

June 7, 1999

Louis Tyrrell and Margaret Dunn Rollins
Co-Chairs, Yates-Ontario-Steuben PGLT
1913 Stiles Road
Penn Yan, New York 14527

Dear Lou and Margaret,

I want to thank you and the other members of the Yates-Ontario-Steuben Planning Group Leadership Team for your creative and dedicated work on the five-year pastoral plan for the six parishes in your group. While every planning group in the Diocese presents its own unique circumstances and challenges, your situation was especially challenging because of the number of parishes, their differing sizes, and their dispersion over a large area with difficult driving routes. The seasonality of your communities with the impact of a large summer population is another important factor. I appreciate your willingness to take on this challenge. I especially value the way in which you included both Keuka College and the important Spanish-speaking community in your plans for Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community.

While your plan is the result of a team effort, I also know the importance of leadership to this process. On behalf of those who will benefit from your work, I want to thank both of you for your steady and focused leadership in this process.

Vision and Key Assumptions

Your vision is a challenging one that is built on growing collaboration and the retention of the identity of each of the parishes and faith communities. Both of these must exist in a creative tension.

The key assumptions of your plan are clearly stated. With regard to the number of priests to be available to the group, the original planning estimate called for three full time priests plus a priest who would say one weekend Mass within the planning group. The assumption that there will be three additional Masses during the summer will be a challenging one for the Diocese to meet.

I appreciate your commitment to work with the Catholic Community of Geneva in addressing the ministry to the Hispanic community. I also note your commitment to the development and use of lay leadership within your communities.

Major Issues

Your work has identified nine major issues that are common to the faith communities of Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community:

1. Youth
2. Quality of worship
3. Young families
4. Young adults
5. Social ministries
6. Reduction in the number of priests
7. Stewardship programs
8. Former and non-active Catholics
9. Regional Catholic school

Your plan has identified important initiatives in each of these areas as you work together to create and sustain a vibrant Catholic community.

Configuration

Your plan for the assignment of three priests to all six parishes is a creative response to your local circumstances. In order to have an effective transition to this plan, we began the process of opening these positions early this spring. I am pleased that I was able to appoint Fr. Philip Billotte as pastor for the six parishes of Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community. Fr. Peter Deckman and Fr. Sean Garrity, C.S.B will assist him. I am confident that these three priests under Fr. Bilotte's collegial leadership will provide excellent pastoral care for the communities. Fr. Deckman's facility in Spanish and his experience in ministering to the Hispanic community responds well to one of your requirements.

The original planning assumptions included the provision of one additional Mass each weekend. In your plan, you have requested that those additional Masses be provided to respond to the increase in parish populations during the summer. It will be more difficult to meet that requirement but we will make every effort to respond. For the summer of 1999, we will be able to provide three Masses in addition to those celebrated by the three

assigned priests. These may not be said by one priest, or by the same priest(s) throughout the summer months. We will know if we can make a similar commitment for subsequent summers only during the preceding March and will inform the pastor as soon as possible.

The rotation of priests one weekend per month throughout the planning group is consistent with your goal of a three-priest team serving all six parishes of the OLL community. At the same time, each priest will focus on two specific parishes and some specific ministry area. Thus your approach is an interesting combination of group wide responsibility and specific focus. I also appreciate your commitment to the quality of the liturgies through the formation of a Liturgical Council and the use of a Liturgical Coordinator. Because of the creative nature of this focus and rotation plan, I encourage you to evaluate its impact carefully at the end of the first year of implementation.

You wisely point out that "parishioners can expect occasional communion services when a priest is not available." In light of the demanding schedule and the number of priests, such communion services might well be more than occasional.

Expansion of the Use of Paid Lay Leadership

Your plan calls for the use of paid lay people to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the parishes and to relieve the priests of some administrative duties. While important financial and administrative details will need to be worked out, your direction is a good one. Your implementation timeline has definite decision points with regard to hiring administrative staff to serve the entire community. As the community begins move in this direction, you should consult with the Diocesan Human Resources Office for assistance and support.

Community-Wide Council

This Council meets the requirement that each plan include a group representative of the parishes and faith community that will be accountable for the implementation of the five-year pastoral plan.

Buildings

Your plan recommends that the three priests assigned to the parishes to live together at the St. Michael's rectory seems reasonable and positive and is certainly acceptable to me. As you know and as you have provided for in the plan, the three priests assigned to the parishes will make their decisions about their living arrangements in consultation with the

Director of Priest Personnel. In Phase Three, the plan mentions that parishes are free to sell or rent facilities not needed for the pastoral programs of the community. As part of our regular consultation process, any use of parish facilities for other than parish use would require prior consultation with and approval by the Bishop.

Pastoral Wellness

Your statement on pastoral wellness is beautifully and sensitively stated. It is a wonderful recognition of the value and importance of the priests who serve you and the communities and of the role of the laity in supporting and affirming them. Your concern for the personal well being of the priests is edifying. While many planning groups have this concern, none have expressed so explicitly and so well. This concern with the personal wellness of priests coupled with your acceptance of your own responsibilities as baptized Christians will create an exciting and lively future for your community.

Your concern for pastoral wellness will be translated into some everyday realities for which many parishioners may need to be prepared. The Sunday Mass schedule is perhaps the most obvious and visible. There are also implications for daily Mass schedules, routine celebration of Eucharist at funerals and weddings, and meetings of multiple committees.

Collaborative Programming

Your plan calls for collaborative actions to address the important and common concerns of *faith formation for youth, families and young adults, revitalization or establishment of social ministries in each parish to promote the consistent life ethic individually and collectively, promotion and marketing the importance of a Catholic education in support of the regional Catholic schools, and evangelization to former and non-active Catholics.* The realities of financial support and program practicalities will come into play as you work to implement these program ideas. These all move in important directions, however, regardless of the exact timeline for implementation. Given the number of your common concerns and the five year implementation period, the Community-Wide Council should consider establishing priorities among these so that financial and human resources are not spread over too many new initiatives.

Implementation

You have provided a timetable for key implementation events. This will be important to the Community Wide Council in its work to oversee the successful implementation of this plan.

I affirm this five-year pastoral plan for Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community. I look forward to being kept informed of your progress and will keep you all in my prayers. I also look forward to meeting with you, the members of the PGLT, and representatives of the parishes and faith communities to celebrate the initiation of this pastoral plan. Bill Pickett will be in touch with you concerning possible dates.

With every good wish, I remain

Your brother in Christ,

† Matthew H Clark
Bishop of Rochester

CC Rev. Phillip Billotte
Rev. Brian Cool
Rev. Peter Deckman
Rev. Mark Miller