

Letter from the Archbishop

Archdiocesan Planning Process

Dear Friends in Christ,

I invite you to take part in the process of building a holier and more vital local Church by attending a Regional Parishioner Meeting during the coming weeks. You will find details about those meetings listed below.

As you likely know by now, I have appointed an Archdiocesan Strategic Task Force to evaluate the current resources of the Archdiocese. The goal of this process is to determine how we can better proceed into the future by building on our strengths, not duplicating our efforts. Next year, this task force will present to me a pastoral plan for our parishes and Catholic Schools.

Members of the task force want to listen to as many voices as possible as they formulate their recommendations. This is a consultative process. There are no preconceived ideas.

Your attendance at a Regional Parishioner Meeting is one way for you to become engaged in this process. There are also other ways to have your voice heard: you may share your ideas, hopes and concerns by speaking with your pastor, or by accessing a voicemail hotline, using the internet or writing a letter. You will find contact information below.

The Regional Parishioner meetings, which begin on September 12th, serve as a follow up to a series of meetings for parish leadership which began in July. I am very grateful to the more than 600 pastors, trustees, and other parish leaders who attended those meetings. Task force members will consider information collected from pastors and parish leaders, along with input from parishioners and members of various ministry groups, as they develop their recommendations.

There are several reasons for undertaking such a planning process at this time. First, the number of Catholics in the Archdiocese is growing and we need to ensure that there are clergy, religious and lay leaders to meet our growing Catholic community's pastoral needs. In addition, the ethnic and socioeconomic make-up of the Archdiocese is changing, many parishes are experiencing financial pressures, and the cost of a vibrant Catholic education is becoming more challenging to sustain.

The primary principles guiding this process are intended to guarantee: that full sacramental ministry will be available to every Catholic in the Archdiocese; that all areas of the Archdiocese will have sufficient pastoral leaders; that special concern will be given to the needs of the poor, marginalized, and immigrant; and that consideration regarding Catholic schools will be included in the planning process.

While these changes which are currently taking place in almost every area of this great Archdiocese are the impetus for this planning process, the process itself is not primarily about becoming a more efficient local Church. Instead, the main goal is to foster a revitalized and sustainable local Church, responsive to the needs of all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is an opportunity to plan for the future of our local Church. Change is inevitable but we can direct that change. Your input in determining this direction is crucial. Again, I invite you to take part in this planning process. I also ask for your prayers for our success.

With every good wish, I remain,

Cordially yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

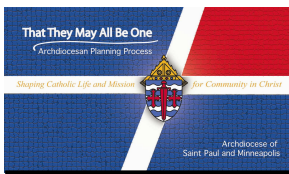
Regional Parishioner Meeting Dates

St. Richard, Richfield	Saturday, Sept. 12	9:30-11:30am	St. Peter, North St. Paul	Tuesday, Sept. 15	7:00-9:00pm
<i>Reunión Pública Regional en español: St Richard, Richfield sábado 12 de setiembre, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.</i>					
St. Wenceslaus, New Prague	Tuesday Sept. 22	7:00-9:00pm	St. Pius V, Cannon Falls	Saturday, Sept. 26	9:30-11:30am
All Saints, Lakeville	Monday, Sept. 28	7:00-9:00pm	Holy Spirit, St. Paul	Thursday, Oct. 1	7:00-9:00pm
Holy Name of Jesus, Wayzata	Tuesday, Oct. 6	7:00-9:00pm	St. Timothy, Blaine	Thursday, Oct. 8	7:00-9:00pm

Contact Information

Website: www.archspm.org/planningprocess
Phone: 651.291.4435

Mailing Address: Archdiocesan Planning Process, 328 West Kellogg Blvd.,
St. Paul, MN 55102



Overview: Parish Leadership and Priest/Deanery Meetings

Archdiocesan Planning Process

Throughout the spring and summer, pastors from parishes across the Archdiocese have been meeting to discuss future planning as it relates to their region and to the Archdiocese as a whole. Parish leaders also met to learn about the current reality in the Archdiocese and to offer their insight into the planning process. Below is a brief summary of main themes and key messages reflected in those discussions. Please speak with your pastor and parish leaders to share your hopes and concerns about the future of the Archdiocese. You may also attend a Regional Parishioner Meeting to give your input.

MISSION

1. Tension between desire for cooperation between parishes and reality of competition for parishioners
2. Perception of the parish as the local church, not the Archdiocese; many do not yet feel a pastoral connection to the Archdiocese
3. Frequently asked questions: What is the mission of the Church? What constitutes a local church?

PROCESS

1. General acceptance of the planning process
2. High-quality engagement among pastors and parish leaders
3. Greater clarity needed around what constitutes a vital and vibrant parish/school
4. Appreciation that we cannot stay as we are while many also fear change

SCHOOLS

1. Desire to provide quality and affordable Catholic schools and have them available to everyone
2. Sensitivity to impact of economics on a family's ability to access Catholic education
3. Frequent suggestion to consider regional Catholic schools
4. Consideration of all parishes supporting all Catholic schools

LAITY AND THE CLERGY

1. Concern that pastors are being asked to take on additional management tasks along with sacramental, pastoral and governance responsibilities
2. Desire to free up clergy for sacramental and pastoral presence
3. Request for further clarity and education regarding the roles of priests, deacons, and laity

THE POOR, MARGINALIZED AND IMMIGRANT

1. Fear of a potential bias in favor of large parishes expanding and small and/or poorer parishes being closed
2. Recognition that serving the poor is a responsibility of all parishes/schools
3. Acknowledgement of the elderly, those with special needs and those from diverse cultures as resources for parishes, as well as being groups with distinctive pastoral needs

SHARING AND COLLABORATION

1. Recognition of need to work together
2. Understanding of potential benefits in sharing both resources and staff
3. Awareness that parish leaders need to think regionally or in parish clusters. Common thoughts on how to do this included:
 - A. Sharing Staff
 - B. Common purchasing
 - C. Program Development
 - D. Coordinating Mass times

FAITH FORMATION AND EVANGELIZATION

1. Suggestion that Evangelization be added as a guiding principle in the planning process
2. Strong commitment to faith formation/religious education
3. Concern for those who are not served at all: awareness, especially by pastors, of those who are not engaged in formation after Baptism or Confirmation; the more than 60% of registered Catholics that do not attend Mass regularly
4. Universal acceptance of faith formation of children and youth as a valued ministry; availability of Catholic schools as a choice for faith formation also a high

FINANCES

1. Appeal for decisions being mission-focused: let mission drive finances, not the other way around
 - Be about mission in a financially responsible way
 - Fear that decisions would be made purely based on finances
2. Acknowledgement by parish leadership and pastors that parishioners and parishes are living in times of financial stress
3. Understanding that parishes have to live within their means

ARCHDIOCESAN PLANNING PROCESS TIMELINE

