

CORONATION DEANERY PASTORAL PLAN

I. PREFACE

Bishop Conlon has asked that each Deanery Pastoral Council in the Diocese of Steubenville present to him a recommendation regarding the best way to “structure the ministry, including personnel and facilities, to provide the best possible presence of the Church in the Coronation Deanery. This recommendation should include recommended changes in the future configuration of parishes in the Deanery.”

Coronation Deanery is located in the northwestern most part of the Diocese and is comprised of ten parishes and one mission in Carroll, Harrison and Jefferson counties. The parishes in the Deanery collaborate and share resources at varying levels. The Deanery representatives determined that, because of the geography and distance between parishes within the Deanery, it was best to divide the Deanery into three “sub-groups” based on geographic location. These three sub-groups consist of parishes in: 1) Carroll county, 2) Harrison county, and 3) the north-western part of Jefferson county. Each group prepared recommendations for their area of the Deanery for review by the entire Council. These recommendations were then combined into one document. The following reflects the discussion and recommendations of the Dean, Chair and members of the Coronation Deanery Pastoral Council.

II. PARISH CONFIGURATION

In discussing the possible closing or combining of parish facilities, five primary areas were considered: 1) the projected number of priests for our Deanery in 2010, 2) the well-being of the clergy that serve the Deanery, 3) the geography and demographics of each community, 4) the financial stability of each parish, 5) the physical plant of each parish.

1) **Projected Number of Priests in Coronation Deanery in 2010** – Six priests currently serve the ten parishes and one mission church of the Coronation Deanery. In 2010, using the “Formula for Distribution of Priests”, the diocese projects that six priests will continue to serve the parishes of the Deanery. Recognizing that there is no guarantee of the number of priests who will serve our parishes beyond 2010, we decided that a “business as usual” approach was not a wise course of action.

2) **Well - Being of the Clergy of Coronation Deanery** – Any discussion of how six priests can serve the parishioners of eleven different communities, must consider the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the priests who will serve. Without exception, the six priests currently serving in our Deanery made it clear that the majority of their parishioners are sensitive to the fact that they serve more than one parish community, and are appreciative, understanding and supportive. Most are generous in assisting the pastor with the daily needs of the parish. The people, in particular the parish council, of each parish not only work with the pastor to minimize the burden that comes with serving multiple parishes, but they also encourage the priests to take time for themselves in order to care for their continuing education as well as their spiritual, physical and emotional health. Each priest specifically indicated that, because of this support, the burden of serving multiple parishes is much less than he might otherwise expect and that he is willing, and indeed desires, to continue serving in whatever way will best serve the needs of the people.

3) **Geography and Demographics** – Each sub-group has geographic and demographic circumstances unique to their region.

Carroll County

The majority of the members of the Carroll County parishes works and conducts their daily business in nearby Canton and Alliance. The Diocese of Columbus borders Carroll County on the west and the Diocese of Youngstown borders it on the north. For many Catholics, after their home parish, the next closest parish is in one of these neighboring dioceses. The population of Carroll County is stable with a moderate influx of visitors/tourists in the summer months taking advantage of the local lake resort and camping opportunities.

The faithful of Carroll County gather in one of four parishes. St. Gabriel in Minerva and St. Francis Xavier in Malvern currently share one priest, while Our Lady of Mercy in Carrollton and St. Mary in Morges share another priest. Based on their experience serving in the county, both priests feel strongly that, because of

the rural nature of the area, two priests is the minimum number necessary to service the Catholic population in this area.

Harrison County

One priest serves in Harrison County. He is pastor of two parishes and one mission. The two parishes in Harrison County, St. Teresa in Cadiz and Sacred Heart in Hopedale, serve the Catholic population in the eastern part of the county. St. Matthias Mission serves the western part of the county. Given the proximity of Dennison (Columbus Diocese) to the Freeport area, it is presumed that some of the parishioners would join the parish in that city if St. Matthias were to close. If Sacred Heart in Hopedale were to close, some parishioners would opt to join the parishes in Wintersville or Richmond. The population of the county is relatively stable and is reflective of the aging population throughout much of the diocese. There are minimal opportunities for employment in the area. There have been attempts at attracting new industry and, at least for the present, these efforts have had little impact on the economy of the area. Despite these concerns, the Catholic population has remained stable. There have actually been more baptisms than funerals and the parishes are more than able to support themselves.

