

It is a "living" document which will require constant dialogue with all the parties involved: archdiocese, parishes, schools, agencies, etc. However, it is important to share with the Vicariate at large the main elements of this plan. Many details as well as the need for staffing all these future activities will be worked out in the next few months and will be shared with communities of the Vicariate.

#### **Organizational and Financial Development**

1. Create a communication tool and process for all members of the Vicariate.
2. Establish a clear Mission for the Vicariate.
3. Sharing best practices between the different communities.
4. Study the case for a new parish in the Northern part of the Vicariate.
5. Initiate a study for the near and long-term future which could involve clustering of some parishes as well as the role of parish administrators as different from ordained ministers.
6. Engage and involve "development experts" in helping in fund raising for our schools.

#### **Education**

1. Establish an educational process around the concept of "Area Church" or "Vicariate"
2. Create and implement an adult education program on the topic of "sacramentality" and the role of sacraments in our faith life as Catholics.
3. Initiate and implement an educational program on the topic of "true stewardship" which will underline its importance in our life as members of Catholic communities.

#### **Parish Life Services**

1. Active support of the Hispanic ministry by creating specific Vicariate-wide events for all Hispanics and by establishing liaisons between the schools and parishes and the Hispanic ministry initiatives.
2. Develop a Vicariate-wide approach to Pastoral Care with a specific training program for pastoral ministers and an office to coordinate the many requests as well as the responses to these requests.
3. Continue and strengthen youth ministry by establishing better liaison with the Catholic Schools of the Vicariate, by coordinating activities between the different communities and by strengthening the working conditions of our youth ministers.

#### **Development of Ministers**

1. Coordinate on a vicariate-wide basis the two major programs "Try It On" and "Mission Possible" to foster vocations to ordained ministry, religious life and lay ministry.
2. Develop a formation program for lay ministers and make it as available to as many ministers as possible.
3. Reinforce and better define the role of deacons in the Vicariate especially in view of the many needs in hospitals and retirement homes.



The outline of the "pastoral plan" can seem overwhelming; so many initiatives and so few resources! It is important to know that this plan will need to be approved and supported by the archdiocese. It will also require an on-going dialogue and the support of the different communities of the Vicariate. But, most of all, it demands from all of us a deeper understanding of what Church is: the model of communities as described in the Acts of the Apostles asks of us a sharing of our resources and a willingness to go beyond our "comfortable" boundaries.



## "Together in Faith"

### The Road to Pastoral Planning

*In the last few years*, you have probably heard the term "Vicariate" in your different communities: a new terminology in a world which does not stop changing. What does it mean, and more importantly, how much does it concern each one of us as members of the different Catholic Communities living in Pontiac, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Waterford, Oakland Township, Auburn Hills and Lake Orion?

During the 2004-2005 year, each parish, school, agency and institution affiliated with this area has undergone an in-depth study of its resources, its needs and where it needs to go. This process was called "Together in Faith" and was undertaken by all the different Vicariates of the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Today, through this newsletter, the Pontiac Area Vicariate Pastoral Council wants to answer a certain number of questions:

1. What is a "Vicariate" and why do we need this new structure?
2. Who are we as a Vicariate? How do we look?
3. Where are we going? What does the future look like? And what do we need to do?

The purpose of this newsletter is to ensure that all of us know what is happening in our communities and to find answers to our questions through dialogue with our parish councils and the many ministers of our communities, schools, agencies and institutions.

## What is a Vicariate?

We know that as Catholics, the scope of our communities goes far beyond the people with whom we worship, socialize and share our faith on a regular basis. We are part of a Universal Church, a Church which embraces all kinds of different people – women, men, children, rich and poor, black, brown and white.

The organizational structure of the Catholic Church in dioceses is not just or mainly a 'hierarchical' structure, but gives a human dimension to the concept of 'universal'. We can relate more easily to a geographical area – we know the city of Detroit, its suburbs and in the context of the Archdiocese of Detroit we share responsibility for common projects, which go far beyond our own communities.

However, the sheer size of the archdiocese – more than 1 million Catholics makes it difficult for us to 'experience' Church. A few years ago, the archdiocese organized itself into Vicariates: a grouping of parishes (10 to 20) which, because of their geographical proximity, have an on-going relationship, interact with one another on a regular basis. It provides us with an opportunity to share our resources, to get actively involved in planning our own future and to make sure that we exercise on a day-to-day basis the responsibility that we have to one another. It is our "Area Church" – where we live, shop, work and relate with one another on a regular basis.

Newsletter  
from  
the  
Pontiac  
Area  
Vicariate

Fall 2005

Today, our Vicariate (the Pontiac Area Vicariate) is made-up of nine individual parishes, three parishes clustered as the Pontiac Catholic Community, three elementary schools and a high school. It also includes the Oakland Jail ministry, four hospitals, chaplaincies for three retirement homes, social agencies, two religious communities and ministries which are vicariate-wide such as Genesis Ministries for young adults.

The Vicariate is headed by a "Vicar" (presently Fr. Jerry Brzezinski, pastor of St. John Fisher) elected by his peers for a three year term (renewable once). The Vicar collaborates with a Vicariate Pastoral Council made up of representatives from each parish council as well as representatives of different groups, such as the Pastoral Ministers Association. The Vicariate Pastoral Council is responsible for the pastoral planning of the Vicariate, ensuring that parishes and all other institutions (schools, agencies, etc) can successfully fulfill their mission. The "Together in Faith" process required us to look at all aspects of the Vicariate, analyze its strengths and challenges and establish a pastoral plan for the next five years.

