



**The Catholic Diocese of Buffalo
Office of the Apostolic Administrator**

September 19-20, 2020

My Dear Sisters and Brothers -

On this 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time we gather together in-person - or with the benefit of live-stream technology - in celebration of God present and at work among us. Yesterday, we celebrated the call of Jesus Christ, accepted and manifested in the lives of two newly-ordained priests, Father Christopher Emminger and Father Denning Achidi, as well as four transitional deacons and 6 permanent deacons. I ask for your prayers and pledge of support for these men that their lives may reveal at all times the boundless grace and love of the Lord who calls each of us in our own way to carry forth His Gospel of truth, of compassion and hope.

As you may now be aware, we have embarked on a "Road to Renewal" here in our Diocese which aims to reinvigorate Catholic faith, to optimize more fully parish and diocesan resources, and, importantly, increase the reach and impact of our varied ministries throughout Western New York. Toward this end, I formed a Diocesan Renewal Task Force this past summer to look at how others in dioceses across the country have faced similar challenges that we now confront with regard to diminished financial resources and reduced church and school attendance, but who have been successful in promoting a culture of co-responsibility among laity, clergy and religious in carrying out the work of evangelization, education and service.

Beginning in the coming days and continuing into October, the Task Force members, along with the Vicars of the Diocese, will be conducting regional consultation sessions in order to gain insight and input from parish leaders, school administrators, and from parishioners across the diocese that will inform decisions about how we will be structured and operate going forward. I want to assure you that there are no predefined conclusions or decisions regarding the way in which regions, parishes and schools will be affected. We are intent on determining how best to preserve individual parish identities as a "Family of Families" - regardless of decisions that may change the way any one parish family is organized and experiences the fullness of Catholic life.

The fact is, never has what we offer as a community of believers been more needed, particularly in light of the devastating, ongoing effects of the Covid-19 threat. As families struggle with the uncertainty of prolonged financial hardship, parish communities must be that place where those struggling to access basic resources have a place to turn, where there is always a shoulder to lean on and where no one is left to walk alone.



Please know that we will be communicating regularly about the progress of our discussions and the conclusions that will be informed by them. A special section of our diocesan website will include the most up-to-date information, as well as schedules for the regional listening sessions. I invite you to participate as much as you can and to share your ideas, voice your concerns and to discern with others how we can best live and demonstrate our Catholic faith here in Western New York going forward.

May our good and gracious God guide and sustain us as we travel this new and promising journey together!

+Edward B. Scharfenberger

Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger
Apostolic Administrator



THE ROAD TO RENEWAL

A collaborative diocesan-wide journey to renew the purpose, mission and impact of Catholic Faith throughout Western New York

- This is a journey - *NOT* a program - to **reinvigorate Catholic faith, more fully optimize parish and diocesan resources, and increase the impact of our varied ministries** throughout Western New York.
- A Diocesan Renewal Task Force has been formed that will be conducting regional consultation sessions in order to gain insight and input from parish leaders, school administrators, and from parishioners across the diocese that will inform decisions about how we will be structured and operate going forward.
- We seek broad input - and invite parishioners to join the 18 Zoom meetings in the coming days to share insights, ask questions and offer ideas. The diocesan website will list these opportunities prominently.
- There are no predefined conclusions or decisions regarding the way in which regions, parishes and schools will be affected. The process is one intended to gain broad input and consultation which will inform decisions that Bishop Scharfenberger will make as interim leader of the Diocese.
- Parishes cannot be simply eliminated or “closed.”
- As a “Family of Faith” defined by a legacy of sacramental life, which has nurtured a distinctly Catholic identity and where life’s most profound moments have been shared and celebrated, a parish community reflects the very soul of those who belong to it.
- We are determined to define how best to preserve individual parish identities as a “Family of Families” - regardless of decisions that may change the way any one parish family is organized and experiences the fullness of Catholic life.
- We invite all to participate - to be part of the consultations underway and to help determine a more promising future for Catholic faith and ministry throughout Western New York for generations to come.