A pastoral letter on our future together

23 Jan 2017

Bishop David M. O’Connell, C.M.

**INTRODUCTION**

As we move into a New Year, the time is right for us to adjust our vision to “new things” for our Diocese. While what “has been” in our past experience is comfortable, we are a living, changing Catholic community, a changing local Church that is, in St. Augustine’s words, a “beauty ever ancient, ever new (Confessions, X).”

Our ancient faith always remains beautiful, true and eternal although times and circumstances have changed and require us to develop “new ways” to foster, promote and witness to our faith in order to address and re-engage an ever-changing environment. Such adaptation has been the case throughout the Catholic Church’s 2,000-year history and we must now seize the moment again, in our time, in the Diocese of Trenton, “ever new,” as we look forward with “Faith in Our Future.”

**THE INSPIRATION OF POPE FRANCIS**

I begin this letter with excerpts from two homilies given by our Holy Father Pope Francis several years ago:

“The law of the Spirit ‘leads us on a path of continual discernment to do the will of God,’ and this scares us. A fear that has two temptations: the first is that of ‘going back,’ saying that up to this point is fine, but ‘no farther’ and so in the end, ‘let’s stay here.”…. this temptation of ‘going back,’ because we are safer there. But complete safety is in the Holy Spirit, who carries you forward, who gives you this trust. In this moment in the Church’s history, we can neither go back nor go off the road (Pope Francis, Homily at Casa Santa Marta, June 12, 2013).”

“Jesus tells us that new wine requires new wineskins. In the Christian life, and also in the life of the Church, there are old structures, outdated structures, they have to be renewed! And the Church has always been attentive to this…It always allows itself to be renewed according to places, times and persons. The Church has always done this work, right from the beginning! …Don’t be afraid of this! Don’t be afraid of the innovation of the Gospel. Don’t be afraid of the innovation that the Holy Spirit works within us! Don’t be afraid of the renewal of structures! …If we are afraid, we know that our Mother is with us and, like children who are a bit afraid, let’s go to her and she — as the most ancient antiphon says — ‘guards us with her mantle, with her protection as mother’ (Pope Francis, Homily at Casa Santa Marta, July 6, 2013).”

**THE CONTEXT**

In recent years, dioceses all over the country have had to come to terms with the changing realities in the life of the Catholic Church and its faithful. It is no longer the Church of “our parents or our grandparents;” it is not even the Church that many of us knew growing up. This realization has not always been “comfortable” or easy — it never is — but change and adaptation has always been necessary for our faith not only to remain strong but also, and more importantly, for our faith to grow stronger. We must acknowledge and endure the “growing pains” that accompany any process of change but we cannot be overcome or discouraged by them. God’s grace and the presence of the Holy Spirit have always seen the Catholic Church through change, and so it will be now and into the future if we open ourselves to God’s grace with a living faith.

**THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE DIOCESE OF TRENTON**

To help us understand the current situation in the Diocese of Trenton, let us consider some important facts gathered directly from its 107 parishes. These facts are sobering but, as Bishop, I do not believe that we are in irreversible or terminal danger. I do believe, however, that we have some genuine causes for concern. Here is why.

In the Diocese of Trenton, it is estimated that there are between 673,500 and 774,000 Catholics living in the 107 parishes in our four counties, with 267,416 registered households. In the past, the Catholic population was estimated at 830,000. The average parish size includes approximately 2,500 of these registered households, with the lowest parish count of 250 households and the highest parish count of 7,436 households.

Present statistics drawn from annual parish reports reveal a weekend Mass attendance of between 17% and 18% of Catholics in the Diocese. Sadly, the numbers have steadily declined within our lifetime.

Participation in the Sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Marriage has also declined. Surprisingly, even the number of Funeral Masses, once considered a faith obligation of families of deceased active Catholics, has also decreased.

