

RECOMMENDATION TO BISHOP SALVATORE R. MATANO

Introduction

The Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Pastoral Planning Task Force was created by the six Pastoral Leaders of Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Charles Borromeo, St. John the Evangelist, St. Lawrence, St. Leo the Great, and St. Mark's in the spring of 2022. The planning of these seven parishes has been a local effort and not a request of the Bishop. The leaders set the goal of the Task Force's work: continuing the Church's mission of Word, Worship, Community and Service in a vibrant way in our area under the constraints of demographics, financial resources, and priest availability.

The Task Force gathered and shared with parishioners, through bulletin articles and a website, information about our current reality. The ages and numbers of diocesan priests came from the Diocese. The following came from our seven parishes:

- October weekend Mass attendance 2011-the present
- church capacities
- detailed information about each parish's buildings, their usage, and condition
- numbers of Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, Weddings, and Funerals 2011-the present
- the priests presently serving in some capacity in each parish
- the permanent deacons presently serving in some capacity in each parish
- enrollment by grade at Holy Cross School and St. Lawrence School since the 2017/18 school year
- the number enrolled in Faith Formation and Youth Ministry
- the number of registered households in each parish.

The Task Force prioritized areas for collaboration--Evangelization, Vocations, and developing a Shared Website—and three committees with representatives from our parishes began to work. There is more information below about how the seven parishes are working together to advance the mission of the Church in this part of the Diocese.

We currently have five Pastors and one Pastoral Administrator appointed by the Bishop to lead our parishes. Our area has already seen two parishes close with their churches and campuses sold: Holy Name of Jesus and Our Lady of Mercy. We recognize that, given the number of diocesan priests and the need for priestly ministry and leadership throughout the twelve counties of the Diocese of Rochester, a time will come when the Bishop will not be able to appoint a Pastor or Pastoral Administrator to maintain this number in our area. Therefore, a subcommittee of the Task Force prepared a draft Report of what we might recommend to the Bishop for his consideration when that time arrives. In January 2024, the Subcommittee Report was discussed and modified by the Task Force. A draft Recommendation was shared with the Parish Staffs on February 27, 2024 for their input.

After modifications, the draft Recommendation was reviewed by the Parish Pastoral Councils and Parish Finance Councils on October 15 and by parishioners on November 20.

This final Recommendation comes now to the Bishop of Rochester. We, the members of the Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Pastoral Planning Task Force, recognize that any implementation of these proposals would be at the discretion of the Bishop of Rochester. We hope that these recommendations will be useful to the Bishop of Rochester as he makes decisions about the appointment of Pastors and Pastoral Administrators as well as priests and permanent deacons to assist them.

Areas of Collaboration Among our Parishes as We Seek to Advance the Mission of the Catholic Church

The Task Force identified the following three areas as most important for collaboration: evangelization, fostering vocations, and developing a 7-parish website to enhance communication. Evangelization, in particular attracting and involving young people, and increasing vocations were viewed as central to growing the Church.

Evangelization

The seven-parish Evangelization Team, created in spring 2023, focused first on helping members of our parishes to deepen their relationship with God. To that end, the group created flyers listing Advent 2023 offerings at the seven parishes and then a similar flyer for Lent 2024. Their second project was the creation of a Digital Library including Catholic apps, websites, podcasts, radio, daily emails, and YouTube videos to help people enrich their faith. Besides continuing to provide these resources during 2024-2025, this fall the Evangelization Team began to publicize information about each parish's Bible Studies on the Roc Catholics Northwest website. They plan to publish a list of retreat opportunities in early 2025. To encourage and help parishioners to share their faith with others, the committee will facilitate parishioners' sharing where they find God each day and develop a list of resources for grandparents to share with their grandchildren.

During Lent 2023 the seven parishes sponsored a mission as part of the Eucharistic Revival. On February 23, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament was followed by Bishop Salvatore Matano's presentation and Benediction. On February 24, Father Joseph Martuscello and seminarian David Cataline shared their vocation stories. There was a Youth Vigil for Vocations prayer service with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the Rosary led by youth representatives, and then Benediction led by Bishop Matano. The Mission ended with Mass on February 25th with the Bishop presiding and offering the homily.

A shared Retreat on "The Spirituality of Change: Being with Jesus" was held during Lent 2024. Presenters included Dr. Damian Zynda and Mr. Michael Sauter, the diocesan Director of the Department of Pastoral Services. Unfortunately, the third day needed to be canceled because of Father Edward Palumbos' surgery.

Vocations

A seven-parish Vocations Committee began meeting in fall 2023. The Vocations Committee is working to replicate the vocation resource displays at Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows in the other five parishes. Members have talked with local catechetical leaders to ensure that the topic of vocations is incorporated into local faith formation or youth ministry. Father William Coffas, Pastor of Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows and a member of the diocesan Vocation Awareness Team, has offered ways the Vocations Committee can coordinate its efforts with the diocese. As part of fostering vocations to the priesthood, the committee hosted a Fisher Dinner in December 2024 and is organizing “adopt a seminarian” where each parish will communicate regularly with one or more seminarians. We are excited that one of this year’s seminarians comes from St. Mark’s and St. Leo the Great. We are fortunate that Deacon Edward Giblin, diocesan Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, is a member of the Vocations Committee. In October 2024 the committee hosted a Holy Hour to pray for vocations followed by an information session about the permanent diaconate open to people beyond the seven parishes.