Jefferson County

Four parishes currently serve the western end of Jefferson County. A pastor and one parochial vicar serve Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes in Wintersville, while St. Joseph in Amsterdam and St. John Fisher in Richmond share a pastor. Amsterdam is bordered on the north by the Diocese of Youngstown and straddles the Carroll County line to the west. As is the case in Carroll and Harrison counties, for many in this area, the next closest parish is in another diocese. Catholics in this area are more likely to do business in the Canton area, than Steubenville. While St. John Fisher and St. Joseph serve more rural communities, Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes serve more of a suburban population.

In preparing this plan, it was consistently pointed out that the northwestern part of Jefferson County is one of the last areas of the county to be developed. The population in the area has been growing and many see hope for the continued future growth and stability of the population in this area. One point referenced in this regard is the fact that it is very difficult to buy land in the area because there has been much speculative purchase of land in anticipation of this projected population growth. At the same time, an increased Amish presence in the furthest corners of the county has driven up the price of land. While there is an abundance of land for development, much of the land is not easily accessible, increasing the travel time to even a close parish.

Evidence of a growing population, in this corner of the county can be seen in the growing number of new housing sites that have been developed in the past five years. In addition, the proposed development of an ethanol plant in Harrison County, the announcement by the Schiappa Trust to open for development nearly 5000 acres in the middle of the cluster of the four parishes with nearly 800 residential lots, and the planned completion of a four-lane expansion of the highway corridor between Cadiz and Uhrichsville, supports this projected growth.

4) **Financial Stability** – each parish is currently in a position to meet its financial obligations though there is variance in how this is accomplished.

Carroll County

St. Mary and Our Lady of Mercy share in the support of their pastor. In addition to the normal obligations of a parish, St. Mary is responsible for the care of a cemetery. While a cemetery fund is set up to cover unexpected expenses, an effort is currently in place to build up a large enough reserve to cover all maintenance costs of the church and grounds. They do not have any other cash reserve fund to cover emergencies or undertake any renovation projects, though they have a small stock fund for this purpose. Our Lady of Mercy has no major debts, and its reserve funds are sufficient to meet its expenses. They have a building fund established for the future development of new parish facilities, though they do not foresee being able to undertake any major building program in the near future.

St. Francis Xavier is close to eliminating a debt of over \$400,000 from their recent church renovation project, while St. Gabriel does not have any financial debt and has been able to make capital improvements to its existing facilities. Both parishes contribute to the support of their pastor and each is in a position to adequately maintain its building and grounds. In addition, each parish has reserve funds on hand to cover any unexpected emergencies, as well as additional funds for support of the less fortunate in the local community.

Harrison County

The three parishes in Harrison County each meet their monthly expenses and share in the costs associated with supporting a priest. None of the parishes has any debt, and each has a reserve fund for emergencies. All three parishes willingly work together in supporting the collaborative efforts in which they share. In addition, each parish is generous in its support of various local social programs.

Jefferson County

Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes each contribute to the cost of supporting two priests. Both are able to meet their financial commitments and have set up funds for future improvements. Neither parish has any debt and both have financial reserves for emergencies.

St. John Fisher and St. Joseph each meet their monthly financial obligations and share in cost of supporting a priest. St. John Fisher is in a position to take on any necessary capital improvements without incurring debt and has a sizeable building fund designated for the construction of a church hall. In addition, the parish does not have any debt, and has reserve funds on hand. St. Joseph meets its monthly expenses through a combination of regular weekly collections and revenue raised through rental of its convent and school building along with several seasonal fund-raisers. It also has reserve funds available for emergencies.

5) **Physical Plant** – Each parish has well-maintained facilities.

Carroll County

The facilities at St. Mary are sufficient to meet its current needs, and no addition or expansion is necessary. With the exception of grass cutting on the cemetery and parish grounds, volunteers perform general maintenance. Within the past five years, the church has been renovated, the roof resingled, and the furnace replaced. The hall is scheduled to be resingled this year.

