

The Journey Before Us

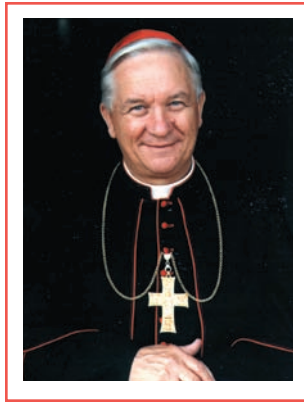
A Pastoral Letter from Cardinal Adam Maida



In the fall of 2004, when we began the *Together in Faith* process, our Scriptural reference point was Luke 24, the story of the two disciples with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. As they journeyed along, Jesus shared their questions and struggles; in the same way, He has been with us as we have discussed the future of our Church. Once the two disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread, they returned to Jerusalem and shared with the other disciples what they had come to understand on the road. At the same time, the Jerusalem community related with joy their own encounter with the Risen Lord. A mutual sharing of good news—such is the life of the Church in every time and place.

Here in the Archdiocese of Detroit, we now find ourselves at a similar moment. Having reflected on our past and present reality, we have recognized our gifts and challenges, limitations and potential. Through our dialogue in parishes, schools, and vicariates, we have come to appreciate that our Church needs new ways of providing and sharing our ministries. This pastoral letter summarizes the distilled wisdom of the Vicariate Pastoral Planning process and outlines the next steps of the process, especially our priorities for the future.

St. Paul said to the Church at Corinth that they themselves were a “living letter of faith;” the same can certainly be said of this pastoral message. Directly or indirectly, you have formulated the recommendations now being made public and set for implementation over the next several years. Through this letter, as your archbishop, I am affirming the vicariate recommendations you yourselves have articulated for the future well-being of our parishes and schools.
March 29, 2006



My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

This year, our Church of Detroit celebrates 173 years as a diocese. Our roots take us back to the very foundation of Detroit itself, July 24, 1701, when French missionaries established St. Anne Parish in Detroit. From the beginning, a steady stream of immigrants from almost every country of the world has built on the faith foundations of the native peoples, bringing with them the rich treasures of their ethnic, racial, and spiritual traditions.

Through the decades, our Church and metro area have changed enormously. There have been times of tragedy such as the Detroit fire of 1805, the cholera plague of the early 1830s, and civil unrest in 1943 and 1967. Our local Church has also mirrored the economic fluctuations of the automobile industry.

Our Church of Detroit reflects the ever-changing mosaic of Metro Detroit and its cycles of change and transformation. Through all seasons, the Catholic Church has stood strong and remained a faithful voice and presence in every part of our metro area—from the core city to the ring suburbs, outer suburbs and rural areas. We have willingly shared our gifts and resources with and for one another; we have lived out the mystery of being one body and one spirit in the Lord Jesus, something we celebrate in every Holy Eucharist.

When I arrived in Detroit as your archbishop in 1990, many were still coping with the closing of parishes the previous year. Even then, it was recognized that more transitions were sure to come—not only in the city, but throughout the wider metropolitan area. With ever-shifting populations, diminishing numbers of priests, aging parish plants in many places, and need for new construction in other areas, clearly, we needed decisive and creative planning.

*In 1994, the Council of Vicars and Archdiocesan Pastoral Council chose to make Vicariate Pastoral Planning one of our highest priorities; we saw it as a healthy channel to ensure planning would happen from the parish and vicariate level and not just from “the top down.” In 2003, at the suggestion of our priests during our biannual convocation, I endorsed the idea of creating a parish and vicariate-based process to identify priorities for strengthening our parishes and schools. This program was launched in the fall of 2004 under the title **Together in Faith**. Thousands of people across the Archdiocese took part in parish, school, and vicariate discussions. There were also special focus groups from the Presbyteral Council, the Council of Vicars, and Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, and the Advisory Board of Catholic Education, each addressing questions of growth, decline, development, and realignment of human and material resources from the perspective of their particular competency.*

