such is needed. As your report notes, long range planning by each parish in a consistent format and conducted at the same time may provide benefits and currently unanticipated opportunities. Establishing and promoting deferred giving and other ways of generating additional revenue are also possibilities for collaborative action.

### **Communication**

Collaboration requires trust that is built on shared experience which depends in part on knowledge. Thus your commitment to initial but important steps to increase the information shared among the parishes about each parish is important. Over time the knowledge of the other parishes will make any collaborative action both more effective and enjoyable.

### **Collaborative Programming**

You have wisely selected two starting points out of the many important and worthwhile opportunities identified for possible collaboration. While you will explore all areas over the next five years, you have selected adult education and volunteerism as your initial areas of focus. Your plan for adult education seems realistic and pragmatic. I encourage your consideration of St. Bernard's on the Road as an initial collaboration. You will find it useful to contact Judith Kollar, Director of Continuing Education (271-3657 ext. 292;jkollar@sbi.edu) to further explore this option.

You have identified "volunteerism" as an important issue because it impacts all the areas of parish life and ministry. Your assessment that "(1) we never have enough volunteers,

and (2) there is a small core of volunteers at the heart of each parish” names a reality that  
Ms. Diane Gannon & Mr. Rick George Diocese of Rochester

February 24, 1999  
Page 3

would characterize most of our parishes. Your innovative approach to addressing this issue could be important to other parishes and planning groups.

Your plan to coordinate special liturgies throughout the planning group is an important expression of our nature as a community of churches.

### **Timeline**

I appreciate your careful work in developing a timeline for the initial steps in the implementation of your shared pastoral plan. This will make it easier to ensure that the initiatives you have planned together come to reality. I was struck by the very aggressive deadlines in the schedule; you may want to review these to make sure that you have not expected too much too quickly. Of course, there is a need for ongoing assessment of needs and the success of these planned activities. Your experience will be reflected in changes that will improve the overall effectiveness of your efforts.

I understand from Bill Pickett that you are in the process of organizing a continuation of the Planning Group Leadership Team that will provide ongoing accountability and oversight for the joint activities to which you have committed. Although this group is not described in the plan, it is an essential part of the implementation plan of any group. Please keep Bill informed about your progress in this regard.

I happily affirm your plan and look forward to its implementation. By July 1, a member of the Pastoral Center staff will be appointed as official liaison to the Southwest Monroe-Northwest Livingston Planning Group. In the mean time, Bill Pickett will serve in that capacity.

Your brother in Christ,

† Matthew H. Clark  
Bishop of Rochester

MHC:mgm