That having been said, the Gospel has not changed; the Church’s teachings have endured; and obligations incumbent upon Catholics — for example, the commandment to “keep holy the Sabbath” — have remained in place, but their compelling importance in the daily life of Catholics today has diminished or, at least, wavered significantly. Add to that the declining enrollments reported each year in our Catholic schools and parish religious education programs and we discover a generation or two of Catholics who are largely unfamiliar with the tenets of the Catholic faith. We cannot neglect youth and young adults in the Diocese and our parishes. They are the best, the only, hope for our future.

National research studies among baptized Catholics born after 1980 dramatically bear out the developments we see locally. When society replaces faith and religion with secular alternatives that are directly opposed to Church teaching and practice, Catholics do not know how to respond, defend against or resist such alternatives. They have become “cultural Catholics” or “Catholics in name only.” This is not to say that they are not good people doing good things but, rather, they are simply uninformed about their faith and the influence that faith should have in their lives as Catholic individuals and as Catholic communities within the local Church.

As a consequence, we also see that young Catholic men and women are no longer pursuing priestly or religious vocations as in the past in the kind of numbers needed to minister to and serve Catholics who DO want to practice their faith, who DO hear the Gospel at Mass, who DO receive the Sacraments, who DO reach out in service to the poor and DO perform the Church’s works of mercy. Currently, there are 163 active Diocesan priests serving Catholics in the Diocese, and 266 religious women and 57 religious men. At the same time, priests and religious currently serving in the Church but reaching retirement age seem to be the only numbers steadily increasing. Twenty-three priests have retired in the last five years and 63 priests are eligible for retirement in the next 10 years.

With these sobering spiritual realities confronting us in the Diocese of Trenton and beyond, and the constantly shifting Catholic demographics within the four counties of the Diocese — Monmouth, Burlington, Ocean and Mercer — it simply does not make any sense to cling to sentimental memories of “the way we were;” or to nostalgically fantasize about a return to “the good old days.” Time moves forward and it is not possible to go back. We must forge ahead to meet and embrace the future with a living, dynamic and active faith.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

In addition to these spiritual circumstances, we must also acknowledge that the economy has not been on our side in most of the parishes of the Diocese. Families have also experienced similar financial burdens in their homes. Parishes — our “spiritual homes” — are not much different. The costs of operating our Catholic churches, schools and institutions continue to escalate while the condition of physical plants and buildings deteriorate in many of our 107 parishes, regularly draining already limited resources with expenses that parishes just cannot afford.

While the Annual Catholic Appeal helps fund Diocesan operations one year at a time, it, too, has experienced a significant downturn. For the first time since 1992, the Diocese has embarked upon a major fundraising campaign, “Faith to Move Mountains,” the sole purpose of which is to endow the wide-reaching spiritual works as well as the “mountainous” material needs of the Diocese and its parishes for a future that we “can have faith in.”

The Catholic Church in our Diocese is not simply about raising money, as some suggest. It is impossible, however, to continue to support current ministries to our parishioners or to establish any new faith-based initiatives without the resources necessary to provide what people want and need from the Catholic Church. On average, only 42% of registered households in the Diocese give financial support.

We also need to be aware of the multicultural realities that are part of the changing landscape of the Diocese. Statistics indicate that our Catholic population is now 15% Hispanic or Latino requiring ministries specific to these growing numbers. Six of the 10 parishes with the greatest number of baptisms in the Diocese have significant Hispanic populations. Attendance at Masses celebrated in Spanish has increased by 45% over the last four years. Currently, in addition to English and Spanish, Mass is celebrated in 10 other languages throughout our four counties.

**WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

So what do we do? Giving up is not an option. The Lord Jesus assured “Where two or three gather in My name, there am I in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20).” Losing faith is not an option. The Lord Jesus promised “I will be with you all days even to the end of time (Matthew 28: 20).” Surrendering to societal or cultural trends is not an option. The Lord Jesus proclaimed “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14: 6)” and, in another place, “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16: 18).”

Some within the Church have concluded that Catholics should simply accept the “fact” that we are destined to become less, to become a smaller Church. While statistics and other data might suggest such a view, the Church’s duty to undertake a “new evangelization” argues against it. I believe that it is not so much a case of growing smaller or “becoming less” as a Church, a Diocese or a parish; I believe it is a case of “doing more WITH less.” The challenge before us all is to figure out “how.”

