

# Growing Together as Disciples to Serve Others

“In order for our parishes to be faithful to all that they are called to be, they must be constantly renewed. We have to study the signs of our times...to give us an opportunity to focus our parishes more clearly on the mission Jesus has given us.” - Bishop Fabbro

## **What are some of the signs of our times?**

- a declining number of priests for parish ministry in our Diocese.  
In 1991, there were 178 priests, by 2025 we are projecting 73.
- fewer people in the total population are Catholic and fewer Catholics practice their faith through regular participation in the sacraments. This is due to a wide range of factors, including declining birth rates, changing multicultural populations, societal influences, loss of religious affinity and changing faith practices.

## **How does our Diocese encourage us to respond to these times?**

Parishes are called to be “missionary”. Bishop Fabbro has challenged us to, “being a mission-oriented church that forms disciples of Jesus.” This mission of evangelization, of proclaiming and living the gospel message, belongs to every baptized member of the Church.

- A missionary parish reaches out to those who do not know Christ by welcoming them and sharing the Good News with them.
- A missionary parish is also one that educates and forms its members in the faith so that they can live their discipleship completely.
- A missionary parish continues to spiritually strengthen parishioners to live their faith boldly and to share it through witness and outreach to others.

## **WOW! That sounds like a lot!**

**What is the new model of parish organization that will allow us to work within our new limitations and yet achieve our mission?** – *by forming a Family of Parishes!*

## **How does this model work?**

Two or more parishes are grouped together to share limited resources (financial, human, and physical (buildings)) to more effectively try to be that “mission-oriented Church.” Individual parishes remain “distinct”, but are now expected to work collaboratively to better achieve this missionary goal.

The Family of Parishes is guided by a pastor with a team of lay leaders and deacons to serve the needs of all the parishioners. As a Family, the leadership and the parishioners are to work together in close cooperation to be mission-driven. As the baptized, we are all “co-responsible” for the building and the growing of the Church. When trying to work with fewer clergy and fewer parishioners to achieve this task, it can be overwhelming. However, when we pool and unite our various gifts and talents, it injects new life, spreads the burden of “doing”, and moves us more into a way of “being” the beloved of God to better share His love with those we meet.



Hi Future Fellow Parishioners,

My name is Fr. Matthew Kucharski (commonly known as “Fr. Matt”) and I am currently the administrator of St. John the Baptist Parish in Amherstburg. With Fr. Rick Janisse retiring at the end of June, I will likely be named the priest of both St. John the Baptist and St. Anthony of Padua. I thank Fr. Rick for his many years of service in your parish and now we must try to move forward using a new diocesan model of parish organization. Like you, I have been struggling under the restrictions of this pandemic. I hope all of you are staying safe. My sympathies to any of you who have experienced the death of a loved one due to this virus. My thanks to all of you who work on the “front lines” for your commitment and sacrifice. I had intended to introduce myself to you in a very different way than through a mailout, but circumstances are what they are. I was born in Windsor, Ontario on February 19, 1967 and was ordained to the priesthood April 27, 1996. I am the Secretary/Treasurer of Priests For Life Canada and have served in this capacity since August 2013. I have also served the diocese as Vocations Director and as the Diocesan Spiritual Advisor for the Catholic Women's League of Canada. I am involved with the diocesan Ministry to Priests Team and serve as the priest-chaplain for St. Thomas Villanova High School. As well, I assist in coordinating various symposia for the ongoing formation of priests in Ontario. In my spare time, I enjoy travelling, especially going on cruises, and getting together with friends and my family (mom, dad, and younger sister). I look forward to ministering with you in the months and years ahead.

Below and on the reverse, you will find some preliminary information about the new Family of Parishes model our diocese is implementing - St. John the Baptist and St. Anthony of Padua will be part of the next phase of this model. As we try to bring our two parishes to form a Family of Parishes, there are many challenges. As this is new territory in our diocese, and as each Family is unique, there is no “one way” to do this. We are learning from those Families that have embarked before us, but we have our own special characteristics that need to be addressed. To assist us in forming our Family, the diocese recommends, and thus we have formed, a Transition Team:

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Deacon Matt Sutton (Deacon rep)	<a href="mailto:msutton@dol.ca">msutton@dol.ca</a>
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Chris D’Aloisio (St. John the Baptist rep)	<a href="mailto:daloisiocd@gmail.com">daloisiocd@gmail.com</a>
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Their tasks include:

- Meeting every few weeks prior to Family activation (July 6, 2020)
- Develop a comprehensive communication plan to keep parishioners informed of the process
- Select a name for the Family of Parishes (according to diocesan directives)
- Develop a workable weekday and weekend Mass schedule (according to diocesan directives)
- Develop a Pastoral Plan for the first six months of Family activation
- Develop an inventory of facilities and resources and how best to utilize them

We have been meeting for the last few months and we have had some very encouraging discussions. If you have any questions or feel you would like to contribute to the discussion, please email one of Team members or call the St. John the Baptist parish office (519-736-5418) and you will be connected to the Team member you wish. Once the pandemic restrictions have been lifted we hope to involve you further in open discussions on how best to move forward with our new Family of Parishes.