Two years ago, Our Lady of Mercy conducted an extensive evaluation of its facilities. While there is need for a more adequate and larger worship space, state code prohibits the renovation and expansion of the current facility. In addition, they identified a lengthy list of structural problems and concerns. The rectory was recently given a facelift to improve its appearance. It too should be demolished and a new facility built in its place. The church hall, built within the past 20 years, is the only facility truly in condition for its intended use. A committee is presently undertaking a study of what options the parish has to best address the building and expansion needs it faces.

The church buildings at St. Francis Xavier and St. Gabriel are both in excellent condition. St. Francis Xavier has an active group of men who keep the facilities repaired and well maintained. It has a large social hall that is used by both parishes for large gatherings and is also available for use by the local Malvern community. The hall, though currently in good repair, due to age and condition, is likely to need to be replaced within the next ten years. Minerva has a small basement hall for small gatherings that meets its short-term needs. The parish communities will need to work together to find a solution for replacing the large hall that is most beneficial to the long-term needs of both parishes.

Harrison County

The three churches in Harrison County are all well maintained and structurally sound. St. Mathias and Sacred Heart have only a church building to care for while, in addition to its church building, St. Teresa also has a rectory and hall. All three parishes have adequate worship space and facilities for parish gatherings. Larger gatherings, that include members of all three parishes meet at St. Teresa. Regular maintenance is performed

through the volunteer efforts of parishioners. Parishioners have a good sense of ownership and responsibility regarding the parish plant.

Jefferson County

Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes are regularly maintained and in excellent condition and repair. The worship space at Our Lady of Lourdes is adequate to meet its current needs. In addition to its church building, Blessed Sacrament maintains a building used for the distribution center of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. It also has a social hall that is used by both parishes for meetings and social gatherings.

In addition to its church building, St. Joseph maintains a rectory, school building and convent. The church has a new roof, and the school roof was recently repaired. The convent was remodeled recently and is currently being rented as a residence. The upper floor of the school is currently vacant and the lower level houses the local food pantry that services the communities between St. Joseph and St. John Fisher. The lower level also serves as a hall for parish gatherings and is available to the local community, providing a source of revenue for the parish.

St. John Fisher church, rectory and grounds are well maintained and in excellent condition. Though the church building is in fine condition, many parishioners view it as a temporary setting. The original vision for the building was that it serve as a temporary church with the intent of constructing a church and converting the current facility into a hall once the size of the parish warranted this. The church and attached rectory were completely rebuilt fifteen years ago after severe damage from a fire.

The worship space is limited and many desire renovations to create an environment more conducive to prayer and worship. In addition, there are inadequate meeting facilities, especially for the growing needs of the Parish School of Religion. The church proper is regularly torn down and converted into a hall for social events. This constant changing of church to hall and back again is taking its toll on the chairs that are used as pews. In addition, the lack of space has not permitted the parish to move the parish office out of the rectory, thus limiting the amount of secretarial help available to the pastor. This is necessary to meet the diocesan requirement to have such help operate in an office that is not part of the pastor's living quarters.

The building of a parish hall has been proposed many times by parishioners and the parish council, but action was delayed until a needs evaluation could be done for purposes of this Deanery Pastoral Plan and until fund raising for the new cathedral was completed. The construction of a new building to meet the growing needs of the parish community is a primary need at this time.

PARISH CONFIGURATION RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful consideration, the Council recommends that no parish in our Deanery be closed at present. For the Jefferson County parishes in particular, we believe it would be premature to recommend the closing or merger of parishes until a clearer picture of the actual population growth in the area becomes evident. We also recommend that, because St. John Fisher and St. Joseph share a pastor and collaborate on a number of initiatives, we believe it is appropriate to designate them as clustered parishes as defined in the "Guidelines for Parish Configuration." At the same time, the Harrison County parishes, though collaborating in a similar way do not see an advantage to being clustered at this time.

In addition, we have identified a number of areas where greater collaboration needs to occur throughout the Deanery in preparation for possible mergers or closures after 2010. Our goal is to begin to prepare our parishioners for any future changes by creating opportunities for greater interaction with nearby parishes, and by intentionally increasing the sharing of existing resources. This increased interaction and sharing of resources will, ideally, increase our parishioners' familiarity with the priests and members of the neighboring parish communities, and will, hopefully, develop within each person a better understanding of the universality of the church.

