

# Press Conference

## St. Louis Parish, Batesville

June 6, 2013

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to speak with you this morning about some decisions that will affect thirty parishes of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. As you may be aware, the parishes of the Archdiocese are organized in regional configurations, called deaneries. The decisions I am about to announce will affect the twenty-seven parishes of the Batesville Deanery as well as two parishes in the adjoining Connersville Deanery and one parish from the Seymour Deanery.

Before giving you the concrete details of what has been determined, allow me to highlight the process that produced the decisions.

Two years ago, pastoral leaders and lay representatives from the parishes in the Batesville Deanery entered an important planning process called *Connected in the Spirit*. This process is an effort to discern where God is leading the Church in central and southern Indiana and to discuss how the Archdiocese of Indianapolis should change its structures in order to carry out its mission today and in the future.

This planning process was inaugurated under the leadership of my predecessor, Archbishop Daniel Buechlein. The parishes of the Terre Haute Deanery were the first to have participated in the planning process and those parishes in the western region of the Archdiocese have undergone some reorganization. Last March, the four deaneries of greater Indianapolis began their own self-study and the remaining five deaneries of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis will eventually take part in *Connected in the Spirit*.

Pastoral planning recognizes the need for the Church to adapt its structures to a changing world. Factors, such demographic shifts in Catholic populations, concentrated density of parish in a limited geographical area, a history of

declining Mass attendance and sacramental activity, increasing economic challenges that threaten sustainability, a decrease in the availability of clergy to staff parishes and a review of facilities, have influenced the pastoral plan for the Batesville Deanery. We recognize that today's mission and the viability of the Catholic Church in the future requires that we reposition our structures and marshal our forces in a new way.

The challenge of positioning the Church to respond to new circumstances is being faced by Catholics across the world. Even in Rome, famously known as the "Eternal City", the diocese is struggling to produce new structures in support of a new mission. During the two decades I worked there I heard Pope John Paul II call several times for the construction of new churches. A tourist might wonder what on earth the pope was talking about, for the visitor to the historic center of Roma will see hundreds of churches, one on practically every city block.

However, families have migrated from the center of Rome to neighborhoods on the periphery of the city, where the cost of living is significantly less expensive. New arrivals to the city have settled in these neighborhoods and the nearby suburbs. Here there are very few churches and many of the parishes in formation still worship in makeshift structures, such as recreational halls or school basements; hence the pope's anxiety for new churches to sustain a new mission.

When I arrived in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis last December, the parishes of the Batesville Deanery had already concluded their self-assessment and the Archdiocesan Planning Commission had submitted its recommendations. The Planning Commission is a group of 20-25 ordained, religious and lay leaders who are broadly representative of the Archdiocese and are delegated by the Archbishop to study the parishes' self-assessment, make preliminary and then final recommendations after a review of the responses from the parishes concerned.

I chose not to implement immediately these recommendations. Instead, I wanted to become more familiar with the Batesville Deanery as well as the entire Archdiocese and enter into a broad consultation with a variety of groups:

representatives of the affected parishes, the Council of Priests, the senior managers of the Archdiocese and others. This consultation has convinced me that the process used to arrive at the decisions I am about to announce has been a sincere attempt to discern the will of God by proceeding from the base of each parish to the leadership of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. The process was not an arbitrary movement from the top-down. And, while I still have much to learn about the Catholic Church in central and southern Indiana, I am confident that the decisions we are making will contribute to its growth and health.

The decisions I am about to announce make use of three different models for the Catholic communities in the Batesville Deanery. You will hear me speak of merged or consolidated parishes, linked parishes and parishes in partnership; let me briefly describe each:

- Merged or consolidated parishes create a new parish configuration which is able to provide many more activities and opportunities than the original parishes could have managed on their own;
- Linked parishes are produced when two parishes share a pastoral leader. Linked parishes cooperate in as many things as possible, since the pastor or administrator is striving to serve two separate parishes.
- Parishes in partnerships are created through the use of joint programs, the appropriate sharing of staff to enhance the quality of ministry and practice good stewardship of resources and the use of joint councils, commissions and programs.

Keeping in mind those three models, I now would like to announce my decisions regarding the parishes of the Batesville Deanery:

1. (Cohort A) – St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville and St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County will become **linked parishes** by July 3, 2013. As **linked** parishes, the two parishes will share a priest and combine as many programs, ministries and administrative functions as possible. The two parishes will continue to have separate finance councils as required under Canon Law.

2. (Cohort B) – Holy Guardian Angels Parish in Cedar Grove will **merge** into St. Michael Parish in Brookville effective December 1, 2013. The new parish from this merger will become part of the Batesville Deanery.

St. Peter Parish of Franklin County will form a **partnership** with St. Michael Parish in Brookville. Under a partnership model, the two parishes will create joint programs and share staff and services.

3. (Cohort C) – St. Anne Parish in Hamburg and St. Mary of the Rock Parish in Batesville will **merge** into Holy Family Parish in Oldenburg effective December 1, 2013.

4. (Cohort D) – St. John the Baptist Parish in Dover, St. Joseph Parish in St. Leon, St. Martin Parish in Yorkville and St. Paul Parish in New Alsace will **merge** effective December 1, 2013 to form a new parish. The new parish will have four worship sites during its first year of existence to be reduced to two worship sites no later than the First Sunday of Advent of 2014 and one site no later than the First Sunday of Advent of 2015. The Archdiocese will work with the new parish to study the possibility of building a new church and a regional school.

