

Detroit considers possible parish closures, mergers, other changes

DETROIT (CNS) -- A pastoral plan for the Detroit Archdiocese that includes recommendations such as closing nine parishes, merging 60 parishes into 21 and establishing multi-parish teams or initiatives is a "plan to move the life of the church forward" over the next five years, said Detroit Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron. In a media briefing Dec. 1, he told reporters the recommendations are likely to be implemented but not "set in stone." He received the recommendations from the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council the previous day and will now seek comment on them from the archdiocese's other consultative bodies. He will then accept, reject or modify them, and is expected to release an archdiocesan-wide pastoral plan in February. Reasons archdiocesan officials have given for the changes include a shortage of priests and the fiscal difficulties facing some of the archdiocese's 270 parishes. The proposed changes have been posted on the archdiocesan website, www.aodonline.org. In a letter distributed to parishes the last weekend of November, Edward "Chip" Miller, chairman of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, said: "The recommended plans will focus on how we will, as one church, manage our resources to fulfill our seven mission priorities: evangelization and catechesis, Christian service outreach, youth and young Adults; lay leadership, stewardship and administration; Catholic school education and vocations."

Christchurch Diocese to reduce number of parishes by more than half

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand (CNS) -- Christchurch Diocese will reduce the number of parishes by more than half, Bishop Barry Jones announced. The bishop said that because of a diminishing number of clergy, the number of parishes will be reduced from 50 to 24. He said larger parishes formed from two or more consolidated parishes will have two resident priests, and a parish may have more than one church. "Sunday Mass is at the heart of the life of the church. Its weekly celebration comes to us from the apostles themselves," said Bishop Jones in a document, "The Provision of Sunday Mass in the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch." He made it clear that Sunday Mass and parish life require a priest: "No priest, no Mass." A diocesan-wide consultation leading to the changes began before the magnitude 6.3 earthquakes in February. Bishop Jones visited all pastoral areas and invited submissions. Well-attended meetings were followed by large numbers of responses. With people from more than 6,000 Christchurch homes moving west and north and out of the city because of earthquakes, Bishop Jones said future needs for churches are not yet clear and figuring out the demographics will take time. Some quake-damaged churches may be rebuilt, depending on insurance demands, earthquake proneness and requirements of the diocesan earthquake strategy, he said. In February, a staggered implementation plan will begin to set up 10 new parishes over the following two years