



Diocese of Green Bay

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Office of the Bishop

January 24, 2007

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

A little over three years ago, I stood before you at Saint Agnes Church here in Green Bay and became the eleventh bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay. The memories of that day are rich and many. I remember being deeply moved by the sincere welcome of hundreds, if not thousands, of people. I remember being overwhelmed by the responsibilities that lay before me as your Bishop and wondering whether I would do a good job. I remember reflecting on the Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Sisters, Lay Ecclesial Ministers and all the Faithful who, in the years and decades prior, worked and sacrificed to build the Church of Green Bay as we know it today. While our ancestors may be gone, their faith is alive with us and through us today.

Like our ancestors, we, too, have worked tirelessly to keep our faith, our parishes, and our schools strong. Eleven months ago, we as the Church in the Greater Green Bay Area began an initiative called Faith Alive. The purpose of Faith Alive is to look at the totality of parish life – worship; sacramental preparation and celebrations; outreach to immigrants and people of different cultures, particularly the Latinos and the Hmong; service to the needy; adult faith formation; and youth education through religious education programs and Catholic schools. In the last 11 months, hundreds of parish leaders and laity of all 23 parishes in the Greater Green Bay Area participated in meetings, discussions and surveys. I can assure you that the phone calls, letters and e-mails which I received on Faith Alive were frank, thought-provoking and passionate. Our people care deeply about their faith and our Church, and want to ensure its vitality well into the future.

Faith Alive helped the members of the 23 parishes in the Greater Green Bay Area study our mission, our priorities and the allocation of parish resources, such as budgets, facilities and personnel – both staff and volunteers – among the many aspects of the mission of Church. It also helped us take a look at and affirm some of the unique ministries in the parishes. One size does not fit all. It helped us to realize that by doing a better job of working together we can accomplish much more than we can do separately. What came of Faith Alive is this: A broad consensus to work together – parishes with neighboring parishes, schools with neighboring schools – and doing so to a greater extent, all in the name of building the Kingdom of God. The overwhelming belief was that Faith Alive could work because existing collaborative efforts are working. Examples of collaborative efforts already in place include a pastoral ministry team serving Annunciation, Saint Joseph and Saint Jude parishes on the west side; joint religious education, RCIA and sacramental preparation happening at Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral and Saints Peter and Paul Parish; several inter-parish youth ministry programs; and a city-wide social concerns committee network.

Knowing this, I am happy to announce my approval of two new initiatives of ministry proposed by Faith Alive for the Greater Green Bay Area. The first initiative is specifically geared toward parish staffs and the ministries they provide. Through collaboration, the 23 parishes in Allouez, Ashwaubenon, Bay Settlement, De Pere, Green Bay and Howard will collaborate to develop and implement many ministries they have in common. The nine areas identified in the Faith Alive proposal are: Adult Faith Formation, Evangelization, Pastoral Care, Peace and Justice, Prayer and

Worship, Religious Education for Children, Schools, Stewardship, and Youth and Young Adult Ministry. The objective is to work together to strengthen ministries and deliver them in a more effective and affective way. If three or four parishes work together collaboratively – and there already are some who do – then the challenges are lessened. Alone, the work can be formidable. Together, the work is far more manageable and more successful as people share a vision and support one another. Ministries are energized.

Based on the recommendation of the Faith Alive project, and with the strong support I heard from the priests on December 1 and more than 100 parish leaders on December 14, I am approving the creation of a Collaborative Parish Ministry Board and four parish cluster groups, all to begin on July 1, 2007. The Board will be the umbrella organization that will facilitate inter-parish cooperation and collaboration on a broad range of ministries. The four clusters will be where implementation will take place, where ideas, challenges, time and resources will be shared – all with the goal of better serving people. The one exception is Youth and Young Adult Ministry. It is the recommendation of the Faith Alive proposal and the pastors to treat Youth and Young Adult Ministry as a city-wide endeavor. I fully support this recommendation and I am happy to announce that this endeavor is already underway.

To help facilitate the creation and implementation of the initiative, I have called on the leadership of the Very Reverend John Harper and the Reverend Monsignor James Dillenburg. Father Harper is the Regional Vicar and Pastor of Saint Mary Parish and Saint Francis Xavier Parish, both in De Pere, and Monsignor Dillenburg is the pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Green Bay and also one of the leaders who studied the shared ministry aspect of the Faith Alive project. Together, they will appoint an Interim Task Force that will work on the details of creating the Collaborative Parish Ministry Board and the parish clusters. The Interim Task Force will be assisted by several Diocesan staff, including Mr. Mark Mogilka, diocesan director of Stewardship and Pastoral Services, who will offer support and resources as the task force identifies needs, deadlines and committees.