5. (Cohort E) – St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright and St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg will establish a **partnership** effective December 1, 2013. Under a partnership model, the two parishes will create joint programs and share staff and services. St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish, with the assistance of the Archdiocese will begin a feasibility study for the construction of a new church.

6. (Cohort F) – St. Denis Parish in Jennings County will **merge** into Immaculate Conception Parish in Millhousen effective December 1, 2013.

Immaculate Conception Parish in Millhousen, St. Maurice Parish in Napoleon and St. John the Baptist Parish in Osgood will form a **partnership**. The three parishes will collaborate in providing programs and pastoral ministry where possible.

7. (Cohort F #2) – St. Mary Magdalene Parish in New Marion will **merge** into Prince of Peace in Madison effective December 1, 2013.

8. (Cohort G) – St. Pius Parish in Ripley County will **merge** into St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Milan effective December 1, 2013.  
St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Milan and St. Mary Parish in Aurora will establish a **partnership** effective December 1, 2013. Under a partnership model, the two parishes will create joint programs and share staff and services.
9. (Cohort H) – St. Nicholas Parish in Sunman and St. Anthony Parish in Morris will become **linked** parishes effective December 1, 2013 and will share a priest. The two parishes will continue to have separate finance councils, but will combine as many programs, ministries and committees as possible. As **linked** parishes, St. Nicholas and St. Anthony parishes also will **partner** with St. Louis Parish in Batesville and are encouraged to create joint programs and when appropriate share staff and services.
10. (Cohort I) – St. John the Evangelist Parish in Enochsburg and St. Maurice Parish in St. Maurice will **merge** effective December 1, 2013 and will become part of a **new parish** to be established in northern Decatur County. The parish will conduct worship at the churches of the two present parishes subject to period review.  
The new parish will enter into a **partnership** with St. Mary Parish in Greensburg effective December 1, 2013. Under a partnership model, the two parishes will create joint programs and share staff and services.

As a result of mergers noted above the following 12 parishes will close: St. Anne Parish in Hamburg, Holy Guardian Angels in Cedar Grove, St. Mary of the Rock in Batesville, St. John the Baptist in Dover, St. Joseph in St. Leon, St. Martin in Yorkville, St. Paul in New Alsace, St. Denis in Jennings County, St. Mary Magdalene in New Marion, St. Pius in Ripley County, St. Maurice in St. Maurice, and St. John the Evangelist in Enochsburg.

A total of 30 parishes – 27 from the Batesville Deanery, two from the Connersville Deanery and one from the Seymour Deanery – took part in this the planning process. Of those 30 parishes, 12 are merging into other parishes and will close,

and two new parishes will be established, for a net reduction in parishes from 30 to 20.

It is anticipated that these decision may result in the construction of some new facilities. The Archdiocese will work with the new parish to be formed in North Dearborn County to study the possibility of building a new church and a regional school.

St. John Parish the Evangelist Parish in Enochsburg and St. Maurice Parish in St. Maurice will merge effective December 1, 2013 into a new parish to be established in northern Decatur County. The parish will conduct worship at the churches of the two present parishes subject to period review. The result could be the construction of a new church.

Finally, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright, with the assistance of the Archdiocese, soon will begin a feasibility study for the construction of a new church.

The Archdiocese has set in place a team that will assist the parishes in carrying out these decisions. Glenn Tebbe, of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg, and Nancy Fahringer, administrator of the Batesville Deanery Resource Center, will assist the implementation process within the Batesville Deanery, together with Father John Meyer, Dean of the Batesville Deanery. The implementation team may also call on the assistance of the consultants of the Reid Group. More information about the implementation of the decisions and how parishioners can volunteer to help with the next steps of the process will be communicated in the near future.

I can well understand that these decisions are difficult to accept and parishioners may wonder how and to whom they might appeal.

According to the proper law of the Catholic Church, the decrees that I have issued today are a type of singular administrative act and those who are affected by such decrees have the right to seek recourse against them. Canon law provides that anyone who chooses to challenge the decree must first petition the person who

issued the decree, in this case me as the Archbishop of Indianapolis, to rescind or emend the decree.

Any such petition must be filed within ten “useful” days or the right to seek recourse is lost. In the canon law, a “useful” day is a day in which a person can act to exercise or pursue a right. Thus, it begins when a person has notice that a right might be impaired and includes the days in which action could be taken to protect or enforce the right. Practically speaking, “useful” days are equivalent to those days upon which the Archdiocese conducts business, so anyone who wishes to seek recourse against the decrees that I have issued today must file his or her petition within ten business days of receiving notice of them.

In the event that I receive any such petition within the ten-day period permitted in law, I would have thirty continuous days to respond to it. Under the law, I could rescind or emend the decree, or I could deny the petition. If I should deny such a petition, or if thirty days should elapse without any response, the petition is considered to be denied by the operation of the law itself. The petitioner then would have fifteen useful days to seek recourse against the decree by petitioning my hierarchical superior, which for decrees of this nature is a department of the Vatican called **the Congregation for Clergy**.

The coming months will bring changes that touch all the faithful of the Batesville Deanery, as well as a particular grief for the members of the parishes that will close. I truly regret the pain these decisions will cause. While I personally know the anguish that comes when having your home parish closed, I am also certain that the God is constantly working through us to advance the work of His Church, leading us through sorrow to new and more abundant life.

I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.