



**For Immediate Release**

## **Diocese of Buffalo Announces Plan to Reshape the Number of Parishes through Merger**

*Plan presented to priests responds to critical factors impacting diocesan operations*

**Buffalo, N.Y., May 28, 2024** – The Diocese of Buffalo today has announced that following a comprehensive and collaborative planning process directed by its Road to Renewal division, a plan was presented to Family of Parishes priests to merge *approximately 34 percent* of the diocese’s 160 parishes.

“The Diocese of Buffalo is facing multiple challenges including a significant priest shortage, declining Mass attendance, aging congregations and ongoing financial pressures brought about by our Chapter 11 filing,” explained Bishop Michael W. Fisher. “This plan resulted from the lessons learned as we brought parishes together in the parish family model and determined rather quickly that scaling back the number of parishes would best allow us to use our limited resources to help reenergize a spiritual renewal in the diocese.”

“These difficult changes associated with our renewal allow limited resources to be directed to the greatest needs in our community,” Bishop Fisher added, “The work of the Holy Spirit within our diocese and the support of the Western New York community has been an incredible blessing.”

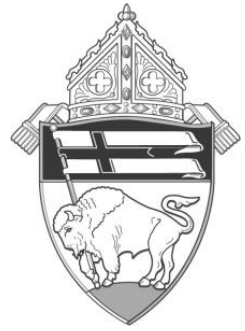
The actual number of parishes merged will not be determined until clergy and parish leadership have an opportunity to review recommendations that will be proposed. They may either agree with the recommendations, or present an option for an alternative parish (or parishes) within their family for merger. Those determinations will be made between August 15 and September 1, 2024.

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# Diocese of Buffalo

## Office of Communications



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“To make the recommendations that will be presented to pastors, we examined parish demographics, sacramental participation, and financial support,” explained Rev. Bryan Zielenieski, Vicar for Renewal and Development, who leads the Road to Renewal effort. “We also looked at the variations of our urban, suburban and rural parishes because factors like poverty rates, availability of transportation, proximity and limited resources impact overall parish long-term vitality.”

The Road to Renewal in the diocese employs a collaborative model that saw the current 160 parishes grouped into 36 Families of Parishes which were announced in December 2021. An initial group of six Families of Parishes soon thereafter began the pilot phase. When the Road to Renewal process began, Renewal staff contacted dioceses throughout the country and 67 percent of dioceses responding were implementing, or had implemented, a collaborative model in their diocese.

Soon, pastors will be provided with detailed materials to lead consultations within their Family of Parishes. Once the parishes to be merged are identified and approved, the process to begin merging those identified parishes is expected to begin this fall.