*A related concern has been the health and well-being of our priests, especially as they have been shouldering ever more demanding challenges of contemporary pastoral service, often to more than one parish community and sometimes in circumstances requiring sensitivity to bilingual, ethnic and racially diverse needs. Thanks to the creative efforts of many priests and other advisors, the Presbyteral Council developed a **Total Pastoral Plan for Priests**. As we go forward, the review and consideration of this later plan, along with the implementation of **Together in Faith**, will be monitored in an ongoing fashion by a newly appointed Archdiocesan Tracking Committee.*

We stand on the shoulders of the giants of the past who built, formed, and sustained our communities of faith and the many structures of our Church; over the decades, the bishops, priests, deacons, religious, and lay faithful of the Archdiocese have made this a great and dynamic Church. In recent decades, we can take pride and satisfaction in the way we have implemented the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, especially in forming and educating our lay faithful, revitalizing our liturgical and sacramental celebrations, renewing our catechesis, and calling parishes to greater collaboration and fiscal stewardship.

We can also give thanks to the Lord and one another for the special grace our Church of Detroit experienced through the five-year Jubilee 2000 process of spiritual renewal through parish discussions and reflection groups, a process that culminated in our September 2000 Archdiocesan Eucharistic Congress and the rededication of St. John's Center. Throughout the decades, we have been a strong voice proclaiming the dignity of life and have translated our faith into action on behalf of social justice and the common good.

As we go through the necessary changes detailed in this pastoral communication, obviously, there will be some pain for our whole Archdiocesan family. Schools that are closing or parishes that are clustering, merging, or being suppressed (closed) will certainly experience grief; we want to assure them we are grateful for their past witness and service, and we share their sense of loss and hope for new life. We also want to provide a warm welcome in new parish or school settings. With gratitude, we remember the past, and with hope, we look to the future. As Jesus taught in the Gospel, from tiny mustard seeds, great things can happen. While change is painful, it is necessary for growth; it is actually a sign of new life.

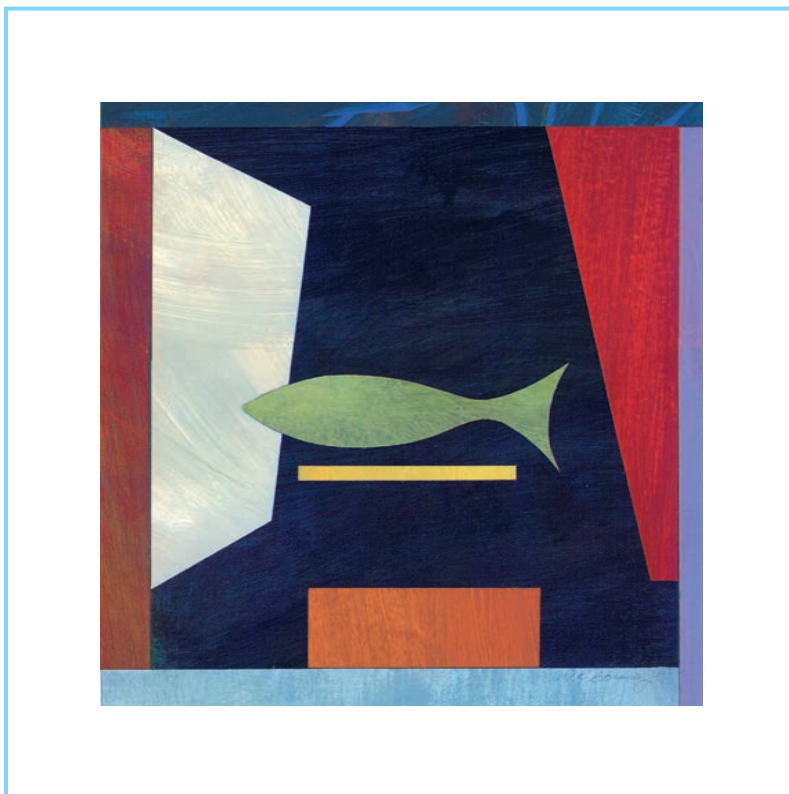
Finally, we owe a great debt of gratitude to all who have been a part of the planning process in giving of their time and talent. I especially want to acknowledge our vicars and regional bishops, the members of the Coordinating Committee, thousands of committed lay faithful and religious of the archdiocese who participated in discussions, and staff from Central Services without whom these planning documents could never have been formulated.

