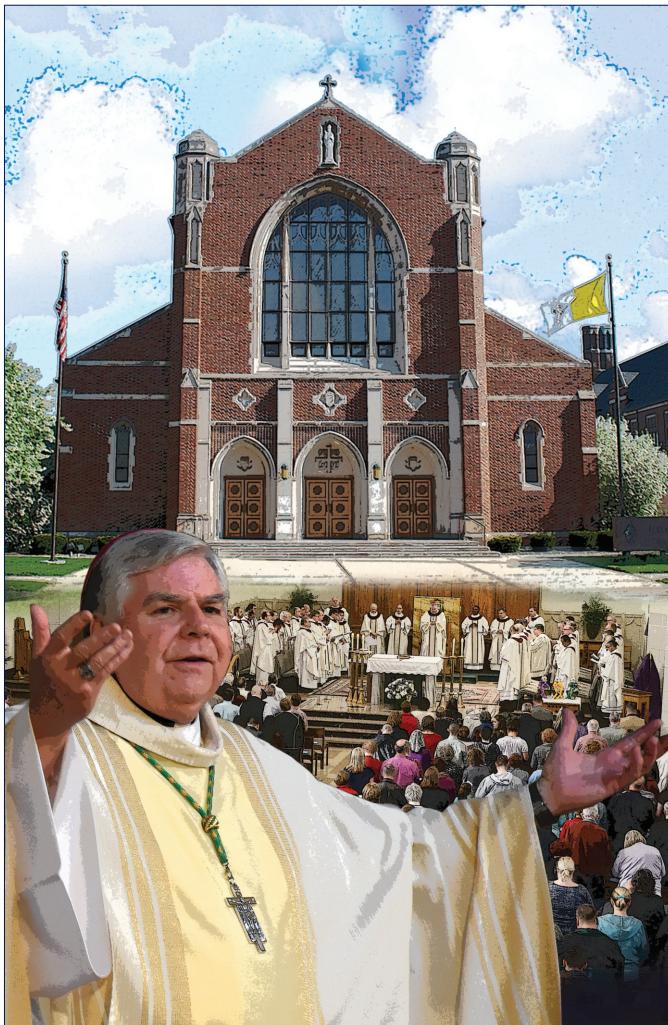


MOVING FORWARD IN HOPE: CHARTING THE COURSE FOR THE FUTURE



A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO



Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo

MOVING FORWARD IN HOPE: CHARTING THE COURSE FOR THE FUTURE

September 2016

A Pastoral Letter to the Faithful People
of the Diocese of Kalamazoo



By Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley, D.D., M.S.W.
Bishop of Kalamazoo

Episcopal motto: “*Waiting in Joyful Hope*”

*For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord;
plans for your welfare, not your woe; plans to give you
a future full of hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)*

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Introduction

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The Church of Kalamazoo recently celebrated our 45th birthday. While that would be considered middle age for us humans, in the life of the Church that is just barely past adolescence on our way to young adulthood. On July 21, 1971 our then Holy Father Pope Paul VI decreed that the Dioceses of Lansing and Grand Rapids should be realigned in such a way as to create what we now know as the Diocese of Kalamazoo. On the very same day, the Holy Father also created our neighbor farther to the north, the Diocese of Gaylord. Our two dioceses are the youngsters among the other five dioceses in Michigan, which is ecclesiastically known as the Province of Michigan. On that same day, Pope Paul VI appointed a young priest from the Diocese of Lansing, Paul V. Donovan, to be ordained the first bishop of the Diocese of Kalamazoo.

Charting the Course for the Future”

Today, I write to you, my dear people of our diocese, as the fourth bishop of the Church in Kalamazoo which is comprised of the nine counties of southwest Michigan. The approximately 110,000 Catholics within our territory find their spiritual homes in one of the 59 parishes in our diocese, currently served by 56 priests, assisted by 36 permanent deacons. Since 1971, much has changed in our diocese, throughout our Church and in our world. What always remains the same no matter what else changes — who our individual pastor is, who the bishop is, or even who is our Holy Father — is the mission of the Church at every level: the Domestic Church (the Church of the Home), the Parish community, the Diocesan Church and the Universal Church. That mission for each of us is to come to know Jesus Christ, to develop a strong and loving relationship with Him, to grow in that love throughout our lives in this world, and to enjoy eternal life with Him in Heaven. The Church has been entrusted by Jesus to go into the world and to proclaim the “Good News” of Jesus’ unconditional and saving love for each of us and for all the world (Matt. 16:15).





Priests are ordained — that is, chosen and given certain authority through the sacrament of Holy Orders given to us by Jesus — to “teach, lead and sanctify” (the three “munera” or gifts of Holy Orders) God’s holy people, and to bring Jesus to them. In fact, through the grace of the sacred priesthood, our priests not only are instruments of Jesus’ grace, but, when acting in Jesus’ name, are His very Presence to us through the actions of the sacraments which only priests can

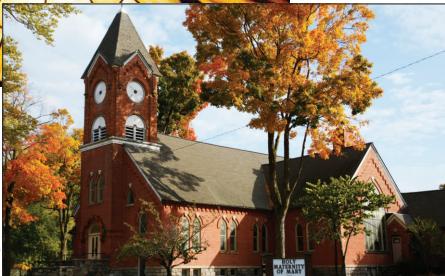
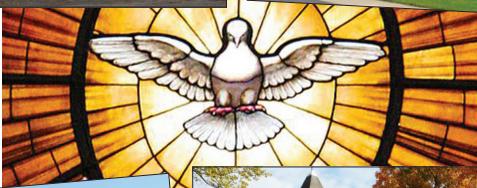
celebrate: reconciliation (the absolution of sins in Jesus’ name), the anointing of the sick, and most dramatically in the Holy Eucharist in bringing about the Real Presence of Jesus in the consecrated Bread and Wine which become the Body and Blood of Christ. While we rejoice in, encourage and welcome the legitimate exercise of lay ecclesial ministry within the Church to assist in advancing the Church’s mission, the ministry of our priests is essential to the spiritual growth and pastoral care of each of us on our journey of faith. Our priests serve as our shepherds along the way. As Pope Francis has reminded us so often, our priests need to be not just waiting for us at church to serve us there, but to be out among us, sharing our people’s concerns, being so close among the “sheep of the flock” as to have the “smell of the sheep on their clothes”; they are called to “accompany” our people along their pilgrim way.
(Pope Francis, Holy Thursday 2013 Homily)

One of the significant changes over these last 45 years of our diocese’s life has been the effects of ecclesial, cultural and societal change on the priesthood in the United States. Dioceses across the

country experience a similar dwindling and aging in the number of priests available to bring Jesus to our people. There have been declining numbers of young men responding to God’s call to consider the priesthood as their vocational choice. The end result is that we are experiencing fewer priests being ordained across the country and a growing number of priests entering into retirement due to age and physical limitation, while the essential need for priests remains the same. We have been finding the same situation here in our diocese. During the seven years I have been bishop, I have had the privilege of ordaining 14 young men (which included two unusual bumper crops of four ordinations in 2009 and four this year, 2016); there have been three different years when we had no priests to ordain; and I have approved the retirement of 12 priests; buried 12 and sadly bid farewell to two priests who left active ministry. The average age of our priests is 53 (with priests able to retire at age 70). In the next five years, there are 13 priests eligible to retire, while we expect to ordain five God willing.