**FAITH IN OUR FUTURE**

As Bishop, I consulted other bishops and considered the experiences of their dioceses, seeking successful models and effective strategies used to address similar challenges we face here. I then interviewed and engaged a Seattle-based Church consulting firm, The Reid Group, with its proven record of success working with various dioceses in the United States for over 20 years, among them the Archdioceses of Indianapolis, New York, Newark, and Seattle as well as the Dioceses of Orange, Orlando, Peoria, Rochester, St. Petersburg, Syracuse and Scranton. Their mission is “to help leaders and organizations transform their challenges into opportunities” for the strengthening of their own institutional mission. Although most of their clients faced similar challenges as the Diocese of Trenton, I directed the firm “not to impose ‘boiler-plate’ strategies” upon us but, rather, to work with our pastors and parishes to develop recommendations specific to our own Diocese.

I launched an initiative called “Faith in Our Future” in the Diocese almost two years ago with consultation of the Diocesan Curia, the Episcopal Council and the Diocesan Presbyterate. Rather than initiating a “top-down” approach, I sought from The Reid Group a “grass roots” team effort involving the laity as well as the clergy throughout the Diocese.

Twenty-five “Cohorts” or small teams of neighboring parishes utilizing lay leaders as well as clergy were established by pastors to surface a “sense of the faithful” regarding the future direction of all our 107 parishes. The Reid Group provided training to the members of these 25 Cohorts, under the guidance of recently retired pastor Msgr. Leonard Troiano and Diocesan Director of Pastoral Life and Mission Mrs. Terry Ginther. The Cohorts then used various means to gather information and data from our parishes including surveys, questionnaires, town hall meetings, small group discussions and other conversations focused on the future direction of the Diocese. The effort was unlike anything the Diocese has ever seen. To avoid any controlling influence or intervention by the Bishop, I was asked to remain neutral throughout the entire process until the Cohort recommendations were processed by a Diocesan-wide Planning Commission (DPC) created by Msgr. Troiano and Mrs. Ginther.

Following many months of discussions, conversations and even lively debate within and among the Cohorts and the DPC, a series of “final recommendations” were presented to me by the DPC in late November 2016. I shared these recommendations with all the priests of the Diocese in meetings held in each of the four vicariates — Monmouth, Burlington, Ocean and Mercer Counties — and with both the Diocesan Curia and the Episcopal Council in separate meetings throughout December 2016. The task then fell to me, as Bishop, to make decisions regarding the recommendations and input I received. These recommendations became for me the subject of much prayer, reflection and soul searching prior to finalizing them.

My decisions will be made public on Jan. 25, 2017. I chose the date because of the important feast the Church celebrates on that day, the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul whose entire life was changed by his encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.

An Implementation Commission will be established to guide and encourage parishes in the process of putting my decisions in place and monitoring their progress. Msgr. Troiano and Terry Ginther will coordinate the process and will be the contact persons at the Chancery for any questions. It is important to note that the recommendations and decisions offered through the “Faith in Our Future” initiative are a “first step” in the reorganization of the Diocese, a “work in progress.” Once implemented, these decisions, no doubt, will give rise to other decisions and changes as the future of the Diocese unfolds.

**PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES FOR DECISIONS**

Following the lead and example of Pope Francis in developing “principles” for the reorganization and revitalization of the leadership of the universal Church, I have identified my own set of principles and priorities for the task at hand. These include:

(1) evangelization, the all-important and all-encompassing effort to bring the Gospel prayerfully and effectively to the parishes and people of the Diocese for our future;

(2) collaboration, the strategic model chosen by the Cohorts and DPC, to ensure that parishes work together with programs, staffing and resources to meet the spiritual and pastoral needs of the people of the Diocese for the sake of evangelization;

(3) stewardship, the effort to establish the best possible use of parish resources, assets, facilities and properties — “doing MORE with less” — for the sake of evangelization;

(4) accountability, the process of providing transparency in the management of the Diocese and all its parishes for the sake of evangelization, and

(5) service, spiritual and pastoral “in-reach” and outreach to the populations that need to be served by the parishes of the Diocese, especially the sick, the elderly, the poor, the immigrant, youth and young adults, families and Catholics who have become estranged from the Church, again, for the sake of evangelization.

