

GATES-CHILI CATHOLIC PARISHES PASTORAL PLANNING UPDATE

June 2009 **draft 6-3-09**



The Gates-Chili Catholic Council is in the midst of developing a second 5-year pastoral plan as part of the second phase of Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium. The goal of the pastoral planning process, initiated by the Diocese of Rochester in 1997, is to ensure that parishes and faith communities throughout the Diocese sustain and/or increase their vitality in the face of challenges such as the declining number of priests, population shifts, and other economic factors. The Catholic Council encourages and coordinates the efforts of the five Catholic parishes of Gates-Chili (Holy Ghost, St. Helen, St. Jude the Apostle, St. Pius Tenth, and St. Theodore) to use their resources more effectively in carrying out the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus.

The Need For Change

As part of the second phase of Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium, our five parishes were notified by Bishop Clark in November 2004 that the number of priests available for ministry in our parishes would decline from five to four sometime between 2010 and 2015. More recently the Catholic Council asked him if we needed to be prepared for this decrease to happen in 2010. In part his response was as follows:

“Looking at the diocese as a whole, fifteen priests, twelve of them pastors, are eligible for retirement between 2010 and 2012, while we will have no ordinations. Therefore, I ask you to develop your pastoral plan, particularly its sections dealing with the utilization of priests and parish configuration, with the expectation that it will go into effect in June 2010.

“I extend my gratitude to you, the members of the Catholic Council, parish staff, and committee members for the way you have worked together collaboratively over the last several years in such areas as adult faith formation/spirituality, youth ministry, and social ministry. I look forward to reading your plans for building on these promising beginnings.”

Exploring Changes in Parish Structure

Over the past several months the Catholic Council explored possibilities for how our 5 parishes might be structured—in light of four priests ministering within them—to ensure that the fourfold mission of the church (Word, Worship, Community, and Service) continues in a healthy way. By May it became evident that some

form of clustering of parishes would be necessary. 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. Clustered parishes in our diocese over time generally work toward becoming a single parish, often with multiple worship sites. Currently the Catholic Council is evaluating a wide variety of possible cluster arrangements that would initially involve some of our parishes. With the continuing decrease in priests available for ministry and the experience of other parishes in our diocese, it is likely that eventually there may be no single parishes as we now know them. ***All five parishes will remain open under any of the parish configurations being considered.***

Principles Underlying any Changes to Parish Structure in the Gates-Chili Area

The Catholic Council adopted the following principles to guide its work:

- It is important that all five parishes continue to work together, build relationships with one another, and keep building an alliance.
- We need to foster present and future collaboration among all Catholics in the Gates-Chili area. Sharing resources is important for long-term planning and future potential changes.
- Any clustering plan must make it easier to share talents and resources for the greater good

of the faith.

- We are committed to increasing shared ministry in faith formation/youth ministry, social ministry, and adult faith formation.
- Clustering enables parishes to join forces and offer more programs to their members.
- The plan should make clear that our four priests serve the entire Gates-Chili community along with their assigned parishes.

Process and Timeline

June – Aug.	Catholic Council and Standing Committees draft a pastoral plan
September	Parish Pastoral Councils and Staffs meet with the Catholic Council to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the draft plan and suggest ways to improve it.
October	After revisions, parish town meetings are held so that parishioners can suggest ways to improve it
Nov. or Dec.	After revisions, Pastoral Councils meet to do any final revisions to the draft pastoral plan so that all 6 councils can affirm it
Dec. or Jan.	Final plan goes to Bishop Clark for his approval

Adult Faith Formation

Our five parishes have now successfully collaborated on three years of Lenten Retreats, the most recent one this past Lent presented by the Mercy Prayer Center. We have also shared and publicized Adult Faith Formation and Spirituality opportunities throughout the five parishes.

Future goals include:

- to embrace and support existing programs that are vibrant and successful
- to participate in diocesan-wide initiatives such as “Spirit Alive”
- to offer a broad range of programs that reach out to all levels of spiritual development.

Social Ministry

The Social Ministry Standing Committee has been coordinating a pilot project in which all five parishes participate and provide resources—“adopting” Bethany House and Hope Hall School. So far Bethany House

and Hope Hall have been provided with a volunteer base of over 140 people willing to assist in everything from tutoring to preparing meals to donating food to performing maintenance, and much more. We have learned that we can accomplish much by working together with pooled resources and diverse ideas.

Faith Formation and Youth Ministry

Efforts of the Standing Committee thus far have focused on creating more regional youth ministry events. Three “Junior High Fun Fests” began with Mass and concluded with an evening of “fun” for grades 5-8. Youth from the five parishes were invited to a Senior High retreat in January, and two parishes joined forces for a Lenten Way of the Cross. Looking ahead, youth from all parishes have been invited to join St. Pius X in the Monroe County Catholic softball league for both Junior High and Senior High. Holy Ghost is hosting a bonfire in August for all youth, and there are plans for future “Fun Fests” at both the Junior High and Senior High levels.

Your Prayers and Participation are Needed

The Catholic Council asks for your prayers for our five parishes and for the wisdom we all need to choose the best direction forward for our communities. Please read upcoming communications, direct your questions and comments to Catholic Council members, and plan to participate in one of the fall town meetings for parishioners.

Members of the Catholic Council

Holy Ghost

Fr. Thomas Nellis
Clayton Connolly
Mary Beth Strohm
Pat Waldmiller

St. Helen

Fr. Malachy Nwosu
Jim Allison
Cindy Hay
Ed Wurtz

St. Jude

Fr. Michael Schramel
Mary Ann Duffy
Gary Rigoni
Tom Uschold

St. Pius Tenth

Fr. Daniel Holland
Bill Rabjohn after 6/30
Sam Ognibene
Jack Quinn
Judy Shea

St. Theodore

Fr. Stephen Kraus
Connie Nye
Danny Phillips
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