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These examples do not include the priests who suddenly become unable to continue an assignment due to illness or accident for long or short periods of time. As you can conclude from these few examples, the number of priests available to bring Jesus to our people is declining.

Since one of my most important responsibilities as bishop is to make sure that adequate pastoral and sacramental care is provided for our people through the assignment of priests to parishes, it became clear to me several years ago that we needed to develop a strategic Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Each and every year when it was time to make priestly assignments, it was more and more difficult to be able to do so. To put it into a sports analogy, all our available team members were on the field; there were fewer and fewer people on the bench. With this introduction, I would like to describe in this pastoral letter in a bit more detail, the following elements:

- I. How we got to this point
- II. The development of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan
- III. A brief reflection on the Church
- IV. Parishes and collaboratives: the what, the why and the how
- V. Challenges and opportunities
- VI. Where we go from here

It is my hope, dear family of faith, that in light of this background and understanding, and with a more equitable distribution of our priests among our 59 parishes in the newly-formed 28 Collaboratives to accompany us along the way, we will continue to move **“forward in hope”** along our journey of faith.

I. How We Got to This Point

For as long as most of us can remember, the local parish church was the center of our spiritual lives. For the majority of Catholics, the parish was the place where much of our time was spent for Mass, religious instructions and even social life. In my childhood years, I attended the parish grade school along with my seven siblings,



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was an active altar server, and my parents were involved in leadership roles in various spiritual sodalities (my dad in the Holy Name Society and my mother in the Christian Mothers), which meant that my siblings and I tagged along quite a bit. Other than Little League, piano lessons and Cub Scouts, I had very little activity other than those that were church-related, as did most of my family. To a greater or lesser degree, perhaps that was a normal experience in the 1950's and early 1960's. Then came the Second Vatican Council, the Vietnam War, the sexual revolution, Roe v. Wade, the clergy sexual abuse crisis, the creation of the Internet, and much of that began to change. There were fewer priests and Sisters, and Catholics became less focused on the regular practice of their faith. We became aware that the percentage of Catholics coming to Sunday Mass was slipping, as was the percentage of Americans in general practicing any kind of formalized religion.

Dioceses and parishes began keeping records of the percentage of their registered members who came to Mass each week, to the point that many now feel satisfied if the percentage of their parish or diocese attending Mass each week is 30 percent to 35 percent of registered Catholics. What a sad development.

Even though there were fewer people coming to Mass, the even fewer, and growing older number of priests available to serve the parishes began to be a problem, especially in recent years. Where a parish might have always had two priests available to serve them, now there might be one priest; and in some parishes that always had at least one priest, that one priest began to have to serve two parishes. This was the case in the very large dioceses of the East, as well as the smaller and more rural dioceses such as our own. The realities were similar. The solutions to try to solve those problems were different.

In my home Diocese of Pittsburgh as far back as the early 1980’s, the bishop closed a large number of parishes mostly in the urban areas involving the multiple ethnic churches where people no longer lived due to the decline of the steel industry, reducing the size of the diocese from what was 333 parishes to 214 parishes. Similar problems in other dioceses began to be faced in more recent years, but with a similar solution. In light of the declining number of priests, but also to adjust to the shifting of people who began moving from old city parishes to the suburbs where large new parishes were being built, the solution in many dioceses was to reduce the number of parishes to be more consistent with the number of priests, and to be able to serve the people living in the new parishes.

In our own diocese, there continues to be growth among our Spanish-speaking sisters and brothers, and a significant influx of migrant workers during the growing season, most of whom are Catholics. Our need is not only for more priestly vocations, but also for priests who are bilingual and can assist in that growing need to provide pastoral and sacramental care for our Hispanic/Latino Catholic people.

Several years ago in a report issued by CARA, (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, a national non-profit, Georgetown

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University-affiliated research center that conducts social scientific studies about the Catholic Church), a report on priests in the United States indicated that the average priest/people ratio was 1/1800. As we looked at our own circumstance here in our diocese, it became clear that our situation was more of a priest distribution issue than it was a priest shortage issue. That is when it became clear that we needed to develop a strategic Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

II. The Development of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan

Following a discussion with all our priests at the fall Clergy Convocation in 2013, the first phase of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan was announced in March 2014, and was subsequently published in my third pastoral letter entitled: “The Church: a Center of Hope — Living our Faith with Joy” (issued November 2014). At that time, I encouraged all parishes to voluntarily enter into “Parish Partnerships.”

In that letter to you, the faithful of our diocese, I explained that the Diocesan Pastoral Plan was to “focus on the importance of strengthening each of our parishes to become as vibrant and active as each can be.” (p.3) I went on to write: “It is within this Plan that I am calling all 59 of our parishes to enter into ‘partnerships’ with one or more of the neighboring parish communities to collaborate and to share resources with one another, and in the process, to help each to become stronger and more vibrant.” The idea of forming partnerships was always with the intention of maintaining the uniqueness of each parish, and to allow the larger parishes with more resources (personnel and programs) to help the smaller parishes in ways that could be beneficial to all involved.

For a number of reasons, there was a certain reluctance to voluntarily



enter into these partnerships, though there were several examples of great success where parishes did become partners, such as St. Joseph Parish and St. Jerome Parish in Battle Creek, and Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Edwardsburg and St. Ann Parish in Cassopolis.

In the spring of last year (2015), when for the second year in a row we had no new priests to ordain, when six of our priests retired, and when our entire diocese was shocked by the loss of two of our younger priests who chose to leave active ministry, I met with all our priests during the summer months in six smaller groups (deanery-based) out of fraternal concern for each of them and to ask their thoughts about future directions. In the fall of 2015 at our multi-day fall convocation, the priests and I spent an entire evening in very open and frank discussion about what steps we needed to take. Our priests showed an amazing understanding of what we were facing, and that we needed to take a fairly bold step forward in hope. While it was clear to them that this would require a significant change of mind and heart for them in regard to what it means to be a priest in parish work, including the fact that there would need to be major adjustments made in how we distributed our priests (and

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which, they understood probably would mean that many of them would need to be reassigned to new priestly responsibilities), their love and concern for you, the faithful of the diocese, in making sure that we could provide you with the best possible pastoral and sacramental care, surfaced as their most important concern.

It was following the convocation in the fall last year that the revised Diocesan Pastoral Plan began to be developed in earnest, and when the voluntary 24 Parish Partnerships would be reworked into the recently-implemented 28 Parish Collaboratives. It had become evident to all who were involved with this initiative that this plan had to be ready for implementation at the time of the priestly ordinations that were scheduled for May 2016 when, thanks be to God, we would have the great joy of ordaining four wonderful new priests.