*May God, who has begun this good work, bring it to completion!
Sincerely yours in the Lord,*

† Adam Cardinal Maida

Adam Cardinal Maida
Archbishop of Detroit

PART ONE: THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY OF CHANGE



Change is an unavoidable part of life; at times, we welcome it and at other moments, we fear it. *Together in Faith* has challenged us to come to terms with change on many levels—in our hearts, in our families, in our communities of faith and in the civic arena. For people of faith, openness to change is a vital part of hearing the Good News and living as disciples of Christ Jesus.

Change has been a major part of our lived experience as Church during the last four decades. Consider the following litany of changes: the language of our liturgy went from Latin to English; we have come to a new appreciation of Scripture study; the number of priests and the style of ministerial service have changed and the role of the laity has been greatly expanded. We rejoice in the presence and ministry of more than 160 permanent deacons, countless pastoral ministers, youth ministers, Christian service coordinators, religious educators, Catholic school teachers, and other leaders of faith formation. We have come to appreciate that faith requires living as disciples through stewardship, being ready each day to translate into concrete action the Church's preferential option for the poor.

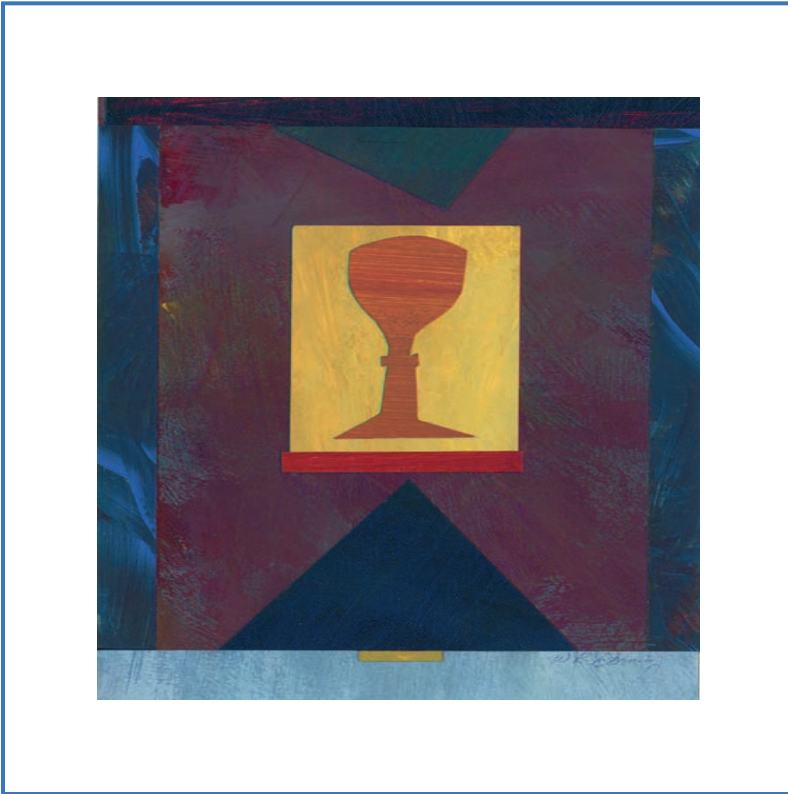
We witnessed extraordinary blessings during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II and marveled at the way he tirelessly proclaimed the Gospel of Life to the very ends of the Earth. Along with the whole world, watching the funeral of Pope John Paul II and the election of Pope Benedict XVI, undoubtedly we were touched by the gift and mystery of the Church Universal and how we embrace every language and culture of our world. It brings great consolation to be part of a Church that is ever-changing, and yet, in many ways, always the same; while the *form* of things may change, the essence or core reality of our faith remains the same.

Christian faith celebrates spiritual change by a special word—“conversion”—our act of turning mind and heart to the Lord, committing ever more of ourselves to the service of His Body, the Church. We believe in the power of change—the transformation of our gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist and the change of our mortal bodies at the time of our transition to life eternal. We work for change in our minds and hearts, and in the structures of society. As John Cardinal Newman put it more than one hundred years ago, “*To live is to change; to be perfect is to have changed often.*”

When facing change, our first challenge is *discernment*: is this change good and necessary? Some things—such as Church doctrine and teaching—*cannot* change. Church discipline and some structures *may* change depending on the circumstances. Discernment, study, and dialogue are necessary whenever we face potential changes in the Church. Once we have gone through discernment about change, then comes a second challenge: *openness* to implementing necessary changes.