Communications through the Roc Catholics Northwest website

Lent 2024 brought the launch of the Roc Catholics Northwest website <https://www.roccatholicsnorthwest.org> which we envision as a resource for parishioners, newcomers, and visitors to our area. A committee with representatives from the seven parishes developed the guidelines and design for this website. Brendan Parker, the diocesan Web Applications Developer, created the actual website, trained key people at each parish, and remains an ongoing support. Deacon David Squilla and Jenny Ertel have taken on the role of local Web Administrators.

Parishes Sharing Staff Positions

We currently have a number of shared staff positions. Beyond the staff that serve the Community of Our Mother of Sorrows and Holy Cross, other positions are shared among two or more of our parishes:

- Amanuel Malik, Faith Formation Director (Holy Cross, Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Lawrence)
- Anna Flaitz, Multi-Parish Catechetical Coordinator (Holy Cross, Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Lawrence)
- Donna Gray, Youth Minister (St. Charles Borromeo, St. Lawrence)
- Theresa Nicolosi, Parish Secretary/Bulletin Editor (St. Leo the Great, St. Mark’s)
- Christopher Frontale, Finance Director, and Finance Office Staff Gina Hill, Jackie McMichael, and Suzanne Proulx (Holy Cross, Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Charles Borromeo, St. John the Evangelist)
- Marisa Stieve, Finance Director, and Finance Office Staff Dawn Nudo (St. Lawrence, St. Leo the Great, St. Mark’s)

- Karen Rinefierd, Safe Environment Director (Holy Cross, Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Charles Borromeo, St. John the Evangelist)
- Samir Agic, Maintenance (St. Leo the Great and St. Mark's).

Viable, Potential Options for the Future

Additional Clusters of Parishes in our Area:

A **cluster** is two or more parishes served by a single Pastor or Pastoral Administrator. Each parish retains its own identity according to both church and civil law. Ministry programs and staffing can be autonomous within each parish or may involve partnerships with other members of the cluster. Typically, clusters move toward a more integrated ministry. In our area, Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows are parishes with the same Pastor, Parochial Vicar, and some shared staff.

Some benefits of clustering that have been identified are fuller Masses as well as more robust ministries and programs.

Additional Appointments of Pastoral Administrators to Lead Parishes in our Area:

Ordinarily the Bishop appoints a priest as Pastor to be accountable to him for the pastoral care of a parish. However, in the absence of a Pastor due to a lack of priests, the diocesan bishop may choose another option. A **Pastoral Administrator** is a Catholic in good standing (Deacon, Religious, Lay Person) assigned to a parish in the exercise of the pastoral care of the parish in accord with Canon 517.2. In several dioceses around the country, the position is titled **Director of Parish Life**. The value of the Pastoral Administrator is being present to the parishioners on a day-to-day basis. This allows the Pastoral Administrator to develop a pastoral relationship with the parishioners so that they may better provide pastoral care to them. Receiving an appointment from the Bishop of the Diocese, the Pastoral Administrator assists the Bishop in the direction and administration of the parish. A Priest Moderator is assigned to the Pastoral Administrator. The Moderator serves with the powers and faculties of a Pastor. The Pastoral Administrator meets on a regular schedule with the Moderator for guidance and input. In our area, the Bishop has appointed Deacon Frank Pettrone to serve as Pastoral Administrator of St. Mark's.

These are the general responsibilities of a Pastoral Administrator:

1. to guide the life of a parish by leading in: Parish Pastoral Council, Parish Finance Council, Parish Committees and Organizations
2. to supervise Parish Staff
3. to give direction for the prayer life and worship of the parish community and the spiritual formation of its people
4. to encourage and cultivate the talents/gifts of all members of the parish by promoting stewardship of time, talent and treasure

5. to work with the sacramental ordained minister in order to provide effectively for the sacramental needs of the parish
6. to attend Deanery and Diocesan meetings.

Clustering Assumptions

1. The scope of the possible clustering is limited to the seven parishes represented by the Task Force. The issue of including other nearby parishes (e.g., St. John the Evangelist in Spencerport, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Brockport, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Hamlin) was discussed, but it was agreed to leave the scope as is.
2. The number of pastoral leaders and priests available for assignment by the Bishop will continue to decrease as more priests reach Senior Priest status than are being replaced by the newly ordained.
3. We understand that any merger of parishes into a single entity under canon and civil law is a decision of the Bishop after a canonical process including consultation and followed by a civil process. Likewise, any decision to sell a church is one made by the Bishop after a canonical process including consultation. **Therefore, no parishes or churches will close due to these recommendations,** and buildings/campuses will remain available for any parishes which are clustered.
4. Our expectation is that the Bishop would do his best to appoint a Pastoral Leader to fill any open parish leadership position within our seven parishes. However, if that is not possible, our preference is that the Pastor/Pastoral Administrator of the neighboring parish recommended as the best partner for clustering be appointed.

