

Bishop Matthew Clark  
Diocese of Rochester  
1150 Buffalo Road  
Rochester, New York 14624

February 28, 2007

Dear Bishop Clark,

The Rush-Henrietta Pastoral Planning Group comprised of members and staff of Good Shepherd, Guardian Angels and Saint Joseph's parishes, thank you for the opportunity to plan for the future of our parishes in creative and prophetic ways.

We've come together as a planning team at a time where our Diocese and the Catholic Church is going through dramatic changes driven by the rapidly decreasing numbers of priests able to minister, the modest number currently being ordained and the steady growth in numbers of a more diverse faith community looking to be ministered. In spite of the difficult circumstances out of our control facing our parishes, I am happy to inform you that as a planning group we've embraced the challenges ahead and are making plans enthusiastically for the future. Following your direction, we've addressed our pastoral plan aimed at defining our structure over the next five years, in a way that allows us to grow toward our preferred ten-year configuration and focus on sustaining and increasing the vitality of the three Rush-Henrietta parishes and faith communities. Our planning process has been demanding, lengthy and sometimes painful. However, it has served our communities to better understand one another, appreciate the differences and similarities that define us and the opportunities we have of using the multiple gifts we possess as a united faith community.

Our work began in January of 2004, with a meeting of Parish Council and Staff members of all three parishes. At this meeting we explored how to approach our plan using the Appreciative Inquiry Process which proved to be a very positive experience for all. In the spring of 2004 we moved forward with our pastoral planning using a ministry-based approach, and by fall, our Ministry Committee began work, creating a survey aimed at assessing the ministry priorities and interests of each of our parishes. We also updated and shared with each other our parish missions, vision and value statements along with summaries of each of our parish ministries. In the spring of 2005, parish wide surveys and open forums at each of our parishes were conducted. This served to focus on specific questions and receive input directly from parishioners on their priorities and what they truly value and hold important when it comes to their parish. Results were compiled and used to guide our priorities when developing our ministry based pastoral plan.

We began our configuration study in the summer of 2005 and explored several options with the objective of selecting a structure that would best serve the needs and priorities of all three parishes. This phase of our planning process was the most difficult and

lengthy requiring much patience and frequent prayers to the Lord for guidance and flexibility. Through this important phase we made effective use of consensus building and followed a disciplined process that at times revisited covered territory, and helped all of us build trust and understanding of each other and clarify the implications of each possible configuration. Final consensus on the targeted configuration was reached in December 2006, including a process and time-line to be followed that will enable our gradual transition toward the new structure and a final decision on implementation. Presentations to our Parish Councils and open forums with parishioners at each site have been conducted over the past several weeks, where details of our Pastoral Plan were reviewed and additional input on the plan was received from our congregations.

Having incorporated the final changes into the plan and received approval from our Parish Councils and faith communities, we submit the attached Pastoral Plan for your review and approval. It is our belief that our plan supports the sacramental needs of our parishioners over the planned time-line, provides for sustaining and increasing the vitality of the three Rush-Henrietta parishes and is flexible enough to allow for change as we go forward in time. We respectfully look forward to your feedback and your blessings.

Respectfully yours,

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