Before announcing my decisions, I would like to express my own thanks and that of the entire Diocese to everyone involved in this lengthy process; there are too many to name. Their monumental effort and investment of time give great witness to their “Faith in Our Future.”

Most Reverend David M. O’Connell, C.M.

Bishop of Trenton

Parish centers for cultural ministries to serve needs of diverse community

By Matthew Greeley

As parishes met individually and in Cohorts during the evaluation and consultation phases of the Faith in Our Future initiative, a priority that emerged was the need to provide for the growing diversity within the Diocese.

In order to walk with and minister to the multicultural community spread across Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth and Ocean Counties, a number of parishes are being designated as Centers for Ministry among specific cultural groups. Seventeen sites are named for ministry among Hispanic Catholics, with another to be named in southern Ocean County by July, 2018; two with Portuguese and Brazilian Catholics, and two with Haitian Catholics.

In announcing his decisions, Bishop David M. O’Connell, C.M., stressed that the designated parish centers “will provide both ministerial outreach and liturgical celebrations for the named ethnic or language group.”

Many of the parishes selected as centers have already become bicultural or multicultural in nature. They minister among English-speaking residents, as well as among the cultural group the center will serve. These parishes will celebrate Mass in the group’s native language, but, just as importantly, the Centers will assure a deeper faith experience, offering ministries, programs and service opportunities in Spanish, Portuguese or Creole to foster a fuller participation in the life of the Church.

The designation of a parish as a Center for Ministry among a cultural group by no means implies the intention to create a separate parish experience or a divided community.

The various cultural groups are to be included as integral parts of the one parish family. The Centers are to foster unity and build bridges of sharing and cooperation between the various segments of the parish family of faith.

The parishes were chosen based on the number of Catholics of the given ethnic group as well as the proximity to other communities with similar populations. The number of Centers for each cultural group is limited by a host of factors. For this reason, parishes designated as Centers will welcome Catholics from the cultural group who live in the general region, not only in their parish territory.

Over the course of time, parishes designated as Centers will make a conscious effort to have bilingual people on the parish staff, to offer opportunities for spiritual formation and continued learning, and to actively raise up ministry volunteers from within the cultural group. The parish should endeavor to engage members of the cultural group in pastoral and finance councils, school boards and other leadership teams responsible to plan for the life of the whole parish.

Bishop O’Connell’s designation of these parishes as Centers for Ministry is one of the steps found in the diocesan Pastoral Plan for Ministries among Spanish-speaking Catholics. The pastoral plan offers some expectations for Centers for Ministry:

•A priest in residence who speaks the native language of the cultural group

•Bilingual staff in the parish office, and in a faith formation role

•A liturgical musician who can incorporate a variety of music within the larger parish

•Trained parishioners who speak the language and can serve in liturgical /worship ministries

•Faith formation and leadership formation in the native language

•Training for the laity of the cultural group to become ministers of Holy Communion to the sick and homebound or to participate in other pastoral care ministries

Diocesan personnel will support the parishes in their efforts, offering guidance and resources where the parish needs it along the way. This model of cultural ministry and awareness is another step on the Diocese of Trenton’s road to lift up and celebrate the gifts and experiences of the diverse diocesan family. Its aim is to continue to empower the people of the various cultural groups to feel “at home” in multicultural parish communities where Catholics practice and share their faith.

Greeley is associate director of the Diocese’s Office of Communications and Media, and coordinator of Spanish-language communications.

Standing in the doorway

For many who read this article the beginning may seem strange. Harkening back to my high school years, I remember learning about the ancient Roman god “Janus.” He is usually depicted as standing in the portal of the doorway of life and having two faces. One face looks to the past and the other turns its glance to the future. Janus was always referred to as the god of beginnings and endings, the god of transition.