Since the available data, statistics and other information was so compelling, it was paramount to find a way to share that information with as many of our people as possible. The steps taken during the late fall 2015 and early winter months in 2016 included several meetings with all the priests to consider what would be the very best and most workable grouping of parishes into collaboratives, and how many collaboratives there would need to be. I also appointed a consultative committee made up of priests, deacons and lay leaders with whom I met on two separate occasions to get their honest feedback and critique. Beginning in late February



until late April, I hosted seven informational meetings in each of the deaneries, inviting our people to come to hear about the proposed plan and to give constructive suggestions. Hundreds of parishioners participated in those meetings, and the response was by and large very positive. There were many other efforts to communicate so that as many people as possible would be informed and have an opportunity to express their opinions.

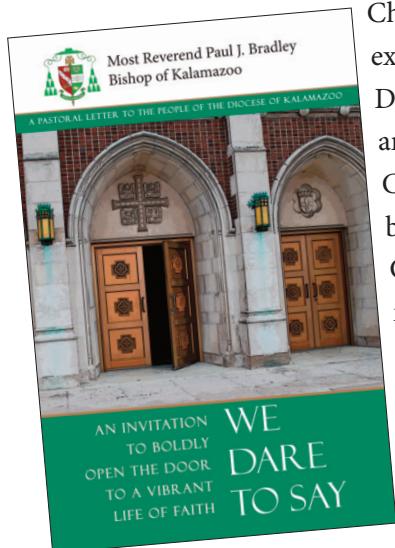
From the very beginning, it had been my intention not to close any of our parishes. Since each of our parishes is very important, with its own history and unique gifts, I decided we needed to find ways other than permanently closing or canonically merging parishes to solve our problems. Rather we would choose a temporary solution by forming Parish Collaboratives instead, that is grouping one, two or three parishes together into a collaborative under the leadership of one pastor shared by each parish. This plan is designed to build on the strength of our parishes and not in any way diminish them. It seems that in our case “temporary” may very well mean that we will see these collaboratives for as long as ten years, which depends on a number of factors, including the hoped-for increase in more priests that we are praying will become a reality. At a time in the future, if and when it might be deemed that the collaborative arrangement is no longer necessary, the parish groupings can be separated and continue in their unique standing as a parish. In addition to reducing the number of priests to 28 who would be needed to serve as pastors, we would be even better positioned to have the remainder of our priests available to serve in other very important pastoral ministry assignments: parochial vicars, chaplains for health care institutions (and other institutions as we can), and spiritual moderators for our Catholic schools.

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After much consultation, preparation, prayer and the guidance, inspiration and direction of God’s Holy Spirit, the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and the launching of the 28 Parish Collaboratives was ready to be implemented, all designed to position our priests and people to further the saving mission of the Church.

III. A Brief Reflection on the Church

We talk about the Church at many different levels, and with many different meanings. We go to church — a building or a sacred place where we celebrate Mass and the sacraments. We experience the



Church at different levels of our lived experience: the Universal Church; the Diocesan Church; the Parish Church; and the Domestic Church (or the Church of the Home). Through our baptism, we become a part of the Church — living and vibrant members of the Body of Christ. Therefore it is very important that we have as our most important and basic starting point “Who we are” as Church. I discussed this very important topic in some detail

in my second pastoral letter to the faithful of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, “We Dare to Say: An Invitation to Boldly Open the Door to a Vibrant Life of Faith” (December 2, 2012).

As important as that critical topic is, what I want to review briefly in this part of the current pastoral letter is what our unique role as Catholics is, and how it is that our membership in the Body of Christ — the Church — helps us to understand more clearly the importance of this Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

Through our baptism, and the graces of that primary of all the sacraments, each of us is called to help build up the Church. On the day each of us was baptized, assuming that most of us were baptized as infants (and therefore were blissfully unaware at any conscious level what was taking place in the core of our souls and very beings) our parents and godparents committed us to a life of faith by making solemn promises in our names. Over the course of our lives, on the day of our confirmation, and each year on Easter Sunday, we pause to renew our solemn baptismal promises to God:



- To reject Satan and the power of sin
- To live as God’s faithful people
- To believe in God, the Father — Son — Holy Spirit.
- To hear the Word of God and share in the Holy Eucharist
- To believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church
- To proclaim the Good News of Jesus through our works and deeds
- To believe in the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, and in all this, to live as followers of Jesus.

These are solemn promises made to God which are to guide and determine the choices that we make in our daily lives. None of us can hope to be faithful to those promises without God’s grace, the divine assistance we all need. That is why Jesus gave us the Church so that we could be joined by other pilgrims along the journey of faith, and be given the help we need to live according to those promises through

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the sacraments, the teachings and the pastoral care of the Church. That is why we have as a key priority of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan the pastoral care of the people — each member of the Church in the Diocese of Kalamazoo.

It is also important for us to understand that through our baptism the vocation that is common to every one of us is Jesus' universal call to holiness. The starting point, and the constant point of reference for all of us, must be rooted in our personal relationship with Jesus. As members of the Church, we must begin with the constant effort to grow in our love for Jesus, and the more that love grows the more we will be able to love our neighbors, our fellow pilgrims along our journey of faith, with the love of Jesus.

We learn about and live that relationship; we build upon it, first and most importantly, in our homes, or what we have come to refer to as the Domestic Church. Our basic faith, passed on to us by our families, and where we live out the teachings of our faith each day, is formalized and strengthened in the Parish Church. All the parishes are united together under the guidance and direction of the bishop of the Diocesan Church, and all dioceses throughout the world are



joined together to form the Universal Church, under the authority of the Vicar of Christ on earth, our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

It is important for us to briefly remember what a diocese is, and what the role of the bishop is in relation to the parishes, and the responsibility of the priests in the parishes. A diocese is a portion of the Universal Church where the people of God live, entrusted to a bishop for him to shepherd. Since it is impossible for the bishop to provide the pastoral care directly to all the faithful within a diocese, the bishop's authority is shared with the priests of the diocese, who then are assigned to particular parishes or other pastoral responsibilities to provide pastoral and sacramental care to the people of God. A diocese is sometimes known as a “Particular Church” or a “Local Church” in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative (Canon 369).

Canon Law of the Church guides the way dioceses are administered and divided, which indicates that every diocese is to be divided into distinct parts — parishes — and which further indicates that to foster pastoral care through common action, several neighboring parishes can be joined into special groups, such as *vicariates forane*, or what we call Deaneries (Canon 374). [See Deaneries, Appendix A]

It is helpful to realize that each bishop, who is a Successor to the Apostles and who has been given the special gifts of the Holy Spirit, is the pastor of the diocese, or the Particular Church, and as such, is the one who is called to teach, govern and lead, and sanctify and shepherd. The bishop, as chief pastor, must be concerned for all the faithful entrusted into his care, of whatever age, condition or nationality; whether living in the territory or staying there temporarily; he is also to extend an apostolic spirit to those who are not able to or have chosen not to practice their religion. Also, he is to act lovingly to those brothers and sisters of other Christian

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faiths not in full communion with the Catholic Church and to foster a sense of ecumenism. He is to consider the non-baptized as committed to him in the Lord. In other words, the bishop is entrusted with care for all people within the territory of the diocese.

