

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Matt Kerr
610-871-5200, Extension 265

November 2, 2007

CRITERIA SET FOR PARISH RESTRUCTURING

The Most Reverend Edward P. Cullen, Bishop of Allentown has accepted the recommendations of the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests for a set of criteria to be used by the 33 Deanery Region Committees around the Diocese when considering the possible restructuring of parishes.

Beth Beers of Bath, President of the Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) said "The DPC worked very hard in achieving a set of guidelines that balanced the practical needs of the Diocese with the emotional needs of all of the parishioners. It's a valuable working document that, while strict in its structure, is also flexible to accommodate the needs of the parishes."

There are eight criteria. Among them: that each pastor in the Diocese will be assigned to only one parish. This would make the current practice of twinning; tripling and quadrupling parishes under the charge of one pastor the exception and not the preferred practice.

Another criterion states that the desired proportion of priests to people is 1 to 2,400. This ratio reflects the number of priests that will be available for parish work in 2010. Understandably, it will be impractical to achieve this ratio in all areas of the Diocese for a number of reasons, primarily geographic difficulties.

Very Reverend David L. James, Vicar for Synod Implementation said, "The goal of this restructuring process is to assure that, taking into account the many variations present among our parishes, the assignment of priests will be apportioned as equitably as possible throughout the Diocese and that parish life will be strengthened."

There are also criteria, which examine a parish's financial position and the condition of its buildings and the role they should play in the deanery region committee's recommendation on which church building in a merger or consolidation should be retained.

Accompanying the criteria is a set of six guidelines for implementing any proposed restructuring and a glossary that defines eleven terms used in the process.

The glossary, for instance, draws a distinction between "consolidation" and "merger." Consolidation is a process by which several parishes are joined together in an existing parish that retains its identity and its name. "Merger" is a process by which several parishes are joined together with a new name.

Gretchen Sterns, a DPC member from Orwigsburg said, "The Pastoral Council provided helpful guidelines to each regional committee in the Diocese, so they can make the best decisions for the future of the churches in their jurisdiction. The guidelines were

carefully drafted to ensure that each and every region in the Diocese would consider these principal factors in making their decisions."