III. STAFFING

The administrative needs of each parish are coordinated differently as described below. Proposed additional staffing is specific to the each sub-group.

Carroll County

A paid secretary works in the main parish office of St. Gabriel, while a part-time secretary works in the St. Francis Xavier parish office one day a week. In the near future, the plan is to conduct all business and pastoral appointments for both parishes at one central office at St. Gabriel.

The business of St. Mary and Our Lady of Mercy is conducted separately at each parish office. The conducting of business with one secretary located in the parish office of Our Lady of Mercy is under consideration as are a combined parish bulletin and newsletter. In addition, Our Lady of Mercy has a full-time paid Director of Religious Education

The four parishes in Carroll County are currently exploring the possibility of hiring a full-time Director of Youth Ministry who, ideally, would also assist with the Parish School of Religion and Adult Education. The Carroll County parishes are considering combining its resources with a fifth parish, St. James in Waynesburg in the Youngstown Diocese, in the hiring of this position.

Harrison County

The business of both Harrison County parishes and the mission church are coordinated through one central office located at St. Teresa. Church records for each are also maintained at this location, and one joint weekly bulletin is prepared for all parishes. Current staffing needs are sufficient for their needs and no new staff is necessary. Volunteers are generous in performing the duties not done by paid personnel, such as coordinating the Parish School of Religion.

Jefferson County

The parish offices of the two Wintersville parishes are centralized at Blessed Sacrament with two paid staff and one parish volunteer. All business is conducted through this office. There is no need foreseen to add any additional office staff in the near future.

All records of St. John Fisher and St. Joseph are maintained at St. John Fisher which also serves as the residence of the pastor and central office for the pastoral needs of both communities. A single weekend bulletin is prepared for both parishes.

Preliminary consideration has begun regarding the hiring and sharing of a Director of Youth Ministry/Religious Education between the four parishes.

IV. SHARED PROGRAMMING OF MINISTRY

Collaboration between parishes varies at present. Our goal is to increase this collaboration to better utilize existing resources. Each sub-group has identified areas that offer opportunity for greater sharing of ministry.

Carroll County

1) **Current Areas of Collaboration** – Currently the four parishes of Carroll County collaborate in the development and conducting of catechist training workshops, safe environment training, and other areas required by the diocesan Office of Christian Formation. Plans are in place to continue offering joint Liturgy Training Workshops for liturgical ministers, musicians and in areas of concern and need. This joint work will continue and the parishes will look to expand their offerings as the opportunities present themselves. In addition, St. Gabriel and St. Francis Xavier offer a growing number of joint social gatherings and collaborate in a joint committee on Justice and Social Concerns.

2) **Faith Formation** – In addition to efforts in encouraging parishioners to participate in special liturgical services offered at other parishes, St. Mary and Our Lady of Mercy see a need to focus on Adult Education. RCIA between the parishes is conducted jointly, and the combining of other sacramental preparation is being considered. While the number of school age children is decreasing, a need exists to coordinate the youth ministry efforts in both parishes. The hiring of a Youth Minister to service the four parishes of Carroll County and possibly a nearby parish in the Diocese of Youngstown is actively under consideration.

St. Gabriel and St. Francis Xavier is considering combining its Parish School of Religion programs, and developing a joint Education Committee to oversee the educational needs of both children and adults at both parishes. RCIA programming and most sacramental preparation is already conducted jointly. Adult education is also seen as an area where a collaborative effort would be of benefit.

3) **Parish Ministries** – The four parishes of Carroll County are working to establish a *Newsletter for the Catholic Parishes of Carroll County*. The goal is to provide a medium for communicating about educational, social and evangelization type activities at all four parishes. In addition, plans are under way to continue to develop an already existing Parish Nurse Program among the four parishes.

Harrison County

A collaborative effort between the three parishes of Harrison County has resulted in St. Teresa serving as the central location for joint liturgical and educational events. The RCIA program and Parish School of Religion is held at St. Teresa. A need to expand on the current adult formation program has been identified and additional programming is being considered.

