



Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls
Office of the Bishop

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January 30, 2014

To the Pastors, Clergy and Lay Faithful of the Parishes in the Yankton Deanery:

The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. In my column published in the January 2014 edition of the Bishop's Bulletin, I outlined the acute challenges faced by our diocese in the near term, challenges brought about, in part, by the departure of religious order priests, retirements and other circumstances. Just this year, there will be at least eight fewer priests available for assignment in our large diocese of Eastern South Dakota.

Our goals for Pastoral Planning remain:

- to assure that the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, are available throughout the diocese,
- to assure that solid faith formation is offered,
- to assure that the faithful can gather in vibrant and vital parishes, and
- to respect and protect the spiritual and physical health of priests.

Keeping these goals and the information that has been provided through consultation, it is now necessary to merge some parishes and link others in new ways. A merger results when two or more parishes become one. A pastoral linkage results when several parishes are served by the same priest. All areas of the diocese will be impacted over the next several years. More information about parish mergers can be found at the Diocese of Sioux Falls' website www.sfcatholic.org under the "Implementing a Pastoral Plan" link.

Critical considerations taken into account when discerning which parishes should be merged include but are not limited to the following:

- distances traveled by the lay faithful and priests;
- population and demographic information;
- the frequency with which the sacraments are received;
- the physical condition of churches, rectories and ancillary buildings;
- the financial stability of parishes;
- our obligation as Diocesan Church to provide priests to carry out specialized ministries locally and to the universal Church; and
- the health and well-being of priests.

With these parameters, I am thus proposing to decree the following changes to parish structures within the Yankton Deanery effective July 1, 2014:

1. Saint Agnes Parish, Sigel would be merged with Saint John the Baptist Parish, Lesterville
2. Saint Columba Parish, Mayfield would be merged with Saint Boniface Parish, Idylwilde

The above parish mergers would be implemented so that we might achieve the goals for Pastoral Planning. In addition, they will help to facilitate the following changes in pastoral linkages I am contemplating making:

1. Saint John the Baptist Parish, Wagner, Assumption Parish, Dante and Saint Paul Parish, Marty would have the same priest assigned as pastor.
2. Saint Mark Parish, Lake Andes and Saint Paul the Apostle Parish, Armour would have the same priest assigned as pastor.
3. Saint Leo Parish, Tyndall, Saint Vincent Parish, Springfield, and Saint Wenceslaus Parish, Tabor would have the same priest assigned as pastor.
4. Saint George Parish, Scotland, a merged parish in the Idylwilde and Mayfield area, and a merged parish in the Lesterville and Sigel area would have the same priest assigned as pastor.
5. Good Shepherd Parish, Centerville, Saint Patrick Parish, Wakonda, and Saint Teresa of Avila Parish, Beresford would have the same priest assigned as pastor.
6. Saint Peter Parish, Jefferson, Saint Joseph Parish, Elk Point, and Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Parish, Dakota Dunes would have the same priest assigned as pastor. The Priest Director of the Saint Thomas More Newman Center, Vermillion would be assigned to assist the pastor by providing sacramental ministry in the parishes within this pastoral linkage.

Your consultation on these proposed changes is requested. On February 4, 2014, a public meeting to hear your comments will be held at Saint Wenceslaus Church in Tabor beginning at 6:30 PM. Written comments will also be welcomed. A special section on the Diocesan website www.sfcatholic.org has been established to receive such comments. Click on the "Implementing a Pastoral Plan" link to locate the section.

Allow me to be clear: while the above is my current intention after consulting with the priests in your deanery, no final decisions have been made. I desire to learn your thoughts. In accord with Church law, the Council of Priests will be presented with these proposed mergers. Subsequent to this meeting and with consideration given to the consultation received, I will announce final decisions on future parish structures shortly thereafter.

Change is never easy, yet it is a part of life on the prairie as you know from the history of our state and diocese, and from your family experiences. This is reflected most recently through school consolidations and economic adjustments. We should not expect that these will be the only changes, as additional mergers may be needed in the future. Together, as one family of faith grounded on our belief in the person of Jesus Christ, we can accomplish our goals by exercising the virtues of faith, hope and love.

May the Blessed Mother who pondered God's will in her heart yet in humility responded in faith intercede for and watch over us. May our patron, St. Joseph who modeled trust in the future, protect us.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Paul Swain". The signature is written in a cursive style.

The Most Reverend Paul J. Swain
Bishop of Sioux Falls