The first month of the year, January is recognized as the door to new beginnings. Many believe that the name of our first month is derived from this mythological figure. So in this first month of 2017 we find ourselves standing in the doorway at an historical moment in the Diocese of Trenton and our parishes, all of us looking back and then turning our glance to the future.

Looking back, it has been more than 18 months since Bishop O’Connell publicly announced his intention to undertake the “Faith in Our Future” planning initiative. As we have all learned, his decision was based on a deep desire to strengthen and enliven the parishes in all four counties of the Diocese and prepare us to meet the challenges of the future.

Bishop O’Connell recognized and expressed his concern about the dwindling number of active priests who will be available for service to the people of the Diocese, the need for better financial stewardship of resources and the care for the spiritual and pastoral needs of the people of the Diocese of Trenton.

Recently, I was asked the question, “As you look back over this year and a half, how would you describe your experience of the “Faith in Our Future” initiative. As I stand in the doorway looking back I can say with certainty that the experience has been a positive one. And as I look ahead I am hopeful that much will be accomplished. Let me share a quote I recently came across: “Looking back and wondering if it could have worked eventually hurts more than trying and failing.”

The wondering is over, we have tried and succeeded. We followed the Bishop’s mandate and no longer have to wonder about its success. During the Faith in Our Future process, working with the Reid Group from Seattle, Washington, nearly 500 people from all 107 parishes of the Diocese came together as members of parish Core Teams and eventually as Cohorts. The process asked them to enter into an intense study and serious discussions about the future of the Church in their area of the Diocese.

At times it was difficult for them to accept the changing realities that are occurring in the Church and in a particular way in their respective parishes. For them, it might even have been painful to determine the impact these new realities are having and will continue to have on the way we worship, learn, gather in community and serve each other.

There have been many positive results that have already emerged during the first phase of the planning process. To mention a few, individuals from neighboring parishes have gotten to know one another and formed new working relationships. Information about programs and ministries is being shared. New ideas have surfaced inspiring better ways of working together.

As we go through the door and move forward into the future, it is my hope that as a Diocese we will be able to build on these positive results. For their part, these 500 individuals have laid the foundation to begin imagining a new way forward, be creative and at times compromise. Through it all they were diligent in offering their best thinking for their parishes and the Diocese.

There is a great debt of gratitude owed the pastors and individuals who accepted the invitation and participated in the “Faith in Our Future” initiative by dedicating their time and faithfully walking through the door.

Msgr. Troiano serves as episcopal vicar for diocesan

Collaborative parishes sharing the load

By Terry Ginther

The Faith in Our Future decisions announced by Bishop O’Connell this week group the parishes of the Diocese of Trenton into 25 Cohorts of collaborative parishes. All of the parishes, even those involved in a linkage or merger at some time during the next three years, will be collaborating with neighboring parishes in ministry.

Collaboration can be defined as people or organizations working together to achieve something successfully. It moves beyond occasional cooperation and the coordination of Mass or Confession schedules. In collaboration, two or more parishes formally agree to work together in a specific way for the foreseeable future. Collaboration between parishes is consistent with the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ; but it is not an end in itself. The purpose of collaboration is to make it possible for all parishes to become more effective at evangelization. It can be like a yoke that spreads the weight across two oxen, allowing them to pull together a heavier load than either is able to move alone. Collaboration has the potential to free up precious resources which can be used for new approaches or allow the parish to reach people on the margins. It focuses neighboring parishes on common goals, reducing competition and increasing the impact they can have on the residents of a local area together.

Here is an example of how a Cohort of three parishes might collaborate:

Two linked parishes share a pastor, two permanent deacons, a business manager and a director of religious education. These parishes have a joint pastoral council, and their finance councils meet together three times a year to consider ways to share resources. These “sister” parishes share an active ministry among hospital patients and the homebound elderly.

The parishes of the Cohort split the cost of hiring one full-time, qualified youth minister to develop youth involvement and youth ministry in all three parishes. Adult volunteers from all three parishes work with the youth minister to plan a mix of shared large group activities, retreats and service projects, as well as small group weekly gatherings at each parish. The youth minister helps the parishes be intentional about leadership development among young people; providing training and mentoring for youth who serve as peer ministers, altar server “captains,” religious education assistants, cantors and readers at Mass.