There are approximately 110,000 Catholics living within the nine counties that make up the territory of the Diocese of Kalamazoo. But as bishop, I am actually entrusted with the spiritual well-being of all the people living within this territory, which is approximately 900,000 people for whom I have some spiritual responsibility. I pray for them, I try to be open to them and find ways for us to receive them and welcome them into the life of faith, and the life of the Church.

It is also important to keep in mind that our diocese is considered to be a “mission diocese” due to our relatively small percentage of Catholics in relation to the general population living within the territory of our diocese, as well due to the largely rural makeup of our diocese. By that very classification, it is evident that our resources are more limited than some larger dioceses, but it has no impact on the quality and vibrancy of those of us who make up the Catholic population in the Diocese of Kalamazoo, nor does it change our responsibility to fulfill the mission of the Church in this territory; in many ways, we have even more responsibility to reach out to those who have become inactive, disenfranchised or “fallen away” Catholics, and in particular to those many people living around us who do not know God at all or practice any religion or faith.

There is a special and intimate bond between the bishop and the priests of the diocese, the bishop’s chief collaborators, and those whom the bishop assigns to serve the people of God. The normal place where the people of God come together is in the various parishes which make up the diocese. The bishop assigns a pastor to

extend his ministry to serve the needs of each parish in the diocese, and the pastor in turn provides pastoral, sacramental, liturgical, catechetical and spiritual care and guidance to those members of the Christian faithful who are members of that parish, or several parishes, entrusted to his care. Some priests are assigned as parochial vicars to assist the pastor, and other priests may be assigned as chaplains, entrusted with the pastoral care of a particular group of the Christian faithful.

Our parishes are truly “Centers of Hope,” or what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines as: “our home base where we grow as disciples of Jesus in the world.” The Catechism goes on to define the parish in this beautiful way: “A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a diocese; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop. It is the place where all the faithful can be gathered together for the Sunday celebration of



the Eucharist. The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life; it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ's saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love” (#2179).

As Pope St. John Paul II so beautifully defined the parish: “The parish is...to be a place in the world for the community of believers to gather together as sign and instrument of the vocation of all to communion” (*Christifideles Laici*, 27).

So, when we talk about the Church, we are talking about this wonderful gift that Jesus, who won for us our salvation, has in turn given to us to help us live faithfully and joyfully in this world, keeping our solemn baptismal promises, and leading us to the heavenly rewards God wants us to have when our life in this world is completed. The Church is the people of God, the Body of Christ, God's pilgrim people, a saved community of disciples of Jesus; the Church is us, people of faith, and those people who are faithfully following Jesus as Catholics who are vibrant members of the Church in the Diocese of Kalamazoo.



Pope Francis, in his typically straightforward style of teaching, reminds us: “It is an absurd dichotomy to want to live with Jesus without the Church: to follow Jesus outside the Church; to love Jesus (but not) the Church” [homily, January 30, 2014]. Jesus loves us unconditionally, and the more we love Jesus and stay united with Him through His Church, the more we will find our way to Heaven.

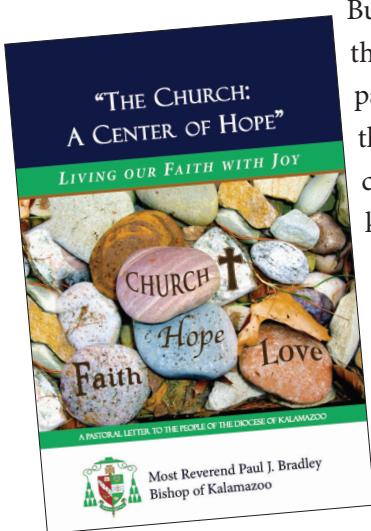
IV. Parishes and Collaboratives: the What, the Why and the How

We all know what parishes are. To one degree or another, the parish is the place where Catholics go to put our faith into practice. When we talk about going to church, we usually mean we are going to the local parish church where we will go to Mass. One of the basic responsibilities every Catholic has, and every person of faith for that matter, is to fulfill the Third Commandment of God which states: “Thou shalt keep holy the Lord’s Day.” As Catholics, we are obliged to keep Sundays holy at the minimum by celebrating the Eucharist (or as we say in common parlance, “going to Mass”). As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it so beautifully: “Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to His Church. The faithful give witness to this by their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God’s holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (#2182).

The basic obligations of each Catholic are spelled out in a bit more detail in what are known as the “Seven precepts of the Church.” [See Appendix B] Just as going to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation (or the Vigil Mass) is what being a practicing Catholic means at the barest minimum, so is the fulfillment of the seven

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precepts of the Church. We fulfill these minimal obligations at our local parish church. I have reflected on this aspect of our faith life with you in my most recent pastoral letter, “The Church: A Center of Hope; Living our Faith with Joy” (Nov. 1, 2014). Our local parish community is the place where we are able to participate in this sacred communal dimension of practicing our faith.



But a collaborative? What exactly is that? Simply put, it is one, two or three parishes that are joined together under the guidance of one pastor, or in some cases, two pastors “in solidum,” also known as “team ministry.”

The literal meaning of the word collaborative defines what they are. While safeguarding the integrity and uniqueness of each individual parish, parishes in a collaborative are united under the leadership of one pastor

to “collaborate”, or work together, for the greater good of all the parishes. Previously, each parish could only rely upon the resources available to itself; in a collaborative, parishes can benefit from the resources of each of the parishes. Let me clarify that when I refer to resources, that does not include financial resources. In a collaborative arrangement each parish maintains its own financial records; the financial offerings that are given by the faithful for the support of the parish are to be used for the benefit of that particular parish. Each parish’s financial reserves (and/or indebtedness) remains particular to the individual parish. Shared resources refer more to the possibility of sharing parish staff members, perhaps a combined parish/collaborative weekly bulletin, and benefitting from and participating in one another’s regular parish events and

ministries. The pastor is responsible to take care of each parish's particular pastoral needs, while at the same time helping to be a bridge so that there can be greater communication and involvement between/among the other parishes in the collaborative. The pastor is responsible for the administrative oversight of each parish under his leadership, and is charged with the basic responsibilities of every priest: to teach the faith, to sanctify (that is to help people grow in holiness),and to lead the people to Jesus.

One of the benefits of arranging our parishes into collaboratives is that our declining number of priests are able to be more evenly distributed to serve our people. When we look at national statistics, we learn that the average priest/people ratio on the United States is 1/1,800 Catholics (CARA). In our diocese, given a number of our smaller parishes, we are just about at that ratio. The 28 priests who are assigned as pastors of our 59 parishes, arranged into 28 collaboratives, have the skills and talents to provide the administrative and pastoral oversight of the multiple parishes for whom they are responsible. This allows our 28 other diocesan priests to use their many skills and talents as parochial vicars, hospital chaplains, Catholic school spiritual moderators, or in other special ministries. In the past, we were unable to have this kind of flexibility.

