



Diocese of Springfield

Office of the Bishop

May 20, 2010

Dear co-workers in the Church,

What has been foreseen for several months has now come to pass. Over the last two weeks I, along with other diocesan officials, have been engaged in some very difficult, very painful conversations with diocesan staff members on the re-configuration plan for the central operations and ministries of the diocese. It means reductions in staff and in central office activities.

As I indicated in earlier communications to diocesan personnel, these decisions, no matter how necessary, were not easy to make. We have simply reached a point in time when corrective action was required if we were to sustain any level of necessary diocesan ministry and service going forward.

Let me lay out what we face.

Since the year 2000, the diocese has suffered annual increases in the amounts owed to it by parishes. These include unremitted health and liability premiums, unremitted cathedralicium, and other unremitted parish assessments. At present, these represent over \$9,000,000 in bills unpaid by parishes with little likelihood that payments will or can be made since so many parishes are operating at a deficit. The diocese used reserves to pay the insurance premiums so as to ensure the continuance of insurance at the parish level, and that diminished our savings.

Over the same ten years, in addition to parish subsidies, the diocese has subsidized education in Catholic elementary and high schools by more than \$48,000,000. And, prior to the economic collapse, the diocese had committed to constructing Holyoke Catholic High School and St. Michael's Academy, and that further diminished our savings.

Despite what some think, the above factors had much more of an effect on diocesan finances than the settlements for clergy sexual abuse. Settlement payments were covered in large part by the insurance companies even though we had to go to court before they agreed to make the payments.

With the economic collapse, the investment income on which the diocese depended for much of the operating budget of its central offices all but disappeared. Our remaining savings were radically diminished. The result is that proverbial "perfect storm" that required a full review of the diocese's central activities.

This review has required that we evaluate everything we do in terms of three critical criteria: what is canonically or civilly required, what is best handled through a centralized diocesan operation, and finally what is best undertaken by parishes or groups of parishes with limited support from the diocese.

As a result, by July 1 we will have eliminated a number of departments and functions, with a total reduction from diocesan payroll of 49 positions or approximately 36 percent of our current workforce. This includes 7 clergy and religious. In addition we have reduced work schedules for a number of the employees who will be retained. After July 1 the overall number of staff members will go from 138 to 89 employees.

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Finally to consolidate and make our operations more efficient, we will be reducing and reevaluating all satellite locations. For example, while St. Francis Chapel will remain available for worship, Catholic Charities and Latino Ministry will relocate to the Bishop Maguire Center where Catholic Charities will focus on direct services to people in need and to immigrants.

At the same time, we are creating a new model in the relationship between parishes and the central diocesan offices, one that will place greater emphasis on resources and referral services:

Pastoral Ministries and Services will encompass Catholic Charities, Counseling and Safe Environment, Latino Ministry, and a combination of the functions formerly undertaken by Parish Ministries, Family Life Ministry, Youth Ministry, Lay Ministry Formation, and Deaf Ministry. The over-arching goal of this new office will be to offer resources and guidance, so that these important services can be best provided on the local level.

Evangelization Ministries will encompass the Catholic Schools Office, Faith Formation (Religious Education), the Vocations Office, the Diaconate Office, the Vicar for Religious, and Catholic Communications.

Stewardship and Temporalities will involve the Finance Office, Human Resources and the Cemeteries Corporation.

The Offices of the Vicar General, the Chancellor and the Tribunal will retain their canonical status.

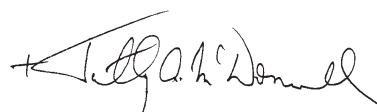
In response to the fiscal situation we face, all diocesan Catholic schools will be operating on a reduced budget. We will no longer be able to subsidize schools as we once did.

I realize in accepting and implementing these changes many valuable services and ministries we once performed will no longer be available through our central operations. Yet at the same time while we accept this difficult challenge, we also realize it presents us with an opportunity to re-envision who we are as a Catholic diocesan community and how, along with our parish communities, we can continue to give witness to our faith throughout western Massachusetts.

I ask all to join me in praying for our co-workers who have lost their jobs. They have been true "co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord." I can't thank them enough for all they have done and all they have been to the diocese. With all my heart I hate to lose their services. I ask God to bless and lead them on new pilgrim paths. I pray as well for our entire diocesan community as we grapple with these changes in the days, week and months to come.

Mother Teresa had a saying that "there is nothing so bad that God can't bring a greater good out of it - if we let Him." I pray we will let Him, let him operate in and through us all that a greater good may emerge from a very difficult time.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy A. McDonnell". The signature is stylized with a large initial 'T' and a cursive 'M'.

+Timothy A. McDonnell
Bishop of Springfield