



The **mission** of the Vicariate is to be responsive to the ministry of its parishes, schools, institutions, and agencies by:



Coordinating pastoral planning



Enhancing communications and networking



Promoting collegiality



Identifying and utilizing all resources which can be shared

Contact:

Fr. Jerry Brzezinski, Vicar
 248-373-6457
 jbrzezinski@ameritech.net
 Lew Elbert, VPC Chair
 248-673-5502
 elbertje@comcast.net

Five Vicariates Gather For Regional Assembly

The Pontiac Area Vicariate hosted a Regional Assembly at St. Paul Albanian Church in Rochester Hills on April 29, 2008. It was the first opportunity for Bishop Daniel Flores to meet with the ministry leaders of his newly assigned Region, which had been expanded that day to include the five Vicariates assembled. They are the Blue Water, Thumb, North Macomb, Southwest Detroit and Pontiac Area Vicariates.

Invitees included Pastors from the 55 parishes represented; chaplains; parish staff and commission members; Parish Council members; principals; school and agency board members; as well as Vicariate Pastoral Council members within the Region. Also present were the leadership of Young Adult Ministry programs in the region and department heads and other personnel from the Archdiocese of Detroit.

The meeting opened with an introduction by Lew Elbert, PAV Pastoral Council Chair, who welcomed everyone and briefly outlined the agenda and objectives for the evening. He said there would be:

- Assigned seating according to ministry and “mixed” by Parish and/or Vicariate in an effort to promote maximum interchange between various areas of the Region.
- Presentations and discussion to discern ideas and best practices to support the ministries involved.
- Opportunity for feedback on how Vicariates can best support their ministries.

Elbert then introduced Fr. Anton Kcira, Pastor of St. Paul Albanian Parish, who provided a brief reflection on the history and community of his parish and its connection to the larger Church. Albanians were some of the first to convert to Christianity and were baptized by St. Paul himself. They count Mother Teresa as one of their most famous descendants.



Dr. Patricia Cooney-Hathaway spoke on the topic “Discerning Ministry in the Church Outside Our Window.”



Jack Cashman, Vicariate Pastoral Council representative from St. Mary of the Hills and Fr. Jerry Brzezinski, PAV Vicar.

St. Paul Albanian is designated as a “Personal Parish” (as opposed to the usual “Territorial Parish”) in that it serves primarily the Albanian population of Southeast Michigan and observes many Albanian traditions. Father Kcira and St. Paul’s were featured in a recent *Michigan Catholic* article, outlining the struggles of Albanians over the past 20 years, and the growth of the parish from 50 families in the 1980’s to about 1800 families today.

Fr. Jerry Brzezinski, PAV Vicar, took the podium next and thanked everyone for attending. He noted that in the 250 people assembled, there was rich diversity within the parishes, schools, agencies, and institutions represented, all partners in the work and vision of the Church. He then introduced Bishop Flores.

Bishop Flores opened the formal program with comments on the theme of the Assembly, “Discerning Ministry and Leadership in the Church outside Our Window.” His remarks included these observations:

- There is real Divine Providence at work when we take the opportunity to experience how the work of Christ and His Church cannot be limited by boundaries and logistics.
- We need to think beyond our parish and our own comfort levels – avoiding an “orbit syndrome” which can miss the larger missions we have.
- Ministry involves “conversion to others” – feeling the joys and sorrows of others which allows a “conversion to Christ,” and more powerful prayer with “a bigger heart.”

Fr. Brzezinski then introduced keynote speaker Dr. Patricia Cooney-Hathaway, Associate Professor of Spirituality and Systematic Theology at the Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit.

Dr. Cooney-Hathaway addressed the theme for the evening by starting with a key premise: that ministry must be grounded in our own spirituality, in how each of us responds to God within the context of our life and community. She then offered a number of images about the ministry and spirituality of Jesus:

- We are called to be “conduits” of the Spirit to others.
- Ministry arises out of personal relationship with God.
- Ministers need to create a balance of work and prayer.
- Ministry is about living, not just doing.
- Jesus was about fellowship – listening, responding, and “inviting all to the table.”

There is perseverance involved – the call to ministry is not necessarily a call to success.

