**All Things New Diocesan Planning Update**

Dear Friends,

Jesus says,  “I am the resurrection and the life.  Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”  Jesus reminds us that the cross and death to sin and our old ways is the path to resurrection and eternal life.  When we believe, Christ brings new life from death and suffering.

The All Things New St. Cloud diocese planning process aims at focusing our churches more on mission than maintenance.  By combining, working together and downsizing, parishes are able to focus more time, energy, people and funds on the mission of prayer, evangelization, vocations and the salvation of souls; the essential reasons that our parishes were built and exist.

**Why are we doing this?**

In the document called “Guiding Change” inserted in our bulletin months ago (also on the diocese website) it lists the reasons why the restructuring is taking place.  A few of those are:  The ratio of parishes to priests in our diocese is higher than twice the national average.  The average attendance at weekend Masses is less than 40% capacity of each church.  Since 2010 the average Mass attendance is down 33%, marriages 46%, and baptisms 44%.  Four out of five parishes in our diocese are unable to meet ministry and operating budgets through regular envelope and plate giving.

**What are we being asked to do?**

The parameters of the diocese plan were given to all the ACCs, in which provide the guidelines that must be met with our plan by the conclusion of this year.  The parameters are as follows:

**Accessibility to Sunday Mass** (includes Saturday evening vigil) (P. 10)

• 80% of the faithful must have access to a Sunday Mass within a 20-minute drive.

• No rotation of Mass schedules between churches.

**Budgeted Ministries** (P. 10/11)

• One administrative office per ACC if under 3000 households.

o ACC Business Administrator (Paid).

• Liturgical Ministries.

• Formation Ministries: Children - Youth – Adult.

o Catholic schools included.

• Hispanic ministries with 10% of the total census population.

• Pastoral Care.

• Social Outreach.

**Pastors/Priests** (P. 12)

• Limit of three Sunday Masses per weekend/priest not including weddings/funerals.

o Mass schedule must be able to be accommodated by assigned priests to ACC.

• Pastors will spend at least 50% of their time in pastoral ministry.

• Desire to live in community within ACC will be considered.

**Buildings** (P. 12/13)

• Overall facility usage must average 50% occupancy or higher for all weekend liturgies in the ACC.

• Buildings must be physically accessible, hospitable and safe.

o Restrooms in church building.

o Church building is either one level or has access to an existing elevator.

• ACC plan must specify how empty buildings will be repurposed or relegated for secular but not unbecoming use ideally within five years.

**Governance** (P. 13)

• Reduce the number of parish corporations.

• Potential Worship Sites – Primary Church, Partner Church.

**Finances** (P. 14)

• Each finance council will approve an attainable and reasonable annual balanced budget.

• Parish investment in Catholic school may not exceed 40% of plate/envelope within five years.

• Routine building operations may not exceed 25% of plate/envelope. 

On August 14th the Eastern Deanery of our diocese had a meeting for the ACCs in the deanery regarding the next steps of the planning process.  Bishop Patrick has assembled a committee to review proposals of plans made by each ACC that follows the diocesan directives given.  The plans must be submitted by the end of 2025.  The Father Francis Xavier Pierz planning committee met on August 21st and prayerfully and honestly discussed in good depth the options for the best plan for the future of our ACC which aligns with the parameters of the St. Cloud Diocese.

Our ACC committee has decided to submit two separate plans to the diocese planning committee in which one of the two will be approved.  The proposals are as follows:  One plan is to merge four parishes into one single corporation with three church buildings.  The other plan is to merge four parishes into one single corporation with two church buildings.  The committee has discerned that these two options best align with the diocese parameters.  The status of the church or churches that would not have weekend Mass would need to be discerned between the parishes and the ACC committee pending approval from the diocese.

The proposal for our plan is scheduled to be submitted by September 8th, and then a meeting with the diocese committee and members of our ACC committee on September 30th.  Adjustments and revisions of the plan may take place after this.  After the plan has been approved, director of diocesan planning Brenda Kresky, will eventually come to meet with our ACC in an open forum meeting to announce the changes that will take place.

I know we can all agree that these are difficult days for our diocese and these changes cause a number of emotions to arise.  The Lord is calling each of us to take our crosses to him and let him carry it with us.  We know that after Christ faithfully carried his cross to the top of Calvary he was completely exhausted as he had spent himself for our sake.  After Christ died it had seemed for a time to his followers that all was lost, and there was great grief.  However, three days later the women found the tomb empty as Jesus Christ rose from the grave just as he said he would.  After the cross came the glory of the resurrection.  There was incredible joy, amazement and great growth of believers in the days, months and years that followed in the church.  I believe with all my heart that the same thing is possible in our Father Francis Xavier Pierz ACC and diocese when we place our faith in the power of God.  With Christ working through us all things are possible.

Brothers and sisters, I ask you again to continue to pray that the Holy Spirit guides us through with his wisdom, grace and peace to the will of the Father.  May he lead us, strengthen us and set our hearts on fire with his love.

God bless you,

Father Aaron

<https://stcdio.org/all-things-new-resources/>