



July 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and are writing to you today about the Vision 2016 Pastoral Planning process that you have been helping to facilitate in your communities. ***Thank you and God bless you*** for generously giving of your time, faith, and leadership during this process. We know that you had already committed a significant amount of volunteer time to your parishes prior to Vision 2016, and that this process is an additional gift of time, talent, and energy to your faith community. We also are mindful that many of you are doing this as you grieve the changes affecting your parishes and your communities.

Now that the first round of cluster meetings is complete and we are halfway through the calendar year, the Diocesan Pastoral Planning Team has reflected on the planning to date and the questions we have received. Attached to this letter is an update on Vision 2016, with changes to the initial recommendations shared in February of this year, a list of frequently asked questions and their corresponding answers, and next steps.

As a reminder, between now and February of 2016, ***ALL*** parishes or parish clusters across our Diocese are being asked to complete a Parish or Cluster Pastoral Plan and submit it to the Diocese for consideration. As has been stated since early in this process, some of our parishes and clusters are undergoing significant changes, including mergers and moving to oratory status. Parishes facing significant changes are being provided with extra planning and facilitation support, but all other parishes or clusters are also expected to complete a Pastoral Plan using the documents provided through the Vision 2016 process, which can be found on the Diocese of Winona website at www.dow.org/vision2016.

Please take the time to carefully review and reflect upon the attached information. We hope it will help to clarify where we are at in the Vision 2016 process, and how all parishes are asked to move forward at this time. As we continue on this journey together, please know that we are praying for all in the Diocese affected by the impending changes. We offer the following prayer as our planning continues:

Bestow an increase of heavenly grace on your faithful, O Lord; grant them the abundance of your mercies and, progressing in the Christian life, may they delight in good things both now and in the time to come; grant them wisdom in planning for the future and under the protection of Blessed Mary, our Mother, may they always be faithful in spreading the joy of the Gospel in our parishes, Diocese, and world; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sincerely in Christ,


Most Rev. John M. Quinn
Bishop of Winona


Rev. Msgr. Richard M. Colletti
Vicar General/Chancellor

Diocese of Winona Vision 2016

Summer 2015 Update

Adjustments to the Recommendations Published in the February 2015 *Courier*

Throughout the first round of facilitated cluster meetings with parishes experiencing significant change, parish leaders asked a number of questions and offered some suggestions to amend the proposed plan. After careful consideration of the suggestions and their feasibility, the following cluster adjustments have been approved by Bishop Quinn:

- Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Canton will join the cluster of St. Mary in Caledonia and St. Olaf in Mabel.
- St. Mary in Ellsworth will join the cluster of St. Catherine in Luverne, St. Leo in Pipestone, St. Joseph in Jasper, and St. Martin in Woodstock.
- Holy Family in Lake Crystal will remain clustered with St. Joseph the Worker in Mankato instead of clustering with Ss. Peter and Paul in Mankato.
- St. Thomas More Student Parish in Mankato (formerly the St. Thomas More Newman Center) will join the cluster of St. Theresa in Mapleton, St. Joseph in Good Thunder, and St. Matthew in Vernon Center.

While many parishes have expressed a desire for their churches to be removed from recommended oratory status, no feasible alternative has been offered to address the existing conditions and challenges that prompted the recommendations: a shortage of priests to serve our Diocesan parishes and a small and decreasing number of people attending Mass in rural areas. As a result, no parish has been removed from recommended oratory status.

Accordingly, all parishes recommended for oratory status should plan to complete a parish history and inventory of sacred and secular goods. In addition, cluster leadership teams may include in the Cluster Pastoral Plan alternative ways in which to use the oratories. As *places of prayer*, oratories may remain open for Catholic weddings, funerals, local prayer during the week, and an occasional Mass on a weekday or holy day. Cluster leadership teams will have the opportunity to develop their plans in meetings this fall and winter.

Vision 2016: Next Steps

As previously mentioned, **ALL** parishes in the Diocese are expected to complete a Vision 2016 Parish or Cluster Pastoral Plan by February 2016 using the Vision 2016 Guidebook and other tools which are posted on the Diocese of Winona website: www.dow.org/vision2016. For those clusters and parishes facing significant changes, three more facilitated cluster meetings will be held between August and January, to assist them in developing their Pastoral Plans.

