

FAMILY OF PARISHES – COMMUNICATION # 3

Recognizing the need to develop a new model of parish organization that will provide for many less priests serving in parishes in the next decade, the Task Force for the Diocese of London, investigated what was being done in other dioceses in Canada and the United States facing a similar shortage of priests. The model that was found to be the most practical and useful involves larger groupings of parishes than we have known in the past.

In this model three, four or even five (yes, six) parishes are grouped together. The individual parishes are not closed or merged together; each remains a distinct parish. How will this be accomplished in an efficient and smooth manner? This is where the Family of Parishes Transitional Team begins its work.

The Transitional Team for the parishes of Immaculate Heart of Mary (Grand Bend), Our Lady of Mount Carmel, (Mount Carmel), Precious Blood (Exeter), St. Boniface (Zurich), St. Peter's (St. Joseph) and St. Peter's (Goderich) consists of the following members:.

Fr. Antoine (Tony) Laforet, <i>Pastor</i>	tlaforet@dol.ca
Fr. Matthew George, <i>Associate</i>	mgeorge@dol.ca
Fr. Vince Gulikers, <i>Associate</i>	vgulikers@dol.ca
Lori LaPorte, <i>Secretary</i>	St. Boniface, Zurich
Laurie O'Meara, <i>Recording Secretary</i>	St. Boniface, Zurich
Ann Sutton	Immaculate Heart of Mary, Grand Bend
Mark Tucker	Immaculate Heart of Mary, Grand Bend
Fran Roelands	Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Mount Carmel
Donna Overholt	Precious Blood, Exeter
Fred Truchon	Precious Blood, Exeter
Christa Ducharme	St. Boniface, Zurich
Meaghan Younge	St. Boniface, Zurich
Lynette Graham	St. Peter's, St. Joseph
Martha Mungar	St. Peter's, St. Joseph
Denise Ann Morris	St. Peter's, Goderich
Pat Weber	St. Peter's, Goderich

Despite the present pandemic, our Transition Team continues to meet through teleconference calls. Our last meeting took place on Wednesday, April 8th. Prior to this meeting, there has been much discernment and discussion about naming our Family of Parishes. The Team suggested 16 names based upon our geographical region where the

six parishes are situated. As a result, the name which we all agreed upon was LAKE HURON CATHOLIC FAMILY OF PARISHES. The Transition Team also agreed that we would like to have the input of our parishioners regarding this choice. Therefore, if you have any concerns or thoughts you would like to share regarding the name LAKE HURON CATHOLIC FAMILY OF PARISHES, please contact Fr. Matt at mgeorge@dol.ca or Fr. Tony at tlafort@dol.ca before Wednesday, April 22nd which is the date of our next meeting. It is important to understand that each of the six parishes will retain their present name! Once approved by Bishop Fabbro, our six parishes will soon be identified as a Family of Parishes by this name, LAKE HURON CATHOLIC FAMILY OF PARISHES.

The Transition Team's next major task will be establishing a new Mass Schedule for the six parishes which will make up the new Family of Parishes. Before this work begins, we need to be clear that we understand our mission. Our mission is the same one we have seen in our bulletins, diocesan newsletter, websites and Year of Prayer card - Being a mission-oriented Church that forms disciples of Jesus Christ.

In Exodus 14.15-31; 15.20, 1 (Third Reading at the Easter Vigil), we hear how Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. When the Israelites were leaving Egypt, they were leaving behind many things, including a life of slavery. But they were moving towards many things as well, including the Promised Land, a land of milk and honey!

For ourselves, we, too, will be leaving behind many things as we move towards becoming a Family of Parishes, but much more than that we will be moving towards new things.

The process of moving towards Families of Parishes began by recognizing the signs of the times – while there were many blessings, we could not help notice that: the number of vocations to the priesthood, religious life and even the sacramental marriage was on the decline; the number of people practicing their faith was on the decline; and, the number of parishioners who had a relationship with Jesus, the Church and mission was low. It was determined that we had to address these concerns; we had to leave that form of slavery behind.

Like the Israelites, we must make our way, through the desert (through a transition time), re-establish our relationship with God and become what we are called to be: missionary disciples in a missionary parish!

A missionary parish or mission-oriented parish:

1. Reaches out to non-Christians and non-practicing Catholics by welcoming them and sharing the Good News with them.
2. Offers a welcoming & friendly environment for any and all who come to it, regardless of race, ethnicity, social status or personal situation
3. Educates and forms its members in the faith so that they can live their discipleship completely by:
 - Preparing adults & children to celebrate the sacraments fully and fruitfully
 - Training people for leadership roles in the community; and
 - Forming parishioners to recognize and undertake works of service and justice in the town, city or region the where the parish is located.
4. Continues to spiritually strengthen parishioners to live their faith boldly and share it through witness and outreach to others. (As one team member said.....We must Walk the Talk!)
5. Makes its presence in society visible and lasting through involvement in social projects, particularly those that serve our brothers and sisters who are poor and marginalized, and promote everyone's right to life and the blessings due to every human person.

In other words, the Church's mission must be at the core of everything we do..... including the manner in which we schedule our Mass times. Therefore, every committee and organization in our parishes is called first and foremost to live the mission of the Church.

Rooted in this mission, we turn our attention to creating a Mass schedule.

“Fortify the men and women that have been given oversight of this community. Provide them with discerning hearts and the ability to make courageous decisions.” *(Taken from the Prayer for our Family of Parishes)*