

September 21, 2004

Mr. James Weisbeck  
3196 Carroll Hill Road  
Bloomfield, New York 14469

Dear Jim,

In anticipation of the Northwest Ontario planning group beginning its configuration planning for "Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium: Phase Two," I reviewed your first pastoral plan. You have been able to accomplish much of what you set out to do. Your Interparish Council meets regularly; you developed a regional envelope return system, Mass schedule and newsletter. You share in regional Confirmation, retreats and workshops. You have built up a strong social ministry, pastoral visitation ministry and a prison ministry for men and women at the Ontario County Jail. Thank you to all the many parishioners who are involved in these efforts. Although you were not able to create the shared position of a full-time youth minister as you originally envisioned, perhaps that was not feasible with the region being so spread out.

As the Diocese of Rochester continues to respond to the circumstances caused by a declining number of priests, we project that four priests will be available to your planning group from 2005-2010 and three from 2010-2015. 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 structured over the next five years in a way that allows you to grow toward your preferred ten-year configuration. Together, you will need to address facility-related alternatives as you consider the impact of fewer priests serving your planning group. You will also need to develop a provisional weekend schedule of twelve Masses to be reviewed and implemented when the number of priests serving your planning group declines to four. Your plan should address how your parishes will continue to work together to ensure that there is appropriate pastoral care at the hospitals.

Please find ways to educate your parishioners about the declining number of priests within our Diocese. Help them to understand what might change in their own communities as four and ultimately three parish priests respond to the pastoral needs of all parishioners.

There are some additional issues that I invite your planning group to address during this second phase of pastoral planning. I am thankful for the welcoming atmosphere at St. Mary School and the close relationship between the school and parish. St. Mary School, the first Catholic school in our Diocese, does an excellent job of educating our young people and reaching out to potential

students. However, I invite you to examine ways to make its work even more fruitful. Please undertake a careful consideration of the planning group's relationship with St. Mary School. Explore whether there are ways for priests and other parish personnel to be more fully present in the school. Likewise there may be additional ways in which parishes and St. Mary School can work together to strengthen the relationship students and their families have with their own parishes.

Please continue to address youth and young adult ministry within your planning group. Become familiar with our diocesan document "Sacramental Celebration and Campus Ministry" and its implications for ministry with Catholic students at the Finger Lakes Community College located within your planning group. Michael Theisen diocesan director of youth ministry and Shannon Loughlin, diocesan director of young adult and campus ministries, can serve as a resource in your planning.

I offer my prayers as you begin this second phase of pastoral planning. Deb Housel will be your planning group liaison and will work with you to ensure that you receive any necessary support from the various offices of the Pastoral Center as you develop your pastoral plan. May God continue to bless your commitment to meeting the challenges of the present and future.

With every good wish, I remain

Your brother in Christ,



†Matthew H. Clark  
Bishop of Rochester

Copies: Sr. Diane Dennie, SSJ  
Rev. John Gagnier  
Mrs. Deborah Housel  
Ms. Shannon Loughlin  
Sr. Elizabeth Meegan, OP  
Rev. Thomas Mull  
Rev. Timothy Niven  
Sr. Joan Sobala, SSJ  
Mr. Michael Theisen