One Marriage Ministry team sees to the Pre-Cana and Marriage Enrichment needs of the Cohort parishes. Addiction Recovery Support and Bereavement Support Groups are offered Cohort-wide. These are not the efforts of one parish to which the parishioners of other parishes are invited; rather they are joint efforts. Those serving and those “being served” come from the three parishes. Care is taken to offer programs at places and during times most likely to reach inactive Catholics along with parishioners who are active in parish life.

There are between two and six parishes in each Cohort. As you see in the example, parishes may collaborate with one other parish or with several other parishes. The shape of the collaborative relationships in each Cohort is limited only by the Cohort’s capacity to imagine ways of working together.

Mrs. Ginther serves as executive director of the Diocese’s Office of Pastoral Life and Mission.

A summary of the Faith in Our Future decisions

The decisions announced by Bishop David M. O’Connell, C.M., Jan. 25, will be implemented over a three-year period (2017-2020) resulting in:

•25 cohorts of collaborative parishes focused on working together to carry out the mission of evangelization

•7 linkages: 15 parishes will be sharing their pastor with at least one other parish; potential for 2 additional linkages following review, involving 4 more parishes

•9 mergers: 17 parishes will be consolidated into 8 new parishes

•Suspension of operations at two church sites, with potential for a third site to be added after review

•1 Personal Parish

•Designation of 18 Centers for Hispanic Ministry, 2 Centers for Portuguese Ministry, 2 Centers for Haitian Ministry

•Action on four additional parishes has been postponed pending review in subsequent years

•Training for the laity of the cultural group to become ministers of Holy Communion to the sick and homebound or to participate in other pastoral care ministries

Diocesan personnel will support the parishes in their efforts, offering guidance and resources where the parish needs it along the way. This model of cultural ministry and awareness is another step on the Diocese of Trenton’s road to lift up and celebrate the gifts and experiences of the diverse diocesan family. Its aim is to continue to empower the people of the various cultural groups to feel “at home” in multicultural parish communities where Catholics practice and share their faith.

BURLINGTON COUNTY

COHORT 1

Corpus Christi, Willingboro • Jesus the Good Shepherd, Riverside • Resurrection, Delran

1. Collaborative Model for all three parishes in the Cohort

2. Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish will suspend all operations at St. Peter Church and will use St. Joseph Church, Beverly, only, no later than July 1, 2017

3. Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish designated as a Center for Hispanic and Portuguese Ministry, no later than July 1, 2017

COHORT 2

Our Lady of Good Counsel, Moorestown • Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Maple Shade • Sacred Heart, Riverton • St. Charles Borromeo, Cinnaminson

1. Collaborative Model for all four parishes in the Cohort

COHORT 3

Holy Eucharist, Tabernacle • St. Joan of Arc, Marlton • St. Mary of the Lakes, Medford • St. Isaac Jogues, Marlton • St. John Neumann, Mt. Laurel

1. Collaborative Model for all five parishes in the Cohort

2. Continue current Linkage Model for St. Isaac Jogues and St. John Neumann Parishes

COHORT 4

St. Andrew, Jobstown • Assumption, New Egypt • St. Ann, Browns Mills • Our Lady Queen of Peace, Hainesport • Sacred Heart, Mt. Holly • Christ the Redeemer, Mt. Holly

1. Collaborative Model for all six parishes in the Cohort

2. Linkage Model between St. Andrew and Assumption no later than July 1, 2017; Merger Model no later than July 1, 2018

3. Continue current Linkage Model for Christ the Redeemer and Sacred Heart Parishes with Christ the Redeemer designated as Center For Hispanic Ministry

4. St. Ann designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry, no later than July 1, 2018

COHORT 5

Sts. Francis and Clare, Florence Township • St. Katharine Drexel, Burlington • St. Mary, Bordentown