PART TWO: DISCERNING CHANGE IN OUR LIFE AND TIMES



At the center of our prayer life as Christians is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist; through the Holy Eucharist, the Church comes into being. As the Council Fathers of Vatican II taught, the Holy Eucharist is the “source and summit” of the Christian life. In and through the Holy Eucharist we experience the mystery of our Triune God and share in the death-resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the prayers of our eucharistic liturgy we find all essential Church teachings and a basic frame of reference for dealing with the questions and struggles of Church life.

From a review of the dynamics of the Holy Eucharist and its celebration of giving and receiving, we can arrive at several insights:

- The Church is constantly living out the mystery of Christ’s dying and rising; this process continues until Christ’s return in glory.

- This Paschal Mystery unfolds within our lives as we deal with physical and psychological challenges and as we strive to grow in virtue. We live out the Paschal Mystery in our communities as we go through transformations and changes in structures and delivery of services.
- Our Eucharist communion is missionary; we gather and then go forth to proclaim what we have shared. As eucharistic people, therefore, we are “mission-minded;” our faith necessarily expresses itself through evangelization and service.

During the *Together in Faith* process, our basic references have been the sacred Scriptures, Church teachings and discipline, as well as our lived experience in communities of faith. While we can never measure or quantify the mystery of the Holy Spirit, nonetheless, since the Church is human as well as spiritual, our discernment needs to include objective data. As we studied the concrete reality of our Church at this time in its history, three criteria emerged for discerning the spiritual vitality of our communities:

- Sacramental: How does our parish/school community celebrate the full spectrum of the sacramental life of the Church?
- Strategic: How does our parish/school location and history affirm a need for its abiding presence and ministry?
- Sustainable: How does our parish/school exercise good stewardship of its resources, sustaining all aspects of the Church’s mission?

Spiritual discernment challenges us to see our parish or school in relationship to the larger whole. Every charism or gift of the Spirit is always for the sake of the common good, for the building up the whole Church. True discernment calls us to ever-greater awareness of, sensitivity to, and accountability for the larger picture—the vicariate, the whole Archdiocese, and indeed, the Church Universal.



PART THREE: WHAT THE SPIRIT IS SAYING: OUR PRIORITIES



Through the Vicariate Pastoral Planning process over the past decade, preceding *Together in Faith*, several major themes have emerged as priorities for our Church. The *Total Pastoral Plan for Priests* articulated these same priorities and concerns.

The first of these themes is our call to be **“mission-minded.”** Throughout his 26-year papacy, Pope John Paul II repeatedly called all believers to be heralds of the “new evangelization,” that is, a renewed *hearing* of the Gospel, believing it in our hearts and proclaiming it in our lives. Such “mission-mindedness” flows from our baptism and confirmation when we were consecrated according to the likeness of Christ our priest, prophet, and shepherd-ruler. Each time we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, we are reminded of our vocation to reach out beyond ourselves, to express our connectedness as one Church, whether we live in urban, suburban, or rural areas. Further, we are sent forth from the Eucharist to be salt and leaven transforming our whole society, bringing Christian values to the realms of politics and business.

In addition to having a mission or purpose, we also need to be leaders. Very rarely is anyone born a leader; leadership usually emerges according to needs and as people develop their talents and skills. To this end, our second priority underscores the vital importance of **developing leaders** for the current and future needs of the Church. As a Catholic community, we need to identify, train, and encourage men and women for roles of active leadership in all aspects of Church life. Obviously, leadership formation includes fostering vocations to the priesthood, permanent diaconate, and religious life; it also means strengthening the vocations of lay men and women as lay ecclesial ministers in their parishes.

Finally, because we are a worldwide Church and a “global village,” we can never think of ourselves in isolation from our brothers and sisters near or far. Our third priority, therefore, highlights proper living as disciples through **Christian stewardship**—including sharing our gifts of time, talent, and treasure for the good of all.

These three priorities present the foundation stones for the next phase of our journey. Steps are outlined below for each of these priorities. These sub-points will all need to be further developed in your respective parishes and vicariates.

