

Faithful Chronicles

By Father Frank D. Almada

September 17, 2017 Bulletin

It's been a while since I mentioned where we are in the On Mission for the Church Alive! Process. Let me bring you up to date.

We are currently in the "consultation phase." This period has included the annual fall meetings with the priests and deacons of the four vicariates, discussions with the On Mission Commission, diocesan Pastoral Council and Priest Council, and other diocesan staff. All priests and deacons are being individually interviewed over the next two months by members of the Clergy Personnel Board. These interviews will help the bishop make decisions as to where priests and deacons are assigned, and in what role (pastor, parochial vicar, health chaplain or special ministry) their gifts and talents best suit them. In addition, there is a Blueprints Committee preparing practical recommendations for the new pastors next year. I serve on this committee, along with six other veteran pastors. We have had three meetings so far, with more to come.

This consultation phase extends from now until April 2018. Last week Bishop Zubik shared the latest versions of the 50 "parish groupings" of parishes. These are not final, but rather are the On Mission Commission's best recommendations.

Sometime after Easter Sunday, in April 2018, we will move to the "transition phase." Bishop Zubik will announce the clergy assignments for all parish groupings, the number of Masses for each parish grouping, and the blueprints to help the clergy in this transition. During this transition phase the incoming new pastor will work with parishioners through consultation to put together a new schedule of Sunday and weekday Masses. (In most cases the number of Masses on Saturday night/Sunday will be three times the number of assigned priests. Canon law limits the number of Masses a priest can say usually on Sunday to three.) This will be a time of building relationships among the clergy, the parish staff and all parishioners.

The "implementation phase" will begin sometime in September 2018. At this time the new clergy teams, parish staff and the new Mass schedules will begin. The new pastor will form a parish pastoral council and parish finance council, and will begin consultation to bring together all the parishes in the grouping into one. This process could take anywhere from three to 12 months. The parish grouping will also recommend three names for the new parish. After diocesan consultation, Bishop Zubik will announce the formation of the new parish, its new name, and the beginning date.

It is only at this point that the new parishes will begin to look at how many church buildings and campuses are needed for efficient and effective ministry. Each new parish will publicly have a significant and thorough analysis of facts and needs. This will include listening to the opinions of parishioners. When a consensus about which churches to keep open and which to close is reached, these recommendations will be sent to Bishop Zubik for discussion, consultation, and ultimately a decision.

It is important to emphasize that no church buildings will close at the beginning of the transition phase (April 2018) or the implementation phase (September 2018). The process of discussion and consultation on a local level regarding churches could take one, or two or more years. Therefore, any closing of church buildings will most probably not take place until 2019, or 2020 or later.

The proposed "parish grouping" for Lawrence County is that the seven parishes (Christ the King; Mary, Mother of Hope; St. Camillus; St. James the Apostle; St. Joseph the Worker; St. Vincent de Paul; St. Vitus) would come together and form one parish. Four priests and two deacons would be assigned to this one parish. (By 2025 the number of priests serving Lawrence County will probably drop to two.) Our parishes have been working together on many projects and ministries, and, I believe, are ready to accept this parish grouping from the bishop. But, I repeat, this is a proposal, and not final until announced by the bishop in April 2018.

I hope this timeline is helpful. If you have any questions, please give me a call (724-652-3422) or email (falmade@diopitt.org), or speak with one of the On Mission Leadership Team members listed on Page 6 (*listed below*). And continue to pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance as the Diocese of Pittsburgh moves forward On Mission for the Church Alive!

Note: Team Leadership from Page 6 of the Bulletin

On Mission Parish Leadership Teams

Mary, Mother of Hope: Amy Chornenky, Joe Colia, Peggy Gettings, Paul Latsko, Geoff Measel, Mike Occhibone

St. Joseph the Worker: Carol Bartley, Jodi Cepro, Dr. Phyllis Genareo, Thomas McCosby, Luann Parkonen, Debbie Thomas

St. Vincent de Paul: Thomas Carangi, Russ Carley, Joseph Gaus, Kristen Lalama, Patty Lepore, Barbara Ruozzo

St. Vitus: Audrey Amodie, Pam Croach, Anthony “Bo” DeCarbo, LeeAnn Fulena, Sharon Marshall, Dr. Joe Ross