The first facilitated meetings held this past spring and early summer allowed parish leaders to learn about each others' parishes, communities, and people, as well as to begin outlining the strengths each parish brings to its cluster and the hopes they have for the future. The first meetings also provided an opportunity to share concerns and fears, which often included questions. The second round of facilitated meetings will address liturgy schedules and check in with clusters on the status and development of church inventories. Then later this fall, the teams will begin to work on their Cluster Pastoral Plan measures and goals as described in the Vision 2016 Guidebook.

The Office of the Vicar General will continue to coordinate the planning process. Questions about Vision 2016 should be directed to Msgr. Colletti or his assistant Leandra Hubka at 507-858-1267.

Diocese of Winona Vision 2016
Summer 2015 Update: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Are all parishes across the Diocese expected to complete a pastoral plan?

A: Yes. All parishes or parish clusters are expected to develop a Parish or Cluster Pastoral Plan by February of 2016 and submit it to Bishop Quinn for review and consideration.

Q: For parish clusters, does each parish in the cluster make its own pastoral plan, or should there be one combined pastoral plan for the entire cluster?

A: Parishes in a cluster should create one Cluster Pastoral Plan for the entire cluster, which will incorporate goals for all parishes within the cluster. Under the leadership of the Pastor, parish leaders from each parish will work together to develop a pastoral plan that spells out how the cluster as a whole intends to become a more vibrant and faith-filled parish cluster.

Q: Does our parish need to inventory sacred and secular goods?

A: All 21 parishes recommended for oratory status need to compile a parish history (format of their choosing) and create an inventory of both sacred and secular goods. While it is advisable for all parishes to have an inventory of goods on hand, it is not required as part of the Vision 2016 process. Likewise, while some parishes not recommended for oratory status may want to put together a parish history, it is not necessary at this time.

Q: Who pays for ongoing maintenance of an oratory?

A: The pastor of the parish to which the oratory is merged administrates the oratory and any associated cemeteries. The receiving parish is legally and financially responsible for the oratory and will have a separate fund set aside to maintain the oratory. For more details on financing of oratories, please see the document "Guidelines for the Administration and Physical Care of Oratories," which is posted on the Diocesan Pastoral Planning Website: www.dow.org/vision2016.

Q: Who is responsible for the upkeep of an oratory?

A: Those who were members of the oratory when it was a parish will, in collaboration with the Pastor of the receiving parish, assume responsibility for sustaining the oratory building in addition to supporting their new parish community. For more details on the administration of oratories, please see the document "Guidelines for the Administration and Physical Care of Oratories," which is posted on the Diocesan Pastoral Planning Website: www.dow.org/vision2016.

Q: If we don't have Sunday Masses at the oratory, for what can we use the building?

A: As places of prayer, oratories may remain open for Catholic weddings, funerals, local prayer during the week, and an occasional Mass on a weekday or holy day. Parish clusters are encouraged to identify specific ways in which they would like to use the oratory, and list these in the Cluster Pastoral Plan that is presented to Bishop Quinn in February 2016. Other than weddings and funerals, other specific ideas are weekly/monthly holy hours for vocations, protection of life, or religious freedom; Mass on the oratory's feast day; and special prayer services for different seasons of the calendar and/or Liturgical year.

Q: What happens if it is no longer feasible to maintain an oratory?

A: If there are no longer resources or interest to continue maintaining an oratory, the building is either to be razed, or the parish responsible for the oratory may propose alternate options for the Bishop's consideration.

Q: Can our parish or cluster have 4 Masses per weekend if our pastor is willing?

A: In developing their Parish or Cluster Pastoral Plans, all parishes and parish clusters in the Diocese are required to review their Mass schedules and make adjustments so that the norm of 3 weekend Masses per priest is followed. With weddings and funerals often scheduled on weekends, priests are frequently overloaded with the number of Masses they are expected to celebrate each weekend. Having 3 weekend Masses per priest aims to help achieve Vision 2016's goal of healthy, happy, and holy priests and deacons. Exceptions to this rule are only granted if there are extenuating circumstances determined by the pastor in consultation with the Vicar General.