I endorse the priorities highlighted through the planning process and I ask you to implement them on the parish and vicariate levels. Please know that Central Services of the Archdiocese will also be using these three priorities as the touchstones for their own ministry in the coming years.

A. Mission-Minded: Evangelization in Word and in Deed

- The “mission” constantly calls us out of ourselves and to greater concern for all, especially those who are most dependent. Youth ministry was the highest priority consistently mentioned by every vicariate on the individual parish evaluations. A comprehensive approach is recommended that incorporates prayer and service, as well as catechesis and social gatherings. Engaging youth as active participants and leaders requires

diverse approaches given the needs of urban, rural, and sub-urban youth, as well as multiple ethnic groups. Youth leaders need to be trained at the vicariate/regional setting. Throughout the Archdiocese, vicariates/regions/corridors need continued in-service for sharing the best practices for ministry with youth.

- At the heart of our life as Church is the call to evangelization and the “new evangelization” that includes concrete ways for attracting new members to know Jesus as Lord through the Church; welcoming back inactive Catholics, and renewing and deepening the faith of lifelong Catholics.
- If we are to be compelling witnesses and voices of faith to others, we need renewed catechetical formation for people of all ages. All parishes should take greater advantage of catechetical opportunities at times of preparation for the sacraments of baptism, penance, and marriage.
- To be “mission-minded,” we must be faithful to our tradition, especially in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and sacraments; therefore, I ask all pastors to renew their commitment to celebrating the Holy Eucharist and all Sacraments in full compliance with the “General Instruction of the Roman Missal” and the “Instruction on the Eucharist.”
- Demographics indicate that Catholic schools are serving students from areas that extend beyond the local parish. Vicariates/regions need to address the responsibility of financial support of schools within the vicariate/region.
- Young adults comprise a key group for evangelization, faith formation and stewardship formation. Implementation of a new model for young adult and campus ministry has already begun.
- Our “mission” toward others begins at home: family life ministry is vital on the archdiocesan and parish level. Current networks of support groups need to be sustained and expanded. Every parish should be especially sensitive to the needs of families from emerging ethnic groups.

- “Mission-mindedness” certainly includes a special loving concern for needs and gifts of all ethnic communities. Each parish/vicariate should identify the needs of emerging ethnic groups on a regular basis. Spirituality is often a major aspect of the faith life of emerging ethnic groups. Sensitivity to all ethnic groups needs to be expressed concretely—in helping all our brothers and sisters obtain settings for worship, service and social gatherings. Data indicate that every parish/vicariate includes people of Hispanic origin within its boundaries; therefore, the Hispanic Pastoral Plan needs to be integrated into each vicariate plan. We are grateful for priests who have become bilingual and we encourage more priests to do so; we are also committed to recruiting and forming more Hispanic deacons and pastoral ministers.
- A “mission-minded” spirituality also appreciates and affirms the gifts and needs of our ever-growing population of seniors; parish programming and vicariate outreach need to take better account of the valuable gifts these brothers and sisters continue to offer the Church.
- Our missionary proclamation of the Gospel necessarily includes action and advocacy on behalf of justice and peace concerns on the local, national, and international level, especially as they impact the dignity of human life. Advocacy for justice and peace requires preaching and forming of consciences according to Catholic social justice teachings and principles of moral theology.

B. Leadership Development

- Our calling of others to leadership will be credible and compelling only to the extent we challenge ourselves to continuing study and formation. Toward this end and in keeping with the *Total Pastoral Plan for Priests*, I ask that every priest recommit himself to ongoing theological and pastoral formation, as well as strengthening his skills in management. Ever-evolving needs require ever-new skills.
- To help meet the reality of a diminished number of priests and to allow priests to focus on their primary ministry of evangelizing and celebrating the sacraments, business managers should be employed whenever possible.

- The pastoral ministry formation program at Sacred Heart Major Seminary and certification process for pastoral ministers remain a major archdiocesan commitment.
- For the sake of future leaders in the Church, the ministry of fostering vocations needs to be a major theme of every parish; I ask that prayer for vocations be a regular part of our liturgies and that once a year, every parish dedicate its weekend liturgies to this theme and seek to identify by name potential candidates for ministerial priesthood and/or religious life.
- Although we are already blessed with 160 permanent deacons, their ministry needs greater affirmation on every level and every parish should work toward the goal of having a permanent deacon; he represents a specific sacramental form of servant leadership.