Relative to the parish clusters, I accept the recommendation of the Faith Alive proposal for the creation of four such clusters. They are:

- In Allouez and De Pere: Resurrection and Saint Matthew parishes in Allouez; and Old Saint Joseph (at Saint Norbert College), Our Lady of Lourdes, Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Mary parishes in De Pere.
- In Downtown Green Bay: Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Mary of the Angels, Saints Peter and Paul, and Saint Willebrord parishes.
- On the East Side: Prince of Peace, Saint Bernard and Saint Philip parishes in Green Bay; and Holy Cross Parish in Bay Settlement.
- And on the West Side: Annunciation, Saint Agnes, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Saint Joseph, Saint Jude and Saint Patrick parishes in Green Bay; Nativity Parish in Ashwaubenon; and Saint John the Baptist Parish in Howard.

The formation and work of the Interim Task Force will begin immediately and will conclude by July 1, 2007, when the clusters and the new Collaborative Parish Ministry Board are operational. The Collaborative Ministry Board will be responsible for the focus of collaborative ministry. It will be composed of four pastors (one from each of the four clusters); six parish representatives who work in the areas of religious education, youth ministry, liturgy, social concerns and pastoral care; and four diocesan representatives, one from each key ministerial department – Catholic Charities, Education, Evangelization and Worship, and Stewardship and Pastoral Services.

The second initiative of collaborative ministry addresses the needs and the future of the 2,600 students enrolled in the 11 Catholic elementary schools in the Greater Green Bay Area.

Nearly one year ago to the day we gathered together to hear my decision on the recommendations of the GRACE initiative. As you know, the purpose of the GRACE initiative and its 14 committees was to develop a proposal to guide the creation of a Catholic school system for the Greater Green Bay Area. The volunteer work of more than 100 professionals made it possible to study budgets, curriculum, staffing levels, facilities, and marketing concepts, to name a few. While I did not endorse the GRACE program “in toto,” there were many aspects of the proposal worthy of consideration and implementation. The significant commitment of time and talent of those who worked to plan for the future of Catholic school education in the city of Green Bay paved the way for a far more comprehensive project

that focused on all the ministries offered in the parishes in the Greater Green Bay Area, that endeavor being Faith Alive.

A little over a year ago, the U.S. Bishops underscored the importance of Catholic schools in our open letter titled "Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium." In the letter, we Bishops identified four critical ways in which Catholic schools animate the "fourfold purpose of Christian education." 1.) To provide an atmosphere in which the Gospel message is proclaimed; 2.) Where "community in Christ" is experienced; 3.) Where service to our sisters and brothers is the norm; and 4.) Where thanksgiving and worship of God is cultivated. I firmly support the U.S. Bishops' statement and promise to do my part to make our Catholic schools the very best.

To that end, I am approving the proposal to create a Catholic school system for the Greater Green Bay Area, set to be fully operational no later than the 2012-2013 school year. It is important to note that very little if any change will occur in the 11 area schools for the 2007-2008 academic year. While the conversion to such a system will begin this fall, its full transition is targeted for a period of no more than five years. Preliminary work in developing the system will begin July 1, 2007.

This effort will be a significant undertaking, one that already enjoys the support of many parish leaders in the Greater Green Bay Area. It is an effort that needs to be designed at the grassroots level. There are many details to work out, requiring the skills, dedication and input of the priests, parish professionals, educators, volunteers, parents, students and parishioners. To help guide the process, I have asked Mr. Mark Salisbury to serve as the temporary coordinator for a time period not to exceed one year. Mr. Salisbury will assume this role in addition to his current responsibilities as Diocesan Superintendent of Schools. I believe Mark can lend his expertise in and knowledge of Catholic school education and work with parish, school and diocesan leaders to establish a detailed project timeline; help the system become legally incorporated; establish committees in the areas of curriculum, accreditation, technology, tuition and personnel; and develop processes for the migration of administrative, business and personnel functions.

Over the course of the five years, until the system is fully operational, local efforts and studies by parish leaders will focus on the best way to fund the system through tuition, parish support and third-source funding. The system also will need to be sensitive to diverse cultures and be both respectful of and responsive to families who face economic challenges. By working together, by sharing resources and by partnering with each other, the parishes of the Greater Green Bay Area will build on successes of the 11 Green Bay Area Catholic Schools as well as the operational systems in Oshkosh, Appleton, Manitowoc, Neenah/Menasha, and Marinette/Peshtigo. The opportunity is timely, challenging and exciting.

We have come to a moment in our history as the Church of the Greater Green Bay Area when we look back and give thanks for what our ancestors have provided, and look ahead at what we can give to the generations to follow. GRACE and Faith Alive have proven that many are passionate about their faith and our Church. We can take the best of both GRACE and Faith Alive and create a new vision for parish ministry and Catholic school education that is rooted in the Gospel and bears the fruit of discipleship for many, many years to come.

Grateful for our belief that "Nothing is Impossible with God" I am

Your brother in Christ,

Most Reverend David A. Zubik
Bishop of Green Bay