1. Collaborative Model for all three parishes in the Cohort

2. Linkage Model for Sts. Francis and Clare and St. Mary, no later than July 1, 2017; Merger Model, no later than July 1, 2018

MERCER COUNTY

COHORT 6

Our Lady of Sorrows-St. Anthony, Hamilton • St. John, Allentown • St. Gregory the Great, Hamilton Square • St. Raphael-Holy Angels, Hamilton • St. Vincent de Paul, Yardville

1. Collaborative Model for all five parishes in the Cohort

2. Linkage Model for St. John and St. Vincent de Paul, no later than July 1, 2019

3. Our Lady of Sorrows-St. Anthony designated as a Center for Haitian Ministry

4. Periodic review of St. Raphael-Holy Angels; potential suspension of operations of Holy Angels Church as early as July 1, 2017.

COHORT 7

St. Ann, Lawrenceville (Church of the Korean Martyrs at St. Michael, Trenton will be treated separately) • St. David the King, West Windsor • St. Paul, Princeton • St. Anthony of Padua, Hightstown • St. Hedwig, Trenton

1. Collaborative Model for all five parishes in the Cohort

2. St. Hedwig designated as a personal parish for Polish Catholics, effective immediately

3. St. Paul and St. Anthony of Padua each designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry, no later than July 1, 2017

COHORT 8

St. James, Pennington • St. Alphonsus, Hopewell • St. George, Titusville

1. Continue current Linkage Model for all three parishes

COHORT 9

Blessed Sacrament-Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd, Trenton • Our Lady of Good Counsel, West Trenton • Incarnation-St. James, Ewing

1. Collaborative Model for Our Lady of Good Counsel and Incarnation-St. James

2. Collaborative Model for Blessed Sacrament-Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd with Sacred Heart, Trenton, in Cohort 10 beginning July 1, 2017, leading to Merger Model for Blessed Sacrament-Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd with Sacred Heart, no later than July 1, 2018, with Gospel Mass transferred to Sacred Heart, beginning July 1, 2018

COHORT 10

St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral, Trenton • St. Joseph, Trenton • Divine Mercy, Trenton • Our Lady of the Angels, Trenton • Sacred Heart, Trenton

1. Collaborative Model for all five parishes in the Cohort

2. Continue current Linkage Model for St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral and St. Joseph; both parishes designated as Centers for Hispanic Ministry

3. Our Lady of the Angels designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry

4. Merger Model of Divine Mercy and Sacred Heart, no later than July 1, 2017; Spanish Mass transferred to Our Lady of the Angels

MONMOUTH COUNTY

COHORT 11

St. Catherine of Siena, Farmingdale • St. William the Abbot, Howell • St. Veronica, Howell

1. Collaborative Model for all three parishes in the Cohort

COHORT 12

St. Robert Bellarmine Co-Cathedral, Freehold • St. Joseph, Millstone • St. Rose of Lima, Freehold • St. Thomas More, Manalapan

1. Collaborative Model for all four parishes in the Cohort

2. St. Rose of Lima designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry; continue Vietnamese Mass in consultation with pastor according to availability of Vietnamese-speaking priest

COHORT 13

St. Benedict, Holmdel • St. Catharine, Holmdel • St. Gabriel, Marlboro • St. Mary, Colts Neck

1. Collaborative Model for all four parishes in the Cohort

COHORT 14

St. Joseph, Keyport • Jesus the Lord, Keyport • Holy Family, Union Beach • St. Clement, Matawan

1. Collaborative Model for all four parishes in the Cohort

2. Merger Model for St. Joseph and Jesus the Lord, no later than July 1, 2018

3. Potential Linkage Model for Holy Family Parish with the newly merged St. Joseph/Jesus the Lord to be determined no later than July 1, 2019

4. St. Joseph/Jesus the Lord designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry, no later than July 1, 2018

COHORT 15

St. Ann, Keansburg • Our Lady of Perpetual Help-St. Agnes, Atlantic Highlands • St. Catherine, Middletown • St. Mary, Middletown