Criteria for the Clustering Recommendations Below

1. Distance between Parishes was the primary driver as other factors seemed to be less significant:

	SCB	MOS	HC	StJohn	StLaw	StLeo	StMark
SCB		2.8	2.8	4.0	5.2	12.0	6.6
MOS	2.8		2.6	4.7	5.5	9.5	4.4
HC	2.8	2.6		7	8	12.0	6.4
StJohn	4.0	4.7	7.0		3.6	10.0	5.6
StLaw	5.2	5.5	8.0	3.6		7.5	5.3
StLeo	12.0	9.5	12.0	10.0	7.5		5.6
StMark	6.6	4.4	6.4	5.6	5.3	5.6	

2. Once a cluster is created, it is the intent that it will not be broken up and re-clustered to accommodate further reduction of pastoral leaders.
3. Costs associated with campus maintenance have not been considered in clustering recommendations at this time.

Clustering Tracks

6 Pastoral Leaders (Current State)
Holy Cross/Our Mother of Sorrows St. Charles Borromeo St. John the Evangelist St. Lawrence St. Leo the Great St. Mark's

Our recommendation for the time when one of these Pastoral Leadership positions is open and the Bishop does not have a Pastor or Pastoral Administrator to assign:

5 Pastoral Leaders		
Possibility A	Possibility B	Possibility C
HC/OMOS St. Charles St. John St. Lawrence St. Leo/St. Mark's	HC/OMOS St. Charles St. John/St. Lawrence St. Leo the Great St. Mark's	HC/OMOS/St. Charles St. John the Evangelist St. Lawrence St. Leo the Great St. Mark's

- Possibility A: if the Pastoral Leadership of St. Leo the Great or St. Mark's is open.
- Possibility B: if the Pastoral Leadership of St. John the Evangelist or St. Lawrence is open.
- Possibility C: if the Pastoral Leadership of the Community of Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows or St. Charles Borromeo is open.

There would be too many possible further combinations to list if the number of Pastoral Leaders declines to four and then three Pastoral Leaders. However, any subsequent clustering would be determined by which parish's Pastoral Leadership position was open.

The preference of our Task Force would not be to move Pastoral Leaders from their current parish assignments within our area to other parishes within our area but to cluster based upon which Pastoral Leadership position was open.

If the number of Pastoral Leaders that the Bishop is able to assign here declines to two and then finally one Pastoral Leader, we could envision the following:

2 Pastoral Leaders
Holy Cross/Our Mother of Sorrows/St. Charles Borromeo St. John the Evangelist/St. Lawrence/St. Leo the Great/St. Mark's

1 Pastoral Leader
HC/OMOS/St. Charles/St. John/St. Lawrence/St. Leo/St. Mark's

Conclusion

We are concerned about the health and wellbeing of clergy even as the reality in our diocese is that priests are being asked to serve in parishes or parish clusters of increasing size. We recognize that the relationship of a Pastor/Pastoral Administrator and all priests to their parishioners is important. One of our concerns is the difficulty of pastoral leaders and priests to develop pastoral relationships with their parishioners in these large entities.

Task Force members also discussed practices that could lessen the burden on priests to maximize their available time to perform sacramental and other tasks that only they are capable or qualified to perform (e.g., celebrate Mass, Confession, Sacrament of the Sick) and/or share other tasks with ordained permanent deacons based on Canon Law. Administrative tasks, especially those requiring specific expertise (e.g. finance, facilities, human resources) can be shared with or delegated to staff. Parishioners can be encouraged and trained to take on more roles.

The Task Force recognizes that the Bishop may need to employ other options that are not presented in these recommendations or ones which the Task Force has not considered.

MEMBERS OF THE CHARLOTTE/GREECE/HILTON PASTORAL PLANNING TASK FORCE

The Community of Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows

- Fr. William G. Coffas, Pastor
- Fr. Justin D. Miller (2023-2024), Parochial Vicar
- Fr. Joseph J. Martuscello (2022-2023), Parochial Vicar

Holy Cross

- Joseph DiVincenzo
- Amy Mulcahy (2024)
- Ryan Snyder (2022-2023)

Our Mother of Sorrows

- Marc Boeh
- David Witkoski

St. Charles Borromeo

- Fr. John A. Firpo, Pastor
- Gina Reeder
- David Steklenski

St. John the Evangelist

- Fr. Peter Enyan-Boadu, Pastor
- Paul Parkman
- Nick Verdino

St. Lawrence

- Fr. Lee P. Chase, Pastor
- Steven Amico
- Jeri Rombaut

St. Leo the Great

- Fr. Joseph R. Catanise, Pastor
- David Jones
- Barbara Surash

St. Mark's

- Dcn. Frank A. Pettrone, Pastoral Administrator
- Peter Blind
- Kimm Wesley

Facilitator: Karen Rinefierd

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