



ATTACHMENT A

THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

Report finds fewer priests celebrating more Masses at fewer parishes

WASHINGTON (CNS, July 2011) -- More U.S. Catholics are attending Masses at fewer parishes staffed by a rapidly declining corps of priests, according to a new report on "The Changing Face of U.S. Catholic Parishes." Produced by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate for the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership project of five national Catholic ministerial organizations, the report documents what it calls the "supersizing" of U.S. Catholic parish life. "Bigger parishes, more Masses and ministries in languages other than English are becoming the norm," said a news release on the report released July 18. CARA found that the number of Catholic parishes has declined by 1,359 since the year 2000 to 17,784 in 2010, representing a 7.1 percent decrease. The 2010 number is roughly equal to the 17,637 U.S. parishes in 1965 and 1,836 fewer than the peak number of U.S. parishes in 1990. The average number of registered households in each U.S. parish grew to 1,168, and the average number of people attending Mass at Catholic parishes was 1,110 in 2010, up from an average of 966 a decade earlier.

This PASTORAL PLAN may take a year and a half to two years to implement. Every parish in the Diocese will be expected to participate. The PASTORAL PLAN will proceed in two phases:

Phase One (September 2011 - March 2012) will consist of:

- A) Each parish must submit a six month "October count" (the months of September, October, November, December, 2011 and January, February, 2012) as well as accurate, current parish data (See ATTACHMENT D, PARISH PROFILE).
- B) A renewed focus on parish clusters, including close attention to the possible reduction of weekend Masses where possible, serious efforts to increase cooperation and minimize duplication of services and, if appropriate, the reconfiguration of existing clusters to meet present needs.

- C) A careful, documented, and honest response to the Parish Evaluation Instrument containing the ten criteria to be used. (See ATTACHMENT C, CRITERIA FOR A VIABLE PARISH)
1. These will be discussed at joint meetings of the Parish Leadership Group (pastor, administrator, or parish life coordinator, parish trustees, parish pastoral council, finance council, liturgy committee and, where appropriate, school principal and school board). The Parish Evaluation Instrument should be filled out confidentially by each individual and given to the pastor, administrator, or parish life coordinator. Participants are encouraged to sign the evaluation instrument, but it is not required. **(If your parish does not have a parish pastoral council or a finance council, you are mandated by this PLAN to establish them. If your councils rarely meet, you are mandated to begin regular meetings.)**
 2. This should be followed by a similar meeting with a larger representation of parish leadership, which might include benefactors, women's/men's club, quilters, major volunteers, chair of picnic, those with key roles/ministries in parish liturgies and other appropriate parish leaders. Once again the Parish Evaluation Instrument should be filled out confidentially by each individual and given to the pastor, administrator, or parish life coordinator. Participants are encouraged to sign the evaluation instrument, but it is not required. The pastor/administrator/parish life coordinator examines the evaluation instruments after each meeting, carefully studying the results. He/she summarizes them at the start of the next meeting. All evaluation instruments are to be saved and sent to the Vicar General at the chancery.
 3. After the results of these two meetings are known, a larger town hall-style meeting should take place. Parish leadership should also participate. After as full a discussion of the results as is possible, the Parish Evaluation Instrument should be filled out confidentially by each individual and given to the pastor, administrator, or parish life coordinator. Participants are encouraged to sign the evaluation instrument, but it is not required.
 4. The responses to the Evaluation Instruments from the three groups should be kept distinct. They should be discussed and evaluated by a meeting of the original Parish Leadership Group. Then the Parish Leadership Groups from all parishes in the cluster should meet and discuss the results of their individual parish meetings. It is MOST IMPORTANT for the Vicar Forane to participate. Every effort should be made to reach a consensus concerning what to recommend to the Committee for Parish Renewal and Restructuring. **The Vicar Forane must exercise active leadership and provide guidance in this process.**

5. Finally, the pastor, administrator, or parish life coordinator, with the Leadership Group from each individual parish should prepare serious recommendations concerning the parish's future and submit them to the Committee for Parish Renewal and Restructuring with all available supporting documents. These recommendations should cover an entire range of possibilities, such as changes in Mass schedule; efforts to strengthen the Catholic elementary school and the parish school of religion; new outreach and evangelization programs; a greater emphasis on stewardship; ways in which a strong parish may significantly assist a sister parish; possible merger, consolidation, suppression, or closing of the parish and/or school.

N.B. The three groups should meet more than once, if necessary.

[**Phase One** is led by the pastor, administrator, or parish life coordinator in collaboration with the Vicar Forane. Appropriate representatives from the Diocese may be available as needed. The Bishop does not participate in these local meetings.]

Phase Two (May 2012 - February 2013) will consist of the practical implementation of the results of **Phase One**:

A) **The Committee for Parish Renewal and Restructuring membership: The Very Rev. John W. McEvelly, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia, chair, *ex officio*; the six Vicars Forane (with The Very Rev. C. Raymond Schultz, V.F., serving as vice-chair of the Committee); Mr. David Spotanski, Chancellor for Administration and Pastoral Services; Deacon Robert Lanter, Diaconate Director; Sister Catherine Wellinghoff, ASC, Parish Life Coordinator; Ms. Kathy Mulvin, Diocesan Pastoral Council; Mr. Thomas Posnanski, Director of Education, as a resource when schools are discussed; and Mr. James Mroczkowski, Chief Financial Officer, as a resource when finances are discussed.**

This committee will study, evaluate, and refine recommendations from parishes and clusters. If their recommendations are significantly different from those of the parishes involved, they must review these differences with the Parish Leadership Group in the parish in question. The goal is to reach specific recommendations concerning the renewal of the parish. If it is deemed viable, what can be done to make it stronger? How can a stronger parish assist one that is struggling?

B) The Committee for Parish Renewal and Restructuring will give special attention to making sure that practical questions are answered as well as possible. For example:

- In the event of a consolidation/merger/closing, what happens to the parish cemetery?
- What becomes of parish land, funds and other assets?

- Who assumes the debt of a closed parish?
 - Are there realistic hopes for a buyer of parish buildings?
 - What costs are involved in demolishing buildings?
 - Could unsalable buildings be given to local community for appropriate alternative use?
- C) The Committee for Parish Renewal and Restructuring makes its final recommendations to the Bishop.
- D) The Bishop studies the recommendations and makes final decisions. He may ask that certain parishes revisit their Evaluation Instrument and parish discussions in order to give more serious consideration to additional parish collaboration, sharing, and possible consolidations/mergers. When there is a recommendation or decision to suppress, merge, or consolidate parishes, the parishes involved will be asked to request appropriate canonical action by the Bishop. While the Christian faithful from a consolidated parish will be urged to join the parish with which their parish is consolidated, they remain free to register in any nearby parish. When a parish closes, the assets are used to pay outstanding debts. All remaining assets go the newly formed combined parish. Any specific question or problems that arise will be addressed before final decisions are made.
- E) The Bishop sends letters to the individual parishes with final decisions concerning the results of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** and informs them of the date(s) of implementation. The public announcement will be made only after each parish has been informed in writing of the Bishop's final decisions.