

Bishop Aquila Announces Structural Changes Being Made Within the Diocese as a Result of the Pastoral Planning Process

On Friday, August 20, 2004, Bishop Samuel Aquila issued a pastoral letter announcing the decisions he has made based upon the results of our year-long pastoral planning process. The complete pastoral letter is available on the diocesan Web site at www.fargodiocese.org. You are encouraged to read the full text of the pastoral letter, which more clearly describes the forthcoming changes in our parish structures. The pastoral letter will also be printed in the September "New Earth."

In the pastoral letter, Bishop Aquila states, "I am thankful to all the Catholics in the Diocese who took the time to provide input during this process, prayed that the recommendations and decisions be guided by the Holy Spirit, and trusted that God would provide for our spiritual needs through and after this time of transition. I extend my deepest gratitude to the laity. You know your parishes and communities much better than I, and you have helped me to understand them more clearly. Your objective and heartfelt counsel, provided to me through individual conversations and correspondence, as well as through the reports prepared by your parishes, have helped me to see parish life in our rural state in a new way. That broader view makes decisions of consolidation even more difficult for me as your bishop. If circumstances were different – if the population in our state had not been steadily declining these past few decades, if the main streets and schools of our small towns bustled with activity – my decisions could be different, too. We cannot continue to operate our parishes in their current structure, however, without recognizing the challenges facing our state and our communities. To be faithful stewards of the blessings God has bestowed upon us, we must use His gifts to the best of our ability. By joining together in our new, consolidated faith communities, we will bring new life to our parishes and will be presented with new opportunities to grow in our faith."

Bishop Aquila announced that 23 parishes within the Diocese of Fargo will consolidate with neighboring parishes by June 2005, one will consolidate in 2006, one in 2009, and the review and possible consolidation of an additional eight parishes will take place by 2010. Some of the church buildings may be designated as chapels for up to five years.

Parishes consolidating by June 2005 include those in the following communities: Hansboro (no longer being used but not yet formally consolidated), Lake Williams, Milton, Osnabrock, Bathgate and Fried (all consolidated this summer), Minnewaukan (October 2004), Alice, Ardoch, Brocket, Burnstad, Cogswell, Conway, Courtenay, Crary, Fulda, Gackle, Jessie, LeRoy, Lomice, Marion, Olga, and Page. Kintyre will consolidate in 2006 and Granville by 2009. Those that will be reviewed and considered for consolidation by 2010 include: Bremen, Hurdsfield, Orrin, Selz, Buchanan, Mount Carmel, Pingree and Wales.

The construction of a new parish in West Fargo will also be considered in the years ahead.

Additional information, including changes in clusters and Deaneries, can be found in the pastoral letter at www.fargodiocese.org.