

September 24, 2003

Mr. Joseph Dombrowski
6 Osage Trail
Spencerport, NY 14559

Dear Joe:

At this beginning of "Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium: Phase Two," I am mindful of people like yourself who have been involved in our pastoral planning efforts from the very beginning. Thank you for your energy, leadership, and commitment to the needs of our parishes.

As I reviewed your first pastoral plan, I realized that your goals were modest but you have been faithful to them. You employed local talent to lead workshops designed to improve the ways parishioners are invited to share in the work of the parishes, trained, and supported in that work. You have pooled resources to conduct adult faith formation sessions. This coming week's first shared mission will continue growth in the collaboration among your four parishes.

Yours is the planning group with the most extensive experience with pastoral administrators leading parish communities. I appreciate the fine leadership these pastoral administrators have brought to your parishes, the cooperative way Fr. Plominski, the priest sacramental ministers and they work together, and the gracious response of your parishioners to a changed model of parish leadership. During Fr. Darling's recuperation, three of the four priests serving in your parishes are sacramental ministers. We project that four priests will continue to be available for the Five Saints West planning group through 2009. These priests may either be pastors or part-time sacramental ministers. I ask that your pastoral plan address the best structure for your communities when only three pastor or pastoral administrator/sacramental minister teams are available for assignment to your planning group. This reduction is currently projected to happen between 2009 and 2014 but may need to occur earlier depending on unforeseen circumstances. It would be helpful to also consider what steps might be undertaken to best prepare your parishioners for this changed future.

Please examine your schedule of weekend Masses. The ideal is that the entire church community gather as one each Sunday for Eucharist. That is, of course, not possible in your parishes, but a careful analysis of Mass attendance in light of the capacities of your churches might suggest that reducing the number of Masses in some churches would result in fuller participation by the congregation and more vibrant liturgies. Also address

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the advisability of more coordination and collaboration in your Holy Day Mass schedules.

Each faith community in a planning group must have access to a well qualified catechetical leader and a well qualified youth minister, a strategy for comprehensive youth ministry, an integrated approach to adult faith formation, flexible models for formation of school-aged children, sacramental preparation consistent with diocesan sacramental guidelines, and a plan for certifying catechists, volunteers, and sacramental preparation teams. I encourage you to use the resources of our diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis as you examine and continue to enhance the quality of your faith formation and youth ministry programs. Since you have many part-time staff, you may find it beneficial to develop a shared approach to other aspects of faith formation and sacramental preparation in addition to adult faith formation.

I invite you to consider additional areas for collaboration. Please consider the advantages of working with the diocesan Office of Liturgy to offer initial and ongoing training of your liturgical ministers and musicians on a shared basis. You may want to develop a coordinated approach to ministry with the sick and dying, particularly for those being released from hospitals, as well as with seniors. You will likely have many ideas of your own.

I offer you my prayers as you begin this second phase of pastoral planning. Karen Rinefierd, your planning group liaison, will work with you to ensure that you receive any necessary support from the various offices of the Pastoral Center as you create different aspects of your plan.

With every good wish, I remain,

Your brother in Christ,

+Matthew H. Clark
Bishop of Rochester

Copies: Ms. Charlotte Bruney
Ms. Irene Goodwin
Rev. Walter Plominski
Sr. Barbara Stinard, R.S.M.
Ms. Karen Rinefierd