While it was certainly a challenge for everyone in the diocese to experience a major transition all at the same time on July 1st when the collaboratives went into effect, on the other hand, that was also an advantage. Now that a few months have passed, and the adjustment period is progressing, and following a few modest modifications or other revisions that have been made, our diocese should experience a time of relative stability for many years to come. Each of the pastors assigned in this new arrangement received an assignment for a six-year term, with the possibility of a renewal of that term for another six years. We have not had terms of office in the past in

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our diocese, primarily because we were in a reactive mode, trying to fill vacancies that took place due to an unexpected health crisis, an unforeseen circumstance, or simply due to retirement. The more proactive stance we have taken with our priestly assignments should translate into a time of much needed stability for all, our priests and our people.

Finally the collaboratives are purposely temporary and, so to speak, moveable. *Temporary* is one of those relative terms with no particular time limit attached; however, it does convey that it is not permanent. One of the basic starting points of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan has been to safeguard the uniqueness and vitality of our parishes. We have made the decision not to make permanent changes, such as canonically closing or merging parishes. At this time in our diocese's history, as the number of our priests are not keeping up with our pastoral care needs, this arrangement of our parishes into collaboratives helps — temporarily — to make better use of the fewer priests available to us. When we have an increase of priests, then we may very well be able to “uncouple” some of our collaboratives.

Please notice that I said “*when* we have an increase of priests.” As is the case in many other parts of our country, and in fact the world, we are at a time in history when fewer young men are responding to God's call to consider the priesthood as their life's vocation. We need more priests. There is no doubt that God is calling. We are the ones who have to continue encouraging young men to listen for that call in their hearts. There are so many other “voices” tugging at the hearts of our young people. Jesus told us: *The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest* (Matt. 9:37-38). Encouraging young men to consider a vocation to the priesthood, or young women to consider a vocation to religious life, is a responsibility that is shared by all of us, beginning with me as the bishop. We are currently blessed with



eight young men in our priestly formation program preparing for priesthood in one of three different seminaries, spanning from second year college to the final year of the School of Theology. If we have eight young men spanning a seven-year preparation program, it is readily evident that we will not be seeing a great increase in newly-ordained priests in the short term. Our Vocations Office is primarily charged with finding ways to keep this important need at the forefront of our collective attention. Prayer is the most effective method of vocation recruitment. Our need is great. I regularly tell our priests that each and every one of them are “vocation recruiters”; there is no greater way to encourage a young man to think about being a priest than to see a priest who is happy and fulfilled in his own ministry as a priest of Jesus Christ, bringing Jesus’ love and mercy to his people, and preaching the Good News of Jesus to the world.

“Moving Forward in Hope:

However, that responsibility is also one that belongs to each and every one of us. When we consider that vocations to the priesthood must be nurtured and encouraged within our families, we have to ask to what degree do our parents and grandparents encourage their children and grandchildren to consider being a priest or religious when discussing career paths and guiding them in their vocational choices? Here is a very stark statistic. The majority of our priests were not originally born and raised within the territory of the Diocese of Kalamazoo. Of the 56 priests actively serving in our parishes at the present time, only 18 were born and raised within the Diocese of Kalamazoo. Nine currently are in a religious community and serving here temporarily; five used to be in a religious community and have chosen to become a diocesan priest serving here; five are priests from other countries serving here; 19 are priests who were born and raised elsewhere but chose to come here and permanently serve here in our diocese (a term that is known is “incardinated”). Of the 59 parishes in our Diocese, only 27 parishes have had a young man become a priest or enter into religious life and only 19 parishes have produced a priestly vocation within the last 45 years. Wouldn’t

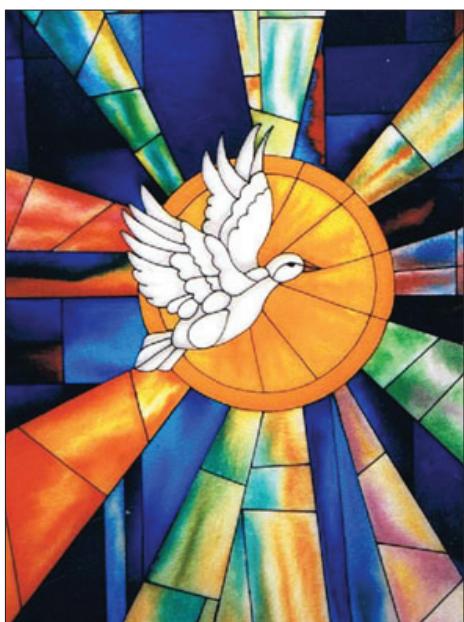


it be amazing if every parish was able to provide one priest or sister to serve the needs of the Church here in our diocese? Our priestly ministry problem would be resolved.

There is one more important fact that must be considered in terms of our very particular needs for a greater number of priests to serve in our diocese. As I have already mentioned, we not only need English-speaking priests; our need for Spanish-speaking priests is quite great. The Hispanic/Latino population living in our diocese is growing. Recent demographic information tells us that close to six percent of the total population living in the territory of our diocese is Hispanic/Latino. Since the majority of Hispanic/Latino people are Catholic, they represent more than 46 percent of the Catholic population in our diocese. While many are bilingual and speak English well, there is a significant number of these Hispanic sisters and brothers who do not speak English, or who still prefer to receive their sacramental preparation, pastoral counseling or to be able to go to confession in their native language. In addition to a growing number of permanent residents who are Hispanic, there is a significant influx of migrant farm workers who make southwest Michigan their home for six months of the year during the planting, growing and harvesting seasons, many of whom do not speak English. We need to be better prepared to provide pastoral care in Spanish for these many Catholics who live among us for much of the year. Of our 56 active priests, only 11 are bilingual. For many years our diocese arranges for the presence of several Spanish-speaking priests and sisters to come here from Texas or Mexico to assist us in our pastoral care during the migrant season. We are grateful to them for this critically important temporary assistance. But it is clear that not only do we need more priests; we need priests who are bilingual. We are focusing much more attention in our priestly formation programs to ensure our new priests are prepared to do so.

“Moving Forward in Hope:

In this same regard of being better prepared to provide pastoral ministry to all our people, I hope you are aware that we are blessed with the presence of three sisters who are now a permanent part of our diocese. Through the assistance of the Catholic Extension Society who offered a very generous grant to make it possible, and through a wonderful partnership with the Missionary Servants of the Divine Spirit, in Colombia, South America, three sisters of the Holy Spirit have been living here in our Diocese and primarily assisting the priests at San Felipe de Jesus Mission Parish in Fennville and



Immaculate Conception Parish in Hartford with parish outreach, home visitation, religious education, and many other aspects of providing pastoral care for our Hispanic Catholics. We are finalizing plans with the Mother Superior of the Missionary Servants of the Divine Spirit to permanently establish a Foundation of these sisters in our diocese to ensure that we will have their valuable assistance for many years to come.