C. Resource Sharing

- Published in conjunction with this letter (and available on our Web site at www.AODonline.org) is *Mileposts on the Journey*, a special report on the 18 vicariate plans which include recommended timetables for closing schools and for clustering, merging, and/or suppression (closure) of parishes. Please note the sequence or order of these terms and their meaning: Clustering—two or more parishes, remaining somewhat independent, sharing a pastor—should be seen as a first step in a large process which could lead to a merger of parishes as one entity with one site (or with perhaps additional locations for outreach centers and/or chapels for special/occasional purposes). Eventually, according to financial circumstances and appropriate ways to ensure pastoral coverage, there could even be reason to move toward the actual closing of a Church building or suppression (closure) of a parish.
- As members of a worldwide Church, every parish needs to be committed to social service outreach *within* the parish and also *beyond* the parish. We are blessed with the resources of Catholic social service agencies and other institutions of health care, and our parish members should partner with them and/or take advantage of their programs.
- A vital part of stewardship includes responsible action in a timely fashion regarding parish and school finances. Every

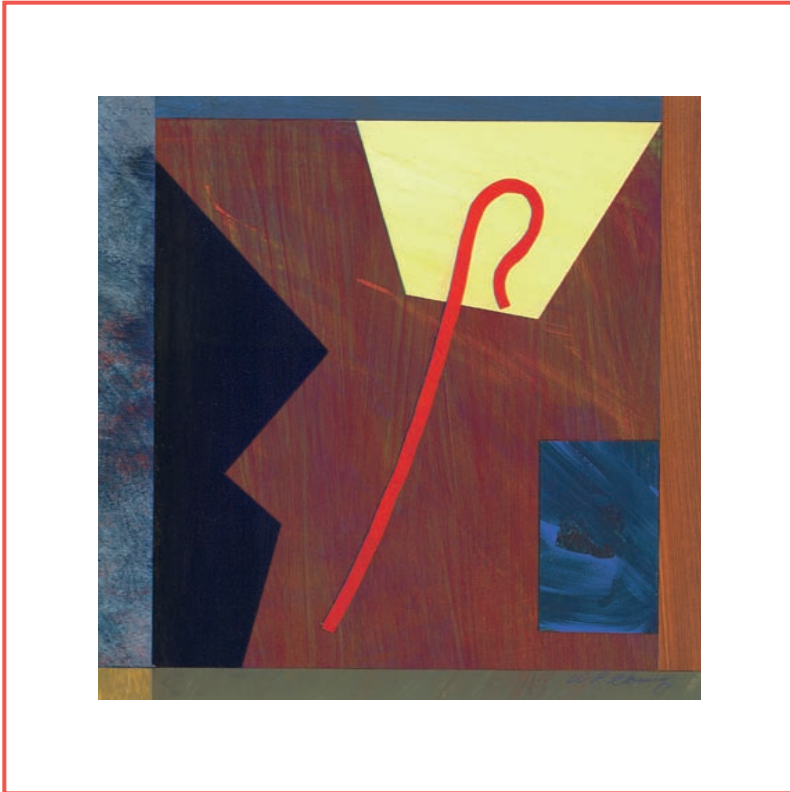
parish should have an active Stewardship Commission and parishioners should be made aware of the general financial condition of the parish and school, including debts and liabilities. In addition, regional bishops and the College of Consultors will regularly challenge parishes and schools to fiscal accountability.

- Central Services will assist parishes with regular financial audits and reviews of properties and buildings.
- We all need continued formation in principles of stewardship. Stewardship formation should happen regularly in the four regions of the archdiocese (Central, Northeast, Northwest and South).
- In some areas of the Archdiocese, future planning will focus on creating new parishes and/or schools; in other areas, planning will need to take into account declining populations and resources.
- A powerful resource not to be forgotten or overlooked is the ministry of communication via the weekly publication of The Michigan Catholic, parish bulletins, CTND, and our Web site. All of these are vital tools for ensuring dialogue that is comprehensive, efficient, and clear to Catholics, as well as the larger public.
- Although this phase of *Together in Faith* is now concluding, I ask every vicariate to continue discussion regarding concrete ways for sharing human and material resources.