Q: We believe our parish/cluster sacramental data may be different than what was in the report we received. If we were to offer new data, might this change our recommended status?

A: Oratory status applies to parishes with fewer than (about) 70 households or people at Mass, and fewer than (about) 50 sacramental activities in a 4-year period. Although alternate data has been offered by some parishes with the suggestion that the data will change their status, the analysis shows that the differences do not improve the overall sustainability of the parishes and, as a result, do not alter any of the Vision 2016 recommendations regarding oratory status. The parishes recommended for oratory status are still expected to merge with larger communities where Sunday Mass will be offered.

Q: What if my family prefers to attend a Catholic parish other than the one recommended as part of Vision 2016?

A: The parish and cluster boundaries are based on geography and drive time and do not commit any parishioner to a specific parish. Members of any parish are free to join and attend Mass at the Catholic parish of their choosing.

Q: Are the recommendations from Bishop Quinn in Vision 2016 the final plan?

A: No. As stated from the beginning, the final determination regarding the status of all parishes in the Diocese will be made by Bishop Quinn after Parish and Cluster Pastoral Plans have been submitted to him in February 2016. However, if there are any changes to the Recommended Plan, these must be within the following parameters:

- Suggested improvements must enhance the plan for the entire Diocese as well as the parish or cluster in question, with a clear eye to local parish and demographic trends, and available clergy.
- Parish or Cluster Pastoral Plans cannot plan for more than 3 weekend liturgies per priest, excluding weddings or funerals, unless there are extenuating circumstances determined by the pastor in consultation with the Vicar General.
- Parish pastors and leaders cannot choose to refuse to develop a Parish or Cluster Pastoral Plan, or ignore certain or whole elements of Vision 2016.
- Parish and Cluster Pastoral Plans cannot violate Canon law, Diocesan policy, civil law, or binding agreements. For example, a parish cannot recruit and hire its own priest or hire a lay administrator in lieu of a pastor.

Q: What is the difference between a parish merger and a parish becoming an oratory?

A: A parish merger occurs when one parish legally ceases to be an independent parish and its territory, including church buildings and cemetery, is subsumed by the designated receiving parish. A church building will be designated as an oratory only when it ceases to have weekly Sunday Mass.

Q: Once the Bishop finalizes Vision 2016, will all changes occur simultaneously?

A: Once all parish and cluster plans submitted to the Bishop have been received, finalized, and approved, we expect all parish *mergers* to occur in July of 2016. Depending on specific considerations within a given cluster, such as priest availability/health and preferences of the cluster leadership, some parishes will convert to oratory status earlier than others, but no earlier than July 2016. The timing will be coordinated with the Office of Vicar General/Chancellor as the Director of Vision 2016 Pastoral Planning.

Q: Are parishes allowed to move to oratory status before July 2016?

A: There is much work to be done for parishes moving to oratory status, and one year is already a tight timeline. Thus, all parish mergers will take place in summer of 2016. However, any parish that would prefer to close its church building altogether, rather than have it remain open as an oratory, is free to propose that in the Cluster Pastoral Plan, as long as the full cluster leadership, including the local pastor, is in agreement.

Q: Are the changes in Vision 2016 the ONLY changes we can expect in our Diocese for the foreseeable future?

A: Unfortunately, no. We cannot state that additional changes to parishes and clusters in the Diocese of Winona in the coming years are unlikely. This is due in large part to the unpredictability of the availability of priests in our Diocese. With many aging pastors, we are mindful of their health and the impact changes in their health may have on their ability to serve their local church communities and on their retirement timeline. It is with this in mind that we will be providing guidance to specific parish clusters in order to give them as much flexibility as possible for planning while also asking them to make alternate plans in the event their pastor or supplemental priest is no longer able to support their parish(es). It also means that clusters across the Diocese could face planning adjustments should more priests than expected retire in the coming two to five years.