## A Profile of the Pontiac Area Vicariate

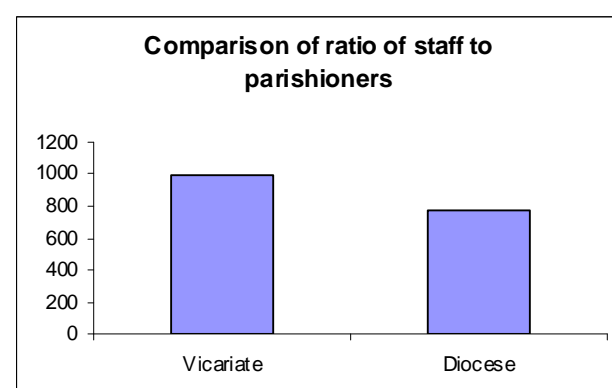
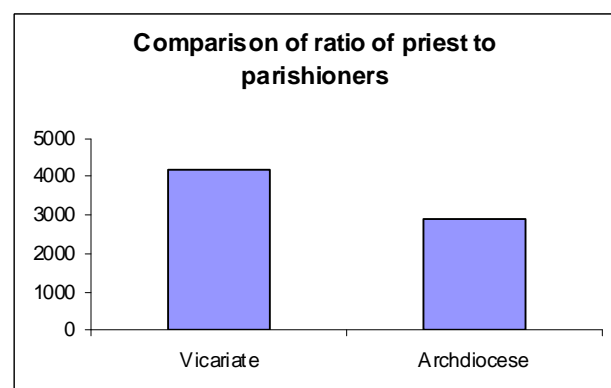
As of June 2004, the Vicariate counted 59,906 registered parishioners – a significant increase in the last 5 years with an increase of more than 50% in the Northern part of the Vicariate (Christ the Redeemer, St. Joseph in Lake Orion and St. Andrew in Rochester). The numbers show a slight decline in Pontiac, which is due in large part to the fact that census traditionally underestimate the Hispanic community due to immigration status. It is estimated that the Pontiac Catholic Community serves approximately of 35,000 Hispanics living outside the parish boundaries.

The schools, which have been the object of an important funding campaign through Vision 2000, have also seen an important increase in their enrollment (from 33% to 113%) for the three elementary schools.

Except for the three parishes which have undergone new constructions or renovations, parishes are pretty much free of debt. However, in the last five years, almost every parish has seen an increase of their administrative expenses which far exceeds the increase in the offertory collection.

As indicated by the two following charts, the ratio of priest and staff to parishioners is much higher than the ratio for the rest of the archdiocese. While the population and the number of registered parishioners have increased in the last five years, the number of priests and full time staff members have not followed the same direction. In addition, the average age of the priests of the Vicariate (52) and the lack of new priests in the archdiocese indicates a serious problem for the near future (3 to 5 years).

**The profile of the Vicariate can be summarized in the three following points:**



1. The number of registered parishioners has increased significantly in the last five years. However it is worth noting that in spite of this increase, during the same period, sacramental activity, defined as baptisms, first communions, marriages, confirmations and funerals has decreased in most parishes.
2. Most communities are financially well established.
3. While the ratio of ordained ministers and staff in relation to the population is already much higher than the average for the archdiocese, the age and number of ordained ministers remain a critical question for the near future, knowing that replacement will not be forthcoming.

Today, the Pontiac Area Vicariate recognizes both its gifts and challenges. The Pontiac Catholic Community is the first effort in clustering parishes affected by demographic changes. The three parishes, under the leadership of Fr. Sean Sylvester, are well on their way in coordinating their different ministries and taking advantage of their many resources. Also, the Pontiac Catholic Community has organized itself to serve the large Hispanic population with all its diverse customs and rituals. The Vicariate needs to support this effort.

The demographic growth in the Northern part of the Vicariate is providing an opportunity to look at its future in creating new models of communities – either through the creation of Missions or the building of a new church, taking into account the fact that the number of ordained ministers and the financial situation of the archdiocese will remain key factors in any future decision.

In many areas, the different communities of the Vicariate have demonstrated their ability to work together: the Vision 2000 has enlarged registration in our Catholic Schools, many parishes are participating in the Catholic Community Response Team (CCRT) to support human needs from the Pontiac area, cooperation in the areas of youth and young adult ministry (Genesis Ministries) and spirituality. This indicates both the willingness and the potential for greater sharing of ministry resources.

Yet, a fundamental challenge remains in front of us: do we, as members of the many communities, understand and accept the fact that as members of this "Area Church" we have responsibility to support one another? How can we maintain the sense of local community (our parishes, schools, etc.) and yet at the same time create the sense of a larger community where we would be willing to share resources, giftedness and concerns for the benefit of all members of the Vicariate? How do we involve young people, young families of the different ministries of the Vicariate?

## A Pastoral Plan for the Pontiac Area Vicariate

The Vicariate Pastoral Council, in coordination with the priests, the different parish councils, the Pastoral Ministers Association (PMA) which regroups all the different staffs of the parishes, schools and agencies, has established a pastoral planning document which will serve as road map for the next few years.