The above three groupings of priorities will need continued discussion within each parish and within the vicariates; they will also be major agenda items for the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council over the next several years. The newly formed Tracking Committee will be monitoring progress with regard to the above priorities and the vicariate plans.



THE JOURNEY BEFORE US



As you can see, although this phase of *Together in Faith* has reached a stage of culmination, the work of dialogue and planning is far from finished! This pastoral message is a summary of what has been accomplished to date. Together, we continue the process for the next steps of our journey.

In general, we have come to these insights of faith and convictions for action:

- Since change is ongoing, for the health and well-being of the Church, we need to be discerning and open in a spirit of prayer.
- No one parish or school can function apart from the rest of the archdiocese. Each of our parishes and schools has gifts to offer and needs the support and expertise of other parishes and schools.
- Well trained, competent leadership—clergy, religious, and lay—is a critical building block for the Church of the future.

- Growth and diminishment, change and transformation make sense only against the backdrop of the death-resurrection of Christ, which we celebrate daily in the Holy Eucharist.
- The Church is a *spiritual* reality, a communion for the sake of mission, which has visible expression in and through parishes, schools, and institutions. Changes of external structures are intended to build up, sustain, and renew our enduring commitment to share together in Christ's three-fold mission as our priest, prophet and shepherd ruler.

CONCLUDING EPILOGUE

Sixteen centuries ago, at a time of great social upheaval and change, St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa, penned a work which has become a classic of our Catholic faith tradition—"The City of God." He reflected on the difference between what he called the "city of man" and the "city of God," and noted that the city of God comes into being already here and now, when we live according to the motivation and vision of God's love, trusting in His providential care, placing our gifts and talents at the service of all our brothers and sisters. His words and imagery have retained their force and application throughout the centuries—even in our own particular circumstances in the Archdiocese of Detroit in this first decade of the 21st century.

As our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has rightly reminded us, the first and last word of all things is God's love. As humble receivers of God's mercy in and through the Church, we have come to know and experience Jesus Christ and we enjoy already now a foretaste of the city of God, as we live according to faith and hope, always inspired and sustained by God's love and not simply our own human efforts. On the journey, we find hope and consolation by looking to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who herself lived through many challenges, remaining ever faithful to the gift, call and promise of the Heavenly Father.

As *The Journey Before Us* unfolds, I ask that you join me in prayer that through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Lord and Mother of the Church, we might know ever more deeply the loving presence and renewing power of the Holy Spirit. May God bless and keep us all as we travel together.

MAKING CHRIST'S CHURCH

We love our Church,
with all her limitations, and her riches too, she is our Mother.
For this reason we respect her, and while we do so,
we dream that she will never lose her beauty:

May she be a Church where it's good to live,
where you can breathe, and say what you think.
A Church of freedom.



A Church
which listens before speaking, which welcomes instead of judging,
which forgives without wishing to condemn,
which announces rather than denounces.
A Church of mercy.



A Church
where the simplest of our brothers and sisters
will understand what the others are saying,
and where the wisest of leaders will know that he doesn't know;
where the people of God will be revealed in its entirety.
A Church of wisdom.



A Church
where the Holy Spirit will be able to feel at home
because everything hasn't been foreseen,
settled and decided in advance.
An open Church.



A Church
where the audacity to do something new
will be stronger than the habit of doing things
as they've always been done.



A Church
where everyone can pray in their own language
express themselves according to their culture,
live with their own history.



A Church
of which people will say,
not "See how well organized they are"
but "See how they love one another."

Church of the city,
Church of suburbs and streets...
Lift up your head, and look: The Lord is with you.

*Adapted from the Pastoral Letter of Bishop Guy Deroubaix,
1966, Saint-Denis, France*

The Detroit archdiocese will provide ongoing reports on the implementation of *Together in Faith* in its weekly newspaper, *The Michigan Catholic*, on its Web site, www.AODonline.org, and on the Catholic Television Network of Detroit (CTND).

Additional information is available at any time via email to TogetherInFaith@aod.org or by calling (313)237-5971.