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## NEWS RELEASE

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### INITIAL PARISH RESTRUCTURING PLANS ANNOUNCED

In letters from the Most Reverend Edward P. Cullen, D.D., Bishop of Allentown, read at all Masses this weekend in parishes in sixteen Deanery Regions in the Diocese of Allentown parish restructuring plans were announced.

In the letter, the Bishop wrote, "These decisions have not been made easily or without deliberation. The Listening Sessions, the Second Synod of Allentown, Deanery Region Committees, the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and the Council of Priests represent the advice of thousands of people in this matter. Nonetheless, this decision may cause disappointment or even pain for not a few parishioners. Such feelings truly are understandable. As you have supported the Church with your prayers throughout this process, know that I, along with all who advised me in this process, also support you with our prayers." **Video of additional comments from Bishop Cullen is available on the Diocesan Web site: [www.allentowndiocese.org](http://www.allentowndiocese.org)**

The initial consolidations and mergers announced this weekend will reduce the number of parishes in the Diocese by 47. Several restructuring plans have been submitted but are still under review and restructuring plans are still being developed in a number of Deanery Regions.

The restructuring plans are the culmination of a process begun more than two years ago. Listening sessions were held in the fall of 2005 in each of the six Deaneries of the Diocese. As many as 1,500 people attended the six sessions.

In Fall 2006, the Second Synod of the Diocese of Allentown was held. 150 people, the majority elected and the majority lay people were Synod members. The Synod produced 26 statutes, one of which called for the establishment of a Diocesan Pastoral Council. The 23-member, predominately lay council's charge was to implement the Synod statutes, three of which concerned the consolidation and restructuring of parishes.

Deanery Region Committees, made up of the priests assigned to a region and two lay people from each parish in the region, made recommendations on restructuring where necessary, using criteria developed by the Diocesan Pastoral Council and applied uniformly across the Diocese. The Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests reviewed the recommendations before the Bishop acted on them.

The restructuring plans are part of the Diocesan response to a growing shortage of priests. The Diocese projects that by June 2009 there will be 115 priests available for parish ministry.

It is important to note that the assets and liabilities of all newly merged or consolidated parishes will pass to the new parish and not to the Diocese.

In his announcement, the Bishop assured the faithful that the Diocese would help guide parishes in the weeks ahead as they work to address issues that will be involved with the transition to new parishes.

The actions the Bishop approved are either consolidations or mergers. In a consolidation, several parishes are joined together in an existing parish that retains its identity including its name. The retained parish becomes the recipient of the parishioners, assets and liabilities of all the other parishes that were assumed by it.

In a merger, several parishes are joined together to create a new parish that is given a new name. The new parish may or may not retain one of the church buildings from one of the joining parishes. The new parish becomes the recipient of the assets, liabilities and parishioners of the joining parishes.

Unless otherwise noted, the restructuring plans go into effect on July 15. Below are the restructuring plans announced in parishes this weekend:

### **Carbon Deanery Region 1**

St. Stanislaus Parish, Summit Hill will be consolidated with St. Joseph Parish, Summit Hill at St. Joseph Church.

St. John the Baptist Parish, St. Mary Parish and SS. Cyril and Methodius Parish, Coaldale, St. Michael Parish, St. Ann Parish and SS. Peter and Paul Parish, Lansford will merge and become the new St. Katharine Drexel Parish at the former St. Michael Church building in Lansford.

### **Carbon Deanery Region 2**

Immaculate Conception Parish, Sacred Heart Parish and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Nesquehoning will merge and become the new St. Francis of Assisi Parish at the former Immaculate Conception Church building in Nesquehoning.

### **Carbon Deanery Region 3**

St. Mary Parish, Beaver Meadow and St. Nicholas Parish Weatherly will merge and become the new Our Lady of Lourdes Parish at the former St. Nicholas Church building in Weatherly

### **Lehigh Deanery Region 2**

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Allentown will be consolidated with Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Allentown at Sacred Heart Church.

St. Stephen of Hungary Parish, Allentown is unaffected and remains the center for ministry to the Latin Mass community and Diocesan Prison Ministry.

### **Lehigh Deanery Region 5**

Our Lady of Hungary Parish and St. Michael Parish, Northampton will merge and become the new Queenship of Mary Parish at the former Our Lady of Hungary Church building.