1. Collaborative Model for all four parishes in the Cohort

2. Potential Linkage Model for St. Ann and St. Catherine to be determined no later than July 1, 2018

COHORT 16

Holy Cross, Rumson • Nativity, Fair Haven • St. Leo the Great, Lincroft • St. James, Red Bank • St. Anthony, Red Bank

1. Collaborative Model for all five parishes in the Cohort

2. St. Anthony, designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry, no later than July 1, 2017

COHORT 17

St. Jerome, West Long Branch • St. Mary, Deal • St. Dorothea, Eatontown • Christ the King, Long Branch • Precious Blood, Monmouth Beach • St. Michael, West End (Immaculate Conception, Eatontown, will be treated separately)

1. Collaborative Model for all six parishes in the Cohort

2. Merger Model for St. Jerome and St. Mary, no later than July 1, 2018

3. Linkage Model for St. Dorothea and Precious Blood, no later than July 1, 2019

4. Christ the King designated as a Center for Hispanic and Portuguese Ministry, no later than July 1, 2017

COHORT 18

Holy Innocents, Neptune • Mother of Mercy, Asbury Park • St. Anselm, Wayside

1. Collaborative Model for all three parishes in the Cohort

2. Mother of Mercy Parish designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry and a Center for Haitian Ministry

COHORT 19

Ascension, Bradley Beach • St. Elizabeth, Avon • St. Rose, Belmar • St. Catharine-St. Margaret, Spring Lake • St. Mark, Sea Girt

1. Collaborative Model for all five parishes in the Cohort

2. Merger Model for Ascension and St. Elizabeth, no later than July 1, 2019

3. St. Mark designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry, no later than July 1, 2017

OCEAN COUNTY

COHORT 20

St. Denis, Manasquan • Epiphany, Brick • St. Martha, Point Pleasant • St. Peter, Point Pleasant Beach

1. Collaborative Model for all four parishes in the Cohort

2. Status of Epiphany to be reviewed no later than July 1, 2018

COHORT 21

Sacred Heart, Bay Head • St. Pio of Pietrelcina, Lavallette • St. Catharine of Siena, Seaside Park • Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Seaside Heights

1. Collaborative Model for all four parishes in the Cohort

2. Linkage Model for Sacred Heart and St. Pio of Pietrelcina, no later than July 1, 2019

3. Merger Model for St. Catharine of Siena and Our Lady of Perpetual Help, no later than July 1, 2018

4. Provision of ministry to Hispanic Catholics by bilingual priest in consultation with the Conventual Franciscan Order, no later than July 1, 2018

COHORT 22

Visitation, Brick • St. Dominic, Brick • St. Mary of the Lake, Lakewood • St. Anthony Claret, Lakewood

1. Collaborative Model for all four parishes in the Cohort

2. Shared facilities between St. Mary of the Lake and St. Anthony Claret, no later than July 1, 2018; Linkage Model for St. Mary of the Lake and St. Anthony Claret, no later than July 1, 2019; Merger Model for St. Mary of the Lake and St. Anthony Claret, no later than July 1, 2020

3. St. Anthony Claret designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry, no later than July 1, 2017

COHORT 23

St. Aloysius, Jackson • St. Monica, Jackson • St. John, Lakehurst • St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Whiting

1. Collaborative Model for all four parishes in the Cohort

2. Status of St. Monica to be reviewed periodically, beginning July 1, 2018

COHORT 24

St. Joseph, Toms River • St. Justin, Toms River • St. Luke, Toms River • St. Maximilian Kolbe, Toms River

1. Collaborative Model for all four parishes in the Cohort

2. St. Joseph designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry, no later than July 1, 2017

COHORT 25

St. Barnabas, Bayville • St. Mary, Barnegat • St. Theresa, Little Egg Harbor • St. Pius X, Forked River • St. Francis of Assisi, Brant Beach

1. Collaborative Model for all five parishes in the Cohort

2. St. Barnabas designated as a Center for Hispanic Ministry, no later than July 1, 2017

3. Designation of a Center for Hispanic Ministry in the southern part of Ocean County to be determined no later than July 1, 2018