

# Parish Evaluation Q & A

## **1. Why are we going through this process in the Diocese of Fargo?**

Living an examined life always bears much spiritual fruit, whether as an individual, parish or diocese. This evaluation process, which occurs every five years, ensures that our parishes are given the tools they need to flourish. The evaluation allows individual parishes to gauge their strengths and weaknesses so as to plan for the future and it also provides the necessary data to make decisions on the Diocesan level regarding the allocation of resources within the diocese. This may affect whether certain parishes continue to remain open.

## **Should parishes that have no chance of consolidation still do this evaluation?**

Yes. The evaluation is a good thing for all parishes to do as they engage in self-reflection upon the how they carry out the mission that they have been entrusted with. A review of their own parish life will lead to a greater understanding of where they have been and what they are called to do for the future.

## **2. What factors are considered when deciding whether or not a parish will be consolidated?**

Many factors are taken into account. They include but are not limited to the following. The first is how many families belong to the parish along with the trends of Mass attendance. The distance to the nearest parish is an important fact. The number of baptisms and weddings along with the enrollment in religious education are factored into the discernment process as well. Median age and the proper allocation of resources will also be considered.

## **3. If parish consolidation is a possibility, who makes that decision?**

The Bishop of Fargo will make the final decision regarding the closure of parishes, but this beginning of this decision begins on the parish level. After a recommendation to the dean and the Bishop, a decision is made in consultation and communion with the college of consulters, the college of deans and the local clergy. The faithful of each parish also take ownership and play a part in this decision by participation in the evaluation process. By an honest evaluation of the facts gleaned by going through the *Parish Evaluation and Planning Workbook*, everyone involved will contribute some way in this collaborative effort.

## **4. What will happen to our church building if our parish closes?**

There are three possible outcomes. The first is that the church building could be granted chapel status for up to 5 years. Chapel status is granted to the structure of a closed parish when that parish has the funds necessary to provide for the building's upkeep. The building then becomes a chapel of the nearest parish. When chapel status is granted, the chapel's feast day, weddings and funerals can be celebrated at the chapel, but Sunday Masses will not.

Secondly, the building can be sold to a third party. This third party could be a family who would like to make the building a home, a historical society that takes care of the building, or other different entities. When the decision is made to sell the building, an important consideration is whether the buyer has the prospective resources to provide care, insurance and assume liability for the long-term. The last of the three options is demolition. This is to avoid gradual deterioration that is both a liability risk and gives a bad image to the Church.