Jefferson County

1) **Current Areas of Collaboration** – Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes currently share a combined RCIA program as do St. John Fisher and St. Joseph. The Wintersville parishes have been clustered for over a decade and have developed a number of joint programs and ministries over the years including a St. Vincent de Paul Distribution Center and a Parish Nurse Ministry Program. St. Joseph and St. John Fisher have only been collaborating for several years but have already developed a number of joint programs including an adult Bible study, the People of God program, and a Dead Theologian Society (DTS) chapter for youth who have been confirmed. The DTS has, at times, drawn youth from as far away as Hopedale. The People of God program has just concluded and follow-up options are being considered. In addition, without a coordinated youth ministry program, the attendance at DTS meetings has decreased and is currently being reevaluated.

2) **Faith Formation** – Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes offer separate Parish School of Religion programs. A joint program is being considered. St. Joseph and St. John Fisher also offer separate Parish Schools of Religion. While St. John Fisher has experienced a 72% increase in the number of school age children in the parish in the past five years, St. Joseph has experienced a decline. Preliminary consideration is being given to combining these programs.

3) **Ecumenism** – The Wintersville parishes host and continue to be the leading effort for the Wintersville Ministerium, the local group of pastors and parish/congregation representatives. Several ecumenical events are sponsored throughout the year. The pastor of St. Joseph and St. John Fisher is an active member of the local Ecumenical Council, and parishioners, mostly through the involvement of the CWC are regular participants in their quarterly events. St. Joseph parish recently took over the running of the area Food Pantry. This was a joint effort with St. John Fisher and other area churches after the closing of the two pantries that served the Amsterdam and Richmond areas.

Because of the resources available through the St. Vincent de Paul facility at Blessed Sacrament, plans are to explore areas for possible collaboration in service to the poor and to eliminate any duplication of efforts.

4) **Parish Ministries** – The Parish Nurse Ministry at the Wintersville Parishes was the first to be initiated in the Diocese of Steubenville. Over the past years this ministry has provided many opportunities for education and information in health care issues for the parishes and the local community. Ministry to the sick, shut-ins and those in health care facilities has been a priority for this ministry. Parish Nurse Ministry provides a ideal area for collaboration with St. Joseph and St. John Fisher. These parishes do not have such a ministry and there is a desire to see this ministry expanded to include parishioners in all four parishes. Preliminary discussions at the Deanery level offer exciting possibilities.

V. VOCATIONS

All parishes in the deanery are keenly aware of the need to pray for and promote the call to ordained, vowed and lay ministry. Parishioners, through the efforts of the Deanery Pastoral Council, are encouraged to pray daily for the priests in the deanery and diocese and for vocations. Specific parish initiatives include: 1) Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes make it a focus of prayer during their monthly day of Eucharistic Exposition and Adoration. 2) Each year, Blessed Sacrament has participated in the seminary summer placement program. 3) Annually, the Parish School of Religion at St. John Fisher invites a group of religious to speak to the parish youth immediately following Sunday Mass, and pre-Theology students participate as leaders of the Dead Theologian Society. These same students are encouraged to help at parish services as well. 4) Multiple showings of the NCCB vocations video *Fishers of Men* have drawn large crowds at St. John Fisher and St. Joseph.

VI. LITURGY AND WORSHIP

Central to the life of any parish is its celebration of the Liturgy. All its service and ministry flow from it as the “source and summit of the whole Christian life” (Lumen Gentium #11). Each parish is blessed with many volunteers to serve in the various liturgical ministries, with Blessed Sacrament employing a Coordinator of Liturgy and Director of Music Ministry.

Carroll County

Presently, five Masses are offered each weekend at St. Mary and Our Lady of Mercy: two on Saturday (one at each parish) and two on Sundays at Our Lady of Mercy and one at St. Mary. Changes being considered are: 1) the elimination of the Saturday evening Mass at St. Mary, and 2) the elimination of the early morning Mass at Our Lady of Mercy from early fall through late spring. This Mass would only be celebrated during the summer months when visitors to the nearby lakes increase attendance beyond the current capacity. Should a larger church be built (as a result of the review currently being done), three Masses are envisioned, one on Saturday at Our Lady of Mercy, and one each on Sunday at Our Lady of Mercy and St. Mary. In addition to Sunday Mass, a weekday Mass is scheduled at either place Monday through Thursday.

