

# Letter from Bishop Boyea to the Faithful of the Diocese

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

The long-awaited final recommendations of the Diocesan Coordinating Commission were placed on my desk this summer and are now ready to be promulgated. I take this opportunity to thank, in the name of all of us of the Diocese of Lansing, Sister Rita Wenzlick, OP, who has so ably chaired this commission all these years and has guided the process whereby the Diocese of Lansing has planned for its future. It is with great joy that I also announce that Sister Rita has agreed to chair the implementation committee which will oversee the actual realization of our planning.

Let us begin with a story. My parents live 16 miles from Cheboygan, Michigan. Their parish (six miles away and where my great-great grandparents were buried) and two other parishes in Cheboygan were closed and consolidated with St. Mary Parish in Cheboygan, the mother church, back in the early 1990s. That was a traumatic event for all, including my father. However, today the Cheboygan Catholic Community is united in one parish and is a very vibrant presence of Christ in the community and a great place to worship. By pooling the resources of all three parishes, the Cheboygan Catholic Community is now able to host the most important fundraiser and social event in Cheboygan's annual calendar, and just built a new grade school building. None of this would have been possible if all the community resources were being expended on heating and maintaining a lot of buildings. This story points out that while the closing or clustering or merging of parishes is always a painful experience, there can be great good that comes of it, if we are willing to cooperate with and do God's work rather than our own. Having said this, now is the appropriate point to make some comments about our new diocesan plan, which is found on our Web site.

First of all, you will notice, as you read this plan, that many of its elements will take place as needed. There could be any number of circumstances which may lead to any given part of the plan being implemented. Thus, for many of these elements of the plan there is no strict timetable. However, even for those parishes which may not see a change in the immediate future, I would urge them to begin to cooperate even now with their future partners. Collaboration with others is part of the richness of being Catholic and we should exercise and taste that richness even now.

Second, no plan is perfect. I am promulgating this plan almost exactly as it was presented to me because I have confidence in the process Bishop Mengeling initiated, and I trust the hard work of all the people who thoughtfully and prayerfully made these recommendations. In approving this plan, I am not saying it is perfect, but I believe it is the best we can do at this time.

Third, it is clear that more needs to be done regarding Catholic education. Everywhere in this plan there are calls for greater support for Catholic schools, especially in each of the vicariates, and by each of the parishes, especially those parishes which do not have schools. I do believe it is one of the priorities of our diocese and will need our consistent attention over the next years.

Fourth, you will notice a couple of changes in status of some of our parishes. Prior to the promulgation of this plan, those parishes which are being directed by our pastoral coordinators, for whose continued service all of us are very grateful, had as their canonical (legal) pastor, the moderator of the curia, Msgr. Michael Murphy. We are all grateful for his fine service in this regard and in so many other areas of diocesan life. Now, each of these parishes will have as a canonical pastor one of the pastors in closer proximity. A second change you will notice is that most of our personal parishes (those that do not have parish boundaries) are being changed to territorial parishes (with boundaries). For instance, a parish may have been founded to serve the Croatian Catholics but no longer does. Thus this change has been made. Those parishes which still serve primarily and substantially an ethnic group, especially where language is critical, will remain personal parishes.

Fifth, you will notice a number of recommendations that the regions made regarding their own goals. While these are not diocesan goals, they merit pursuit by the regions (vicariates) and thus I endorse them.

Finally, my sisters and brothers, this is a time of change. Change is always difficult, even if it is good change. We need to be patient with one another, and most of all, we need to exercise that great virtue given to each of us in our baptism, that is, love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea  
Bishop of Lansing  
September 15, 2008