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Members:

Parishes

- Christ the Redeemer, Orion Township
- Pontiac Catholic Community
 - St. Michael
 - St. Joseph
 - St. Vincent
- Sacred Heart of the Hills, Auburn Hills
- St. Andrew, Rochester
- St. Benedict, Waterford
- St. Irenaeus, Rochester Hills
- St. John Fisher, Auburn Hills
- St. Joseph, Lake Orion
- St. Mary of the Hills, Rochester Hills
- St. Paul Albanian, Rochester Hills

Schools

- Holy Family Elementary, Rochester/Rochester Hills
- Marist Academy Lower Level St. Benedict Campus, Waterford
- St. Joseph School, Lake Orion
- Marist Academy Middle School, Pontiac
- Notre Dame Preparatory, Pontiac

Catholic Cemeteries

- Guardian Angels
- Mt. Hope

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She went on to offer some models and roles for ministries which support collaboration, as well as obstacles which can stall and stifle such efforts. She concluded with these two insights:

- It is important to continuously evaluate the purity of our intentions – the why and how of what we do.
- We can adopt a perspective that ministry is not a gift we create for ourselves, but actually a gift of the Spirit to us.

The table discussions following her presentation were, by all accounts, lively and informative, facilitated by the mix of people and their unity of purpose. Each table was asked to summarize what they had learned on sheets which were collected and tabulated, with results reported back to participants within a week. The report included a “synthesis” of the comments most often mentioned, in effect a summary of the experience for those attending:

- Logistics don’t matter – what matters is what we are doing for others as a conduit of the Spirit

- A Vicariate can be a resource to the local parish, and a beneficial bridge to the larger Church

Bishop Flores closed the meeting with a few observations about problem solving, saying that problems can be viewed as a “gift” and a collective opportunity. He expressed his appreciation to all those involved in the Assembly and offered a blessing on all the ministries of the Region.

In recent years, the Pontiac Area Vicariate has held an Assembly for the ministry leaders of the Vicariate each fall and spring focusing on current topics of interest to all. Last fall the topic was Christian Service, which drew a large crowd to hear directly from local organizations who serve those who need of assistance in the communities that make up the Vicariate. The Catholic Community Response Team (CCRT) - which was created by PAV and is sponsored directly by PAV - is a leading force in these activities, particularly in the Pontiac area where needs are greatest. *



Bishop Daniel Flores met with leaders from the five Vicariates in his region.



Representing Campus and Young Adult ministry in the Region were campus ministers Tom Donahoo, from Oakland Community College and Lawrence Tech, and Tim McCormick, Campus Minister at Macomb Community College.

VPC Accomplishments and Year-End Review

The Pontiac Area Vicariate Pastoral Council extends its heartfelt appreciation to all of the Parishes, Schools, Agencies, and Institutions of the Vicariate for their continued support. The funding and representatives they provide supports the planning, development, and operation of the programs and services best thought to benefit from a shared Vicariate-wide approach. These programs not only serve our constituents but also extend the reach of our ministries beyond our own parishes and organizations and beyond our Vicariate borders in a way that would not be otherwise possible.

The activities summarized in this article provide a broad view of the efforts of the PAV to coordinate the gifts and needs of our

Area Church. What this summary cannot do is detail the tremendous value of the donated funds and efforts or the remarkable impact of these on those in need.

Barbara Williams, from the Catholic Community Response Team, provides a glimpse into the lives behind the numbers.

“A mother with 6 dependents came to CCRT with an eviction judgment from the court. She has two children of her own and is caring for four other family members’ children during a crisis situation. She attends college full time and works part time while caring for her family. She got behind on her rent due to wages lost due to lack of transportation. Her car needed a repair. She was unable to get to work and ended up losing her job. She has since

secured a new and better paying job. CCRT was able to help her pay off her car repair through our grant with the Rochester Women’s Community Grant and, through various partners such as TEAM Center in Birmingham and local support, her eviction payment was satisfied.”

In 2007-8, the Vicariate supported five continuing operations, three projects, and a host of administrative and communication activities. Highlights and accomplishments are summarized here.

PAV Operations

ACTS: Call To Serve –Lay volunteer minister training program. In the 2007-8 operating year, 104 lay ministers received

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training (compared with 36 in 2006-7 and 19 in 2005-6).

Youth Ministry – Youth ministry collaboration continues within the PAV bringing teens and their families together in shared prayer and worship, service, and community life. This has resulted in successful events – dances, trips to Cedar Point, and service projects – that attract larger numbers than could be done at any single parish.