Of course, this is with the hope that they will also begin to attract young women whom the Lord is calling to join them in living out their very special religious consecration.

Praying for, and encouraging, an increase in vocations to the priesthood is one of our most important responsibilities as Catholics, and is also one of the major solutions to the situation which has led to the development and implementation of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan.

V. Challenges and Opportunities

With any change comes a time of adjustment and uncertainty, as we long for what we have left behind (which in some ways is similar to a grieving process), but also as we move forward with excitement and anticipation for what lies ahead. We experience minor changes 100 times a day which we, sometimes even unconsciously, adapt to with little or no difficulty. Less frequently, but with some regularity, we experience more substantive changes in our lives, from the need to adapt to seasons of the year, to the growth we experience in the seasons of our own lives, moving from infancy to childhood to adolescence to adulthood to those wonderful golden years of those of us who are experienced, or as we sometimes say, seasoned. This time of historic change that we are experiencing in our diocese is an almost predictable result of the same realities taking place within our local Church, which have been greatly influenced by the dramatic societal changes taking place in the world around us (sexual revolution, growing secularism, global terrorism), and within our Church at the universal level (Vatican II, clergy sexual abuse crisis, dramatic decline in Mass attendance) for several decades. Those changes are making their impact on the reality of where we find ourselves at this time in history as a still-young mission diocese.

We have all had the experience of breaking in a pair of new shoes. The first few times we wear them, they might be uncomfortable, stiff, even temporarily painful, and we might trip up every so often or slip as we adjust to the shiny surfaces of the new shoes’ soles. In some ways, that is what some may have been experiencing during these first months of the implementation of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan. We have to get used to the “new shoes” of our new collaboratives and allow time to “break them in” so to speak. That is part of the real challenge that everyone is going through, both priests in their new assignments and the people with the new Mass schedules

“Moving Forward in Hope:



and other parish changes, and as both the priests and the people get to know one another.

As with every challenge we encounter in our lives, so too with the challenges that we might be facing as parish communities become better acquainted with the other parish communities in the collaborative: we need to deal with these challenges and figure out ways to resolve any problems, rather than to ignore them or pretend they do not exist. As people of faith, it is even more important for us to be guided by the principles of our faith and the values of the Gospel in confronting the challenges and resolving the problems during this period of time. I have been urging our priests and our people to use this time to truly practice the virtues of patience, understanding and forgiveness; to keep a good sense of humor; to always consider the big picture; and to make sure that we never allow discouragement or disappointment to dampen our spirits nor to forget that we must always be people of hope.

While it is true that every change may cause us to long for what we have left behind to one degree or another, it is equally true that every change also provides us with many new opportunities to be creative, innovative and to explore new possibilities. I am sure that when each of us pauses to reflect on our own personal life circumstance, we may very well find ourselves in places or in situations that we never might have even imagined, or might have thought we were not capable of doing. I can very honestly say that there has not been one priestly assignment that I was asked to accept by the bishops I have had over my 45 years of priesthood that I did not at first find myself worried whether I was up to the challenge, but then as I accepted each and moved forward in hope, found that, with the help of many people and by the grace of God, I was able, for better or for worse, to fulfill each of those assignments. Once again, I am confident that is what will prove to be the situation for us as a diocese at this time in our history. We have seen the problems that are before us, we have considered all our options, we have communicated widely both to inform as well as to welcome suggestions, we have developed a strategic plan, and we have now implemented that plan. While we must keep confronting the challenges and finding ways to resolve the current problems or those that may still arise, we must also embrace our new circumstances and move forward with enthusiasm to continue the mission of the Church.

VI. Where We Go from Here: *Forward in Hope*

It is very possible that the most frequently asked question of any child by interested adults is: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Each of us was asked that question a thousand times in our childhood years; each of us has asked that question of those children in our lives just as often. The answers we gave, or that we hear, from children in response to that question usually represent their biggest

dreams or something out of their wildest imagination. We want to be anyone with a superlative attached to it — the greatest, the best, the most talented or the most beautiful, the richest, the most powerful; we want to be superheroes; Olympic stars, athletic superstars, Academy Award winners; we want to be admired by all the world. As we get a bit older our answers might become a bit more realistic, but the goals, dreams and visions are still related to accomplishing something great. Very few of us would have as our life’s ambition to be mediocre in our profession, or to have as a goal to come in last in the 100-yard dash. It is natural for us to dream big and to shoot for the stars.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves that same question about our diocese. As I have mentioned already, we are still a relatively young diocese — we have only been a diocese since 1971. The Catholic faith has been in southwest Michigan for much longer, first as part of the Diocese of Detroit (which was the only diocese for the entire State of Michigan in the 1850’s) then as part of the Diocese of Grand Rapids for some of our diocese and part of the Diocese of Lansing for some others. But in our current alignment of 59 parishes in nine counties of southwest Michigan, we have only been a diocese for 45 years, currently moving from “late adolescence” into “young adulthood” so to speak. When our diocese “grows up” — as our diocese comes more into its own — what are the hopes, dreams, and vision for the Church in the Diocese of Kalamazoo?

Before I offer some thoughts about the vision for the future, let me emphasize that the very reason why we have implemented the Diocesan Pastoral Plan, arranged our 59 parishes into 28 Collaboratives and reassigned most of our priests as pastors, administrators, parochial vicars, chaplains, spiritual moderators, and special ministries has been not only to attempt to resolve the problems we were encountering due to our current circumstances, but also to position ourselves better in such a way as to more

completely fulfill the mission entrusted to us by Jesus and His Church. The Diocesan Pastoral Plan is about much more than “rearranging the furniture in the house”; it is about making responsible use of our current resources so that we can put those resources to work in better ways to accomplish the mission. Now that we have created the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and implemented the new collaboratives, we are far from being done; in fact, we have only just begun. It is my hope and fervent prayer that because of our new pastoral plan, we are now better positioned to accomplish great things — to shoot for the stars — to become the best diocese we can be in doing the work of the Church.



My answer to that question about our diocese and what we want to become is not anything new, nor does it have anything to do with my own personal goals. My answer, and I hope the answer that all of us would give as followers of Jesus and good faithful Catholics, is that we want our diocese to be 100 percent committed to accomplishing the mission of the Church; that we want to be faithful to the vision that Jesus gave when He established the Church and commissioned the

“Moving Forward in Hope:

Apostles to go forth and begin the work of the Church with these words: *Full authority has been given to Me both in Heaven and on earth; go therefore and make disciples of all the nations; Baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world* (Matthew 28:18-20).

There is no bigger dream possible than that; this vision, which is Jesus' vision, shoots beyond the stars into eternity. My vision — I hope your vision as well — is:

- 1) that we will make the work of the Church here in these nine counties open to the ongoing guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- 2) that we will personally embrace the part of this vision that uniquely belongs to each of us through our common baptismal vocation and “call to holiness”;
- 3) that the Church in our 28 Collaboratives will be “on fire” with love for Jesus and that we will be even more effective in reaching out to love our neighbors with Jesus’ love;
- 4) that we will live with one another in Catholic charity, with mercy and with justice;
- 5) and finally, as we become renewed in our faith as Catholics and in our love for Jesus, that we will fully embrace our responsibility as joyful disciples of Jesus by not just being “consumers” of the Church’s ministries and sacraments, but that we can be “marketers” or “promoters” — truly, evangelizers of the Good News of Jesus to all the world — or at least to the part of the world in which we live.

