

# Church of Saint Ann

## Pastoral Planning Process Statement to Parishioners

### Weekend Masses May 24-25, 2008



Over the past two months, St. Ann's Core Committee has been meeting with the other parishes in our Cluster Group - St. Mary of the Mount (Mt Pocono) and St. Bernadette (Canadensis) to engage in joint planning that involves reviewing our respective parish assessments, with the objective of identifying an appropriate parish restructuring model that will better serve our congregations in the future. This process is necessary for two primary reasons:

- The current shortage of priests available to serve in residence at parishes within our Diocese and the projected further dramatic decline in the number of priests that will be available to serve our parishes in the immediate and mid term future, and
- Financial stress resulting from the effect of urban population shifts and the overall diminishing number of Catholics that are active in the faith and supporting their parishes.

During the Parish Cluster meetings, the three Parish Core Committees evaluated our collective parish resources in relationship to its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that affect our vitality. Through this exercise, the expectation is to reveal opportunities by which parishes could:

1. Share more resources with each other and with parishes in need;
2. Avoid unneeded duplication of services; and
3. Fill in the gaps where service and ministry have not been available.

Every parish of the Diocese is participating in this Diocesan Pastoral Planning process, and through this exercise, four possible restructuring models are to be considered:

1. **Consolidation** – A parish may discover that the mission of the parish is compromised by being too small, or that with its limited resources, cannot accomplish its mission. Such a parish would consolidate with another parish and *become a new canonical parish with one pastor.*
2. **Linked** – Other parishes may come to the awareness of the advantage of being linked with another parish, *sharing a common pastor* and resources.

3. **Partnership** – By which parishes will come to see the advantages of entering into partnership with another parish, *each having their own proper pastor*, but now sharing resources and working together.
4. **To Pastor in Solidum** – Other parishes may find it appropriate to be served by a team of *two or more priests* working closely with Deacons and lay people, *servicing three or more parishes*.

Our Cluster Parish Core Teams conducted an evaluation of the three parishes based on five categories of Criteria for Planning:

1. Eucharist, Prayer and Communion;
2. Evangelization, Education and Formation;
3. Vocation;
4. Stewardship and Social Justice; and
5. Stewardship and Administration

During the course of these meetings, several areas of ministry were identified for collaboration, generally falling into two types:

- Activities that one of our Parishes already excels at and could share with the other parishes, and
- New initiatives that we all desired as revealed in our parish self-evaluations, but do not have a sufficient number of volunteers, participants or resources as a single Parish to implement. Examples that the Cluster Core Group discussed include: CCD, RCIA, adult catechesis, integrated ministerial and social events with the Latino community, post confirmation programs for teens, activities for young adults, pastoral outreach to the elderly, homebound and marginalized, bereavement support groups, a combined cluster retreat for our Parish Councils and Finance Committees, and a much greater emphasis on family events and activities

Also discussed was the possibility of sharing some administrative functions and building a common regional Cluster (Parish) Community Center which we would all support and utilize for joint activities.

As to which organizational alternative will best serve our Parish Cluster? At this time, the Partnership Model is receiving the most attention within the Parish Cluster Group. There are still very important issues that are to be further discussed regarding financial matters and, the realities of parish base population support, in light of the number of available priests and demographic trend information provided by the Diocese.

The Cluster's reorganization recommendation will be submitted to the Diocese during the second week of June and will ultimately be evaluated by the Diocesan Planning Committee over the coming months.

Review and follow-up communications by the Diocese will occur through this Summer and Fall, with final decisions to be made effecting all parish clusters by this coming January. Implementation is scheduled for July 2009, just over one year away.

Before this recommendation is submitted, each of our parishes is requesting feedback from their respective congregations. **St Ann's Parish is conducting a Town Hall Meeting for this purpose next Saturday, May 31<sup>st</sup> at 10:00am at the Parish Hall.** This will be an opportunity to engage in discussion about these matters with the Core Committee and Parish Council members, and to offer your comments.

As was stated earlier in the year, throughout this process, please keep in mind that it is crucial that we all continue to support St Ann's Parish, through regular Mass attendance, participation in parish ministry, parish social and funding raising events, and weekly stewardship support.

As demonstrated at last month's Town Hall Meeting, many of us hold St. Ann's Parish near and dear to our hearts. We are rich in human, cultural and spiritual resources, and although we are not currently running at our full potential, all three parishes believe that through this process, we can all emerge in a position in which we can more fully serve God and our parish communities.

We will keep you all fully informed as we further progress through this process, and please continue to keep the Core Committees and this parish in your prayers.