Genesis Ministry – Genesis continues to reach out very effectively to single and married young adults between 18-35 years old in the 59 parishes in Oakland County.

Catholic Community Response Team - CCRT provides direct referral and support services. They work to build a permanent bridge between two populations who live in close proximity, but whose life experiences are worlds apart: those in crisis with urgent, unmet needs and volunteers wanting to live out their faith through works of charity and justice.

In 2007-8, with \$34,000 in support from the Archdiocese of Detroit and PAV, CCRT provided coordinated assistance to 534 adults and 142 children to resolve approximately \$136,000 worth of critical financial need.

As reported by CCRT Director Barb Williams: *"In terms of real people, gosh so many stories... People laid off from work, single moms in job programs, domestic violence victims, men and women with mental health issues, disabled persons living on \$636 a month (basic payment) trying to pay rent, utilities, buy food and gas. They are all heart-wrenching stories. State aid has been cut back and more people are looking for charitable support. Example: Last year the state paid \$550 for low-income utility support, this year they paid only \$350. Food stamp issuance has gone down and the price of food has gone up. Please thank all the Vicariate parishes for their support. We couldn't extend the aid we do without them!"*

Crittenton Chaplaincy - Spiritual Care is available to patients and families from the Crittenton Hospital Chaplain. In 2007-8, the PAV continued its share of support for this ministry.

PAV Projects

Vision 2000 –Continued execution of the original Vicariate Vision 2000 plan collecting nearly \$700,000 in pledged contributions to remain on schedule to retire the loans associated with this investment.

Hispanic Pastoral Plan Implementation – An ad hoc committee has been working to encourage parishes to use existing Hispanic groups and AOD development models to move forward in their goal of integrating Hispanics into parishes. Activities included:

- Bulletin announcements and invitations in Spanish
- Identification of Hispanic leadership in PAV parishes
- Spanish edition of the PAV newsletter
- Information about Catholic Social Services Hispanic Outreach services at PAV parishes
- Inclusion of Spanish/bilingual liturgical songs at PAV parishes
- Information about Spanish/bilingual resources for PAV Directors of Religious Education.
- PAV newsletter articles to help dissipate animosity toward undocumented Hispanic population
- Parish-centered activities for women, many of whom are home without transportation

Pastoral Care of the Sick – Another ad hoc committee worked on developing a Vicariate-wide approach to Pastoral Care of the Sick in light of declining availability of ordained ministers. Working within the framework of the previous year's "Report on the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick," and with the support of specially assigned Deacon Alex

Jablonowski, the committee completed a Pastoral Care Survey, "The View from the Pew." Next year's efforts will focus on the implementation of the plan and service coordination.

PAV Communication

Another focus this year was enhanced Vicariate communication. Vicariate Pastoral Council representatives, who report to and from their parishes, schools, agencies, and institutions, serve as the primary communication conduit to enable our collaboration. Additional communication this year was enabled through the:

PAV Website – Contains the most comprehensive view of PAV activities, plans and information. Members of our Area Church are encouraged to use this forum to learn about their Vicariate as well as to communicate their own ministry activities.

PAV Newsletters – Distributed quarterly through parish bulletins and on the website. They provide a broad communication of current PAV activities.

Leadership Assemblies – In October 2007, the PAV "Christian Service Activity Coordination Assembly" engaged over 100 vicariate leaders to discuss better coordination in the use and support of the Christian Service Activities and Social Agency Programs that are already available for those we serve.

The Spring 2008 assembly is described on page one of this newsletter.

This has been a year of blessings and challenges. Through continuing support and feedback of our member organizations we have made steady progress to help improve the capability and reach of their ministries. We are grateful for their support and the opportunity to serve our Area Church.

As the 2008-9 year approaches, we pray that our continued collaboration as the body of Christ in Oakland County will help transform our world. ✱

Members:

Religious Communities

- Oxford Dominican Sisters
- St. Benedict Monastery

Chaplaincies

- Crittenton Hospital
- North Oakland Medical Center
- Oakland County Jail
- Oakland County Juveniles
- POH Medical Center
- St. Joseph Mercy Oakland

Nursing Homes

- Lake Orion
- Mercy Bellbrook
- Oakland County Medical Care Facility
- Lourdes Campus

Oakland County

- Campus Ministry
- Catholic Community Response Team
- Catholic Social Services
- Genesis Young Adult/Campus Ministry
- Fusion Ministry
- Guest House