Our collective responsibility is to realize anew that through our baptism, each of us has been called to be a joyful followers of Jesus as we live our faith with conviction, not just at “church” but in every situation where our daily responsibilities take us, to defend our faith with our very lives if necessary, and to share our faith in keeping



with the spirit of the new evangelization formerly called for both by Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI and currently by Pope Francis.

Naturally, we are all still adjusting to our new circumstances; to use the furniture analogy again, we are still a little tentative about the new arrangement and placement of the furniture; we are not quite comfortable in walking with confidence through the rooms in the dark. But just as we know when we rearrange our room furniture at home, or start living in a new home, that comfort level comes with time and with trial and error, so we can be confident that same comfort level will come in regard to our new collaboratives, sooner rather than later.

While we go through this adjustment period, I am convinced that we need to refocus our attention on why it is that we come together at our parishes in the first place. Why do we come to Mass? Why is it important that we have a priest assigned to provide pastoral and sacramental care for us? The answer is because we want to know, and love, Jesus. And the way Jesus has provided for us to be able to do that is through His Church. Recall those beautiful words Jesus spoke even as He was ascending back to Heaven having completed



His saving mission on earth: *Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world* (Mt. 28:20). Jesus remains always present to us through His Church and through the ministry of our priests who, through the sacrament of Holy Orders, are able to “be Jesus” for us in the sacraments. When a priest hears your confession and absolves your sins, it is Jesus who absolves you. When a priest celebrates Mass, Jesus’ Body and Blood are truly made Present in the Holy Eucharist. We come to Mass, we open ourselves to be instructed in the Good News of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church, because that is what we desperately need in our spiritual lives. As Jesus has taught in the graphic image of the “vine and the branches”: *I am the Vine, you are the branches; He who lives in Me and I in him will produce abundantly, but apart from Me you can do nothing.* (John 15:5).

Of course there are other important dimensions to coming to church, being active in our parishes, and practicing our faith, but we can never lose sight of what is most important, or allow differences about the Mass schedules or other matters that are far from essential to our

faith to distract or discourage us in any way.

It is for this reason that I have directed all our priests, and in particular the pastors of our 28 Collaboratives, to initiate a time of spiritual renewal for all parishioners during these weeks and months of initial adjustments. I have asked each priest, in consultation with their lay leaders, to determine which published format or program of spiritual renewal to follow for their respective parish(es). The most important thing is to make this time of spiritual renewal a first priority for all our collaboratives for these next weeks and months so that we will hear more clearly Jesus’ voice, and realize more deeply who we are, as individuals, as parishioners, as members of the Diocese of Kalamazoo in union with me as the bishop of this Local Church, as Catholics in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Catholic Church being led by our Holy Father Pope Francis, and as joyful and faithful followers of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

In other words, we need to move *forward in hope*. Are there problems and challenges that we still are facing? Yes there are, we have



“Moving Forward in Hope:

identified them, and are trying to resolve them, and all of us need to work together to find solutions for them, while we pay as much, if not more, attention to the new opportunities that are being presented to us. Also, we can look at the glass as half empty and see the inconvenience this is causing because I have to make accommodations in my own personal schedule to get to Mass at a different time than I am accustomed to, or to have to share a priest with another parish; but it is much healthier and more virtuous to look at the glass that is half full, as we keep in mind that in spite of our challenges, we are still very blessed to have multiple Mass times available to us, and at least one priest, and maybe more, nearby to “be Jesus” for us by celebrating the sacraments and by providing the pastoral and sacramental care that is so essential to us, and to be our Shepherd as we all continue our journey of faith. As we know, there are more and more parts of our country where that is not the case at all. It accomplishes nothing that is helpful to look to the past and long for what does not exist any longer.



Among the theologically astute insights of the Second Vatican Council, especially in the *Dogmatic Constitution On the Church* (*Lumen Gentium*), we have the rich images of the Church as a “Pilgrim Church,” and each of us known as “a person of faith,” and that all who live in this world as a person of faith as being on a “pilgrimage of faith”. In that sense, we are on a journey of a lifetime with our destination firmly set on living in Heaven united with God for all eternity, and blessed here on earth to have our priests serving as our pilgrimage guides, who help to keep us on the right paths through sharing the wisdom of God’s Word, the Good News of the Gospel, the teachings of our faith, and who, when we are lost, go out to the highways and byways to look for us and bring us back home. Of course, our parishes are the places along the pilgrim path where we come to be refreshed, fed, instructed, strengthened and healed so that we can keep moving forward on our pilgrimage of faith.

Pope Francis loves to use the image of the parish Church as similar to a “way station”, or as we might call it, a “rest area” along the Interstate — the place where we come to be refreshed, rest a bit, have a bite to eat, and then, after being renewed, to continue on your journey.

As we continue with that image of our lives in this world as a pilgrimage, it is so necessary for all of us to keep on the move, moving toward our final destination. We can not keep looking to the past; we certainly can not live in the past. We are people who live in the present, and we must keep moving forward into the future, dealing with the problems and challenges as they present themselves, and finding new ways to put the new opportunities to work to help us all advance along our pilgrimage.

It is critically important for our spiritual lives to keep moving *forward in hope*, knowing that through the abiding Presence of Jesus in His Church and through the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit,



Whom Jesus promised will guide the whole Church for all time, we will be as well prepared as we can possibly be to live our faith as followers of Jesus courageously, lovingly, faithfully and joyfully, and to continue our pilgrimage of faith, accompanied by our fellow pilgrims and shepherded by our pilgrimage guides, moving safely and surely into the arms of our loving God in Heaven when our pilgrimage of faith is completed.

We are able to confidently move forward in hope because we believe in Jesus and in His victory over sin and death. The entire reason why our loving God gave us His only begotten Son to take our human nature on Himself, even as He maintained His divine nature, was so that He could accomplish what no human person or all of humanity together could accomplish on our own: the reconciliation that is so essential between humanity, God's creation, and Himself, our Creator and merciful Father. Jesus accomplished that reconciliation through His life, death and resurrection, and we share in that glorious victory. We celebrate that saving event on Easter, and we re-live that event every time we come together to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, and receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in Holy Communion. That means that true followers of Jesus are Easter people, and by

definition, we are people of hope. While we live here in this world, and make our way along our pilgrimage of faith, we are “waiting in joyful hope” for the moment when the pilgrimage is ended and the work of the Church is accomplished. And so, in the midst of the challenges and opportunities, in spite of our problems and difficulties, and even as we go through changes and adjustments, we must keep moving *forward in hope*, each of us individually and all of us as a diocese collectively, each and every day of our lives.