Four Masses are offered each weekend at St. Francis Xavier and St. Gabriel: one at each location on Saturday evening and one at each location on Sunday. With Mass attendance at its current levels, no change in this schedule is anticipated. One weekday Mass is offered at each church on a rotating basis four days a week.

Harrison County

Four Masses are offered each weekend in Harrison county: two on Saturday, one at St. Mathias and one at St. Teresa, and two on Sunday, one at St. Teresa and one at Sacred Heart. At present, no change in this scheduled is anticipated. A daily mass is offered five mornings a week at St. Teresa.

Jefferson County

Five Masses are offered each weekend at the two parishes in Wintersville: one at each location on Saturday, and two on Sunday at Blessed Sacrament and one at Our Lady of Lourdes. Daily Mass is offered Monday through Saturday mornings at Blessed Sacrament and Monday through Friday mornings at Our Lady of Lourdes.

Four Masses are offered each weekend at St. John Fisher and St. Joseph: one at each church on Saturday and one at each church on Sunday. With attendance at its current level, no change to this schedule is anticipated, though a decline in attendance at St. Joseph could lead to elimination of the Saturday Mass at this location. Through the generous assistance of the retired pastor of St. John Fisher, seven weekday Masses are able to be offered, five days a week at St. John Fisher and two days a week at St. Joseph.

VII. TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION (Completion dates are subject to change)

Carroll County

- 1) Completion of Our Lady of Mercy building/expansion study (within 1 year).
- 2) Decision regarding or development of a plan for hall replacement at St. Francis Xavier (upon retirement of debt).
- 3) Hiring of a Director of Youth Ministry for Carroll County parishes (within 1 year).
- 4) Decision regarding the combining of Parish Schools of Religion at St. Gabriel and St. Francis Xavier (fall 2008 for high school age).
- 5) Establishment of combined newsletter for Carroll County parishes (within one year).
- 6) Mass changes at St. Mary and Our Lady of Mercy (2007).

Harrison County

- 1) Development of a plan for adult education (on-going).

Jefferson County

- 1) Monitor anticipated population shifts in the area (on-going).
- 2) Development of a plan for construction of facility at St. John Fisher that considers a possible shift in the population center in the area (within 5 years).
- 3) Evaluation of need for Director of Youth Ministry/Religious Education for the four Jefferson County parishes (within two years).
- 4) Evaluation of Dead Theologian Society and People of God follow up programs (fall 2007).
- 5) Decision regarding or development of a plan to combine Parish Schools of Religion at Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes (within two years).
- 6) Development of a plan to combine Parish Schools of Religion at St. John Fisher and St. Joseph (within 2 years).
- 7) Collaboration on food pantries between Jefferson County parishes (within 1 year).
- 8) Expansion of Parish Nurse Ministry to all Jefferson County parishes (within 1 year).

VIII. CONCLUSION

The population of Carroll and Harrison Counties is stable, while that of northwestern Jefferson County is growing. The parishes of Carroll and Harrison Counties and Amsterdam must consider the impact the proximity of parishes in other diocese when making decisions regarding the future of its own parishes. Service to the poor in the area is a hallmark of all Deanery parishes. With the evident signs of population growth looming in Jefferson County, parishioners must take a more active role in collaborating with the surrounding parishes to assure that a vibrant Catholic presence is available to the new residents. At present, if, when and where any such population growth will occur remains a question. Questions of moving location or merging with area parishes are premature.

At the same time, though Coronation Deanery is not projected to see a reduction in priests before 2010, we must begin now to prepare for such a possibility. As parishes, we must be prepared to accommodate a shift in the location of the population we serve. By collaborating with each other, should the need in the not so distant future for a merging or a move of the location of any of our churches become evident, parishioners will be better prepared for this change.

What, if any, recommendations are not in conformity with the Parish Configuration Guidelines? Please explain.

Other than not being at the ideal for Standard #1, we are in conformity with all other Standards. Section II: Parish Configuration, addresses our Deaneries assessment of our ability to reach the ideal in Standard #1 and our preparation for the future in this regard.