Assumption B.V.M. Parish, Northampton is unaffected.

Annunciation B.V.M Parish, St. Lawrence Parish and St. Andrew Parish, Catasauqua will merge and become the new St. John Neumann Parish at a site and on a date still to be determined.

### **Northampton Deanery Region 2**

St. Roch Parish, West Bangor will be consolidated with St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish, Pen Argyl at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Roseto, Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Bangor and St. Rocco Parish, Martins Creek are unaffected.

### **Northampton Deanery Region 3**

Our Lady of Pompeii Parish, St. John Capistrano Parish, St. Joseph Parish, St. Stanislaus Parish and SS. Cyril and Methodius Parish, Bethlehem will merge and become the new Incarnation of Our Lord Parish at the former SS. Cyril and Methodius Church building.

Holy Ghost Parish, Bethlehem will also now serve the Catholic community at Lehigh University.

Holy Infancy Parish, Bethlehem and St. Ursula Parish, Fountain Hill are unaffected.

#### **Northampton Deanery Region 4**

St. Bernard Parish, St. Joseph Parish and St. Michael Parish, Easton will merge and become the new Our Lady of Mercy Parish at the former St. Joseph Church building.

St. Bernard Church will become a public oratory for weekday Masses.

St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Easton is unaffected.

#### **North Schuylkill Deanery Region 1**

St. Bertha Parish, Tuscarora and St. Bartholomew Parish, Brockton will be consolidated with St. Jerome Parish, Tamaqua at St. Jerome Church.

SS. Peter and Paul Parish, Tamaqua is unaffected.

#### **North Schuylkill Deanery Region 2**

Immaculate Conception Parish, Kelayres; St. Kunegunda Parish, St. Patrick Parish and St. Mary Parish, McAdoo; St. Michael Parish and St. Bartholomew Parish, Tresckow will merge and become the new All Saints Parish at the former St. Patrick Church building in McAdoo.

#### **North Schuylkill Deanery Region 3**

Assumption B.V.M. Parish, St. Canicus Parish, St. Casimir Parish, St. Fidelis Parish, St. Joseph Parish and Sacred Heart Parish, Mahanoy City and Our Lady of Siluva Parish, Maizeville will merge and become the new Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Parish at the former St. Joseph Church building in Mahanoy City.

St. Richard Parish, Barnesville is unaffected.

#### **South Schuylkill Deanery Region 1**

Mary, Queen of Peace Parish and St. Joseph Parish, Pottsville and St. Francis de Sales Parish, Mount Carbon will be consolidated with St. Patrick Parish, Pottsville at St. Patrick Church.

St. John the Baptist Parish, Pottsville and St. Ambrose Parish, Schuylkill Haven are unaffected.

#### **South Schuylkill Deanery Region 2**

St. Vincent de Paul parish and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Minersville and St. Kieran Parish, Heckscherville will merge and become the new St. Michael the Archangel Parish at the former St. Vincent de Paul Church building in Minersville.

St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish, St. Francis of Assisi Parish and St. Barbara Parish, Minersville and St. Mary, Star of the Sea Parish, Branchdale will merge and become the new St. Matthew Parish at the former St. Stanislaus Kostka Church building in Minersville.

### **South Schuylkill Deanery Region 3**

St. Mary Parish, Immaculate Conception Parish, St. Casimir Parish, SS. Peter and Paul Parish and St. Boniface Parish, St. Clair will merge and become the new St. Clare of Assisi Parish at the former St. Mary Church building in St. Clair.

### **South Schuylkill Deanery Region 4**

Holy Family Parish and Sacred Heart Parish, New Philadelphia and St. Anthony Parish, Cumbola will merge and become the new Holy Cross Parish at the former Holy Family Church building in New Philadelphia.

St. Stephen Parish, Port Carbon is unaffected

### **South Schuylkill Deanery Region 5**

Immaculate Conception Parish, Tremont, Sacred Heart Parish, Newtown and SS. Peter and Paul Parish, Tower City will merge and become the new Most Blessed Trinity Parish at the former Immaculate Conception Church building in Tremont.

**To view video of Bishop Cullen discussing the restructuring process, access the Diocesan Web site at [www.allentowndiocese.org](http://www.allentowndiocese.org)**