As I complete this fourth pastoral letter to my dear family of faith in this wonderful local Church of Kalamazoo, it happens to be the Feast Day of St. Augustine, bishop and doctor of the Church. As we all know, St. Augustine is the patron saint of our diocese as well as the patron saint for our Diocesan Cathedral. It is well-known that St. Augustine, as brilliant as he was, spent a good part of his adolescent and young adult years pursuing all kinds of bizarre academic theories and living a life of debauchery and immorality. Throughout his life, his mother, who is also canonized, St. Monica, never lost hope and kept praying for him and urging him to repent and return to God’s family of faith. Eventually St. Monica’s prayers were answered, and St. Augustine became a Catholic, then a priest, and then Bishop of Hippo. He is best known for his two classic works: *Confessions* and *City of God*. In his “*Confessions*”, St. Augustine wrote this well-known quote: “Great are You, O Lord and highly worthy of praise. You arouse us so that praising You may bring us joy, because You have created us and draw us to Yourself, and our hearts will be restless, until they rest in You” (Book 1, Chapter 1, *Confessions*).

At this very special and historic time of our diocese’s pilgrimage of faith, I reaffirm our prayer that the great St. Augustine, who was such a faithful and joyful pilgrim himself, will continue to watch over our diocese and intercede before our loving God to shower His blessings upon us so that we will find our ultimate rest in Him.

“Moving Forward in Hope:

As we draw near to the conclusion of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, I ask that our dear Blessed Mother, our Mother of Mercy, will continue to show her gentle maternal love and tenderness to our family of faith in this diocese, even as she helps to keep us close to the Divine Mercies of the Sacred Heart of her Son Jesus, Who extends His open arms in constant invitation with His cherished and reassuring words of comfort: *Come to Me, all who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take My yoke upon your shoulders and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for My yoke is easy and My burden light* (Matthew 11:28).

Faithfully yours in Christ —
Bishop Paul J. Bradley

+Paul J. Bradley

August 28, 2016
Feast of St. Augustine,
Bishop and Doctor of the Church,
and patron of our Diocesan family of faith

APPENDIX A

Deaneries

Central Deanery

Dean: Very Rev. James Richardson, Kalamazoo County

- St. Augustine Cathedral Parish, Kalamazoo
- St. Thomas More Student Parish, Kalamazoo
- St. Monica Parish, Kalamazoo
- St. Mary Parish, Kalamazoo and St. Ambrose Parish, Parchment
- St. Joseph Parish, Kalamazoo
- St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Portage
- St. Martin of Tours Parish, Vicksburg and St. Edward Parish, Mendon*
[*St. Joseph County]
- St. Ann Parish, Augusta; St. Ambrose Parish, Delton* and Our Lady of Great Oak Parish, Lacey* [*Barry County]

Eastern Deanery

Dean: Very Rev. Mark Vyverman, Branch and Calhoun Counties

- St. Joseph Parish, St. Jerome Parish and St. Philip Parish, Battle Creek
- St. Mary Parish, Marshall and St John the Evangelist Parish, Albion
- St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Coldwater; Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Union City and St. Mary's Assumption Parish, Bronson

Northern Deanery

Dean: Very Rev. Fabio Garzon, Allegan and Barry Counties

- St. Peter Parish, Douglas, Immaculate Conception, Hartford* and San Felipe de Jesus Parish, Fennville
- St. Mary's Visitation Parish, Byron Center; St. Stanislaus Parish, Dorr and Sacred Heart Parish, Watson
- Blessed Sacrament Parish, Allegan and St. Margaret Parish, Otsego
- St. Therese of Lisieux Parish, Wayland and SS Cyril and Methodius Parish, Gun Lake
- St. Rose of Lima Parish, Hastings and St. Cyril Parish, Nashville
[Van Buren County]

“Moving Forward in Hope:

Southern Deanery

Dean: Very Rev. Richard Altine, Cass and St. Joseph Counties

- Holy Maternity of Mary Parish, Dowagiac; Sacred Heart of Mary Parish, Silver Creek and Holy Family Parish, Decatur* [*Van Buren County]
- Our Lady of the Lake Parish, Edwardsburg and St. Ann Parish, Cassopolis
- Immaculate Conception Parish, Three Rivers; St. Clare Parish, Centreville and St. Barbara Parish, Colon
- Holy Angels Parish, Sturgis and St. Joseph Parish, White Pigeon

Western Deanery

Dean: Very Rev. Brian Stanley, Berrien and Van Buren Counties

- SS John & Bernard Parish, Benton Harbor
- St. Joseph Parish, St. Joseph
- St. Anthony Parish, Buchanan; St. Gabriel Parish, Berrien Springs and Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, Bridgeman
- St. Mary of the Lake Parish, New Buffalo; St. Agnes Parish, Sawyer and St. Mary of the Assumption, Three Oaks
- St. Mark Parish and St. Mary Parish, Niles
- St. Basil Parish, South Haven; Sacred Heart Parish, Bangor and St. Jude Parish, Gobles
- St. Joseph Parish, Watervliet
- St. Mary Parish, Paw Paw; St. Margaret Mary Parish, Marcellus* and St. John Bosco Parish, Mattawan [*Cass County]

APPENDIX B

The Seven Precepts of the Church

- I. To attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and resting from servile works.
- II. To observe the days of abstinence and fasting.
- III. To confess our sins to a priest, at least once a year.
- IV. To receive Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist at least once a year during Easter Season.
- V. To contribute to the support of the Church.
- VI. To obey the laws of the Church concerning Matrimony.
- VII. To participate in the Church’s mission of Evangelization of Souls.
(Missionary Spirit of the Church)

FOR THE CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

God of Mercy and Compassion, we give You thanks and praise for your love for us.

Consecrated by baptism and nourished through the Eucharist, we are privileged to be your holy and faithful people.

We are gathered together as the Church in the Diocese of Kalamazoo, united with our Bishop, and in union with our Holy Father, as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, vibrant members of the Body of Christ.

As disciples of Your Son and our Lord Jesus Christ, You have entrusted us with the sacred purpose of joyfully living our faith and faithfully sharing the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Aware of our current challenges, while at the same time enthused by our new opportunities, we ask your grace to open our hearts to the guidance and direction of your Holy Spirit.

Please inspire the men you are calling to be your holy priests and deacons so they generously answer your call to serve God’s people.

May all of us be filled with a desire to use the gifts and talents You have given us in helping to advance the mission of the Church.

Let the examples of those who have gone before us in faith, and in a particular way our dear Blessed Mother, inspire us to take up our crosses and follow You with hope and perseverance.

May we be the leaven which will renew us in Christ and help to advance the Kingdom of God among us.

We ask this through the intercession of our beloved patron, Saint Augustine, and through Christ our Lord.

Amen



A PRAYER FOR THE
DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

Faithful PARISH LIFE D
CATHOLIC Vocations I
Education Holy Spirit R
Stewardship Eucharist S
New Evangelization Acceptance T
Collaboration MISSION Y
Unity Community
Compassion Hospitality Accompaniment



DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

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