

- To this end we must be clear, consistent and transparent in all that we share with the people of God. Which brings me to the next section of this letter where do we go from here and how do we develop these plans?

### **Meeting the Thanksgiving 2006 Mandate:**

A sense of urgency is a sense of pressing importance. It is neither an attitude of crisis nor panic; it is a sense of pressing importance. Likewise hope is not a strategic plan, it is a theological virtue. In pressing for plans by Thanksgiving, Bishop Moynihan is striving to move our pressing situation forward.

First, let us review the mandate. Bishop Moynihan asked for written plans to be submitted by Thanksgiving, and that those plans have the possibility for initial implementation in July 2007. The mandate extends to all PCA groups.

He did not ask for:

- Single plans that allow no flexibility.
- Plans that merely opine about closing or merging rather than the long-term concern of care for the people of God.
- Private plans that are hidden from the public.
- Full implementation of a plan to be developed before Thanksgiving.
- Announcements about impending closings or merging, unless he has already mandated a reconfiguration in a specific area of the diocese.
- Planning strategies to be limited to simply a discussion of the reality of fewer priests.

Bishop Moynihan did ask for:

- ✓ Multiple recommended pastoral plans for each area.
- ✓ Usable plans for each area of the diocese that are listed by priority, have time-tables, are capable of implementation, show respect for the needs of the people of an area, demography, evangelization, ministry, mission, and stewardship.
- ✓ Examination of the use of financial, infrastructure, and human resources to assure that ecclesial resources are best used for mission and ministry.
- ✓ Examination of our infrastructure to assure that utilization of our buildings and structural resources are maximized.

- ✓ Communication with parishioners about the realities that we are facing as a diocese.
- ✓ Communication with parishioners that the changing realities of our area, especially the stewardship of resources, will necessitate changes in the number of ministries and parishes in the diocese and in the way that they are staffed.
- ✓ Candor modified by clarity of detail that mitigates rumors and a sense of crisis. A sense of urgency is perfectly ok.
- ✓ The widest possible consultation or information sharing as directed by the wisdom of the PCA leadership: pastors, trustees, and PPC officers.
- ✓ Continued encouragement in the development of positive relationships and cooperative programs and ventures between parishes/parishioners in each pastoral care area.
- ✓ In cases where one priest is responsible for pastoring two or more parishes the examination of methods by which those parishes at sometime in the future to be cared for using one site.
- ✓ In cases where there are multiple priests assigned in ministry to an individual parish the examination of ways in which it may be possible for the parish to be staffed one priest.
- ✓ In all cases, reflecting upon the current weekend Mass schedule, and in those situations in which the Church is consistently filled to less than 50% of its capacity combining liturgies in a way that will promote fewer but better celebrations.
- ✓ The communication of the truth that we have a future full of hope, even if that future will look different from the pastoral structures of the recent past.
- ✓ Sharing the truth about the limited number of priests, the reality of their aging, and the related concern about how much they can actually do in the changing situation. Further, that planning for the human resource provided by priests demonstrate concern for the reality of their aging and health.
- ✓ Encouraging and actively promoting vocations to ministerial life, particularly to those ministries of our current greatest need priesthood and religious life.
- ✓ Sharing the truth that the bishop is deeply concerned about the faith communities of the diocese. He trusts that together we will carefully plan to serve the needs of the people of God - effectively.