

11 February 2011

Dear Friends in Christ:

In the Summer 2010 edition of *Journey*, I wrote an article in which I indicated that I had established a Parish Review Committee, comprised of representatives of clergy, religious and laity, to provide advice to me on planning for the future of the Archdiocese.

The Committee was given three distinct tasks: to propose a policy for altering or closing parishes or missions; to recommend a process and procedures which will ensure appropriate consultation and communication among parishes concerned; and to develop a checklist of issues or questions that would need to be addressed when a parish or mission is either clustered or closed. The work of the Committee is now complete.

The Committee has developed a set of Guiding Principles, a Policy Statement, and a statement of Procedures for Implementation of Parish Review. These documents have been endorsed by the Council of Priests and approved by me. A copy of each is included with this letter.

It will, I think, be of interest to you to know something of the specific situation addressed by the Parish Review Committee. At the present time, there are 71 church communities in the Archdiocese of Kingston, served by 47 priests. Of that number, 31 are priests of the Archdiocese, and 16 belong to other dioceses or religious communities. These figures contain no provision for retirement or illness.

As I noted in the *Journey* article, faced with a shortage of priests, increased costs, buildings in need of repair, and a decline in church attendance in some communities, it is necessary to examine how best to provide ministry in the years to come. It is important to remember as well that restructuring of parishes may provide an opportunity for renewed parish life, with more involvement by the laity, greater shared resources, and more inter-parish activity.

In order to carry out the recommendations of the Review Committee, an Implementation Committee will be established within the next few months. Additional information will be provided to you as the Implementation Committee continues its work. I am most anxious that the principles of accountability and transparency, outlined in the Guiding Principles of Parish Review, be faithfully observed.

It is my intention that the Implementation Committee will be principally involved in long-range planning for the Archdiocese. I realize, too, that situations requiring immediate attention may present themselves from time to time. I think, for example, of an instance in which, with little advance notice, there may not be enough priests to cover existing Mass schedules in the parishes of a given area. In that case, I may have to direct the parish(es) to reduce the total number of Masses celebrated, and request that the Implementation Committee begin considering a more permanent arrangement.

While I realize that the changes foreseen in this process will not affect all parishes immediately, we are an Archdiocesan family; and I ask for – and count on – the cooperation, continued support, and prayer of everyone, so that together we can plan for the future of this Archdiocese.

Sincerely in Christ,

† Brendan M. O'Brien  
Archbishop of Kingston

## MISSION STATEMENT

We, the community of God's people  
in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Kingston,  
united by the Holy Spirit, with lives rooted in the Gospel,  
proclaim with joy the resurrection of Christ,  
and, as followers of the Risen Lord,  
under the patronage of Mary, the Mother of God,  
dedicate our lives in Christian service to all,  
especially those most in need.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES of PARISH REVIEW IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF KINGSTON

In imitation of Christ, the Servant-Leader, and in fidelity to the Mission Statement of the Archdiocese, the Archdiocese of Kingston:

1. embraces the Church's mission;
2. strives to meet the changing needs of God's people in the Archdiocese of Kingston;
3. is committed to the principles of accountability and transparency;
4. promotes responsible administration of Archdiocesan resources;
5. supports appropriate participation in decision-making by laity, religious, and ordained.

**POLICY STATEMENT**  
**of**  
**PARISH REVIEW IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF KINGSTON**

In order to implement the Guiding Principles established by the Parish Review Committee with respect to the reorganization of parishes, the Archdiocese of Kingston will adopt the following standard criteria, recognizing that, ordinarily, no individual criterion will be considered adequate for action:

1. Ordinarily, a priest will celebrate no more than two Masses on Saturday, including a Saturday evening Vigil Mass, and two Masses on Sunday;
2. No Catholic person or family should need to travel more than 1/2 hour by car, in good weather, to access their geographical home parish;
3. A parish or mission with fewer than 100 people regularly attending weekend Masses will be considered for clustering or closing;
4. Each parish or mission is responsible for 100% of its costs, including operational expenses, current liabilities on capital expenditures, and diocesan assessment;
5. A parish whose revenues or resources have failed to meet its expenses in the past three-year period will be required to cluster with at least one other parish, or to close;
6. A parish whose buildings require repair or renovation beyond its ability to pay may be required to merge with at least one other parish, or to close.

**PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**  
**of**  
**PARISH REVIEW IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF KINGSTON**

1. The Implementation Committee shall:
  - a) be appointed by the Archbishop as a successor Committee to the Parish Review Committee, with members appointed for set terms;
  - b) have the following membership, with a chairperson to be appointed by the Archbishop:
    - i) Archbishop or his delegate;
    - ii) one priest from each deanery;
    - iii) two lay persons from each deanery, one preferably under the age of 40;
    - iv) one Religious Sister;
    - v) one Permanent Deacon;
    - vi) one additional member nominated by the Archbishop.
  - c) consider the reorganization of parishes by applying the criteria of the Policy Statement;
  - d) establish early in its mandate a schedule of meetings, addressing issues such as location, frequency, time, etc.
  
2. The Implementation Committee shall address, and make recommendations regarding, particular parish situations:
  - a) proposed by the Archbishop, the Council of Priests, the priests of a deanery, or the Pastor/Administrator and/or Parish Pastoral Council that would be directly involved;
  - b) resulting from its own investigation of need.
  
3. The Implementation Committee shall present its preliminary recommendation(s) to the Archbishop for his consideration.
  
4. With the approval of the Archbishop, the Implementation Committee shall consult:
  - a) the parishes involved;
  - b) the relevant deanery;
  - c) the Council of Priests.
  
5. After assessing the response of each of the groups listed in 4. above, and, upon receiving the approval and endorsement of the Archbishop, the Implementation Committee shall recommend either closure, clustering, some other appropriate measure, or no action.
  
6. The Archbishop shall issue a decree, if appropriate, indicating his decision regarding the recommendation(s) of 5. above, observing all canonical requirements.
  
7. In order to implement the decision of the Archbishop, the Implementation Committee shall establish, for each parish situation, a Sub-Committee, comprising:
  - i) the pastor(s) involved;
  - ii) two representatives from each Parish Pastoral Council involved;
  - iii) two representatives from each Parish Finance Committee involved;
  - iv) two representatives from the Implementation Committee, of whom one shall chair the Sub-Committee.
  
8. The Sub-Committee shall:
  - a) implement the decision of the Archbishop, in accordance with the *Checklist for Clustering or Closing Parishes* provided;
  - b) provide to the Implementation Committee ongoing assessment regarding the clustering/closure of the parish(es) involved;
  - c) after six months, undertake an evaluation of the arrangement, which will be forwarded to the Implementation Committee.