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# Diocese of Buffalo

## Office of Communications



### **“Road to Renewal” Initiative Launched to Re-Imagine Parish and Diocesan Ministries Throughout Western New York**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 18, 2020

(Buffalo, NY) – In what aims to be a broad-based initiative to redefine the relevance and impact of Catholic faith in Western New York, the Diocese of Buffalo has launched its *“Road to Renewal”* initiative to reinvigorate Catholic faith, more fully optimize parish and diocesan resources, and, importantly, increase the reach and impact of Catholic ministries.

“We have a responsibility to ensure that the immense potential and good that is being accomplished each and every day across Western New York adds up to more than the sum of our many parts,” said Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese. “The fact is, many of our parishes and schools are struggling and their viability is uncertain. Our ‘Road to Renewal’ initiative is all about bringing together resources and capabilities to ensure that we don’t in any way withdraw, but increase our impact, while fulfilling our common mission of evangelization and service, particularly to those most vulnerable.”

Bishop Scharfenberger has formed a Diocesan Renewal Task Force to look at best practices regionally and nationally to learn how others have, or are, facing similar challenges with regard to diminished financial resources and reduced church and school attendance, but who nonetheless have been successful in promoting a culture of co-responsibility among laity, clergy and religious in carrying out the work of evangelization, education and service.

The members of the **Diocesan Renewal Task Force** include:

- Ms. Maureen Hurley, (Co-Chair)
- Rev. Msgr. David LiPuma – (Co-Chair); Pastor of Our Lady of Victory Basilica
- Mr. Frederick G. Attea – Phillips Lytle LLP Senior Counsel
- Mr. Jim Beardi – Chair, Finance Council, Diocese of Buffalo
- Ms. Deborah Brown - Pastoral Administrator of St. John the Baptist Parish, Alden
- Deacon Timothy Chriswell – Director of Permanent Diaconate
- Ms. Carrie Frank – Consultant; Member of Diocesan Finance Council
- Reverend Peter Karalus, Vicar General, Diocese of Buffalo
- Sister Mary McCarrick, OSF - Chief Operating Officer, Diocese of Buffalo
- Mr. J. Brian Ruh - Pastoral Associate of St. Gregory the Great Parish, Williamsville
- Ms. Joan Thomas - Interim Superintendent of Catholic Schools
- Ms. Eileen Warner - Director of Parish Engagement
- Reverend Bryan Zielenieski - Vice Chair, Presbyteral Council; Pastor of Our Lady of Charity Parish, South Buffalo

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The added burden of financial hardship currently confronting the Diocese as it works through its Chapter 11 reorganization, as well as the challenges facing many parishes and exacerbated by the Covid-19 threat, is one that necessitates rethinking the proper organization of diocesan departments, and also how better to utilize resources parish-to-parish. Over the past several months, Bishop Scharfenberger has implemented a reorganization of Catholic Center departments to ensure a more outward-facing focus to support parish life and ministries. This has entailed the formation of a new leadership team and the first appointment of a Chief Operating Officer, Sister Mary McCarrick, OSF.

“Never has what we offer been more needed, particularly in light of the devastating, ongoing effects of the Covid-19 threat,” said Bishop Scharfenberger. “As families struggle with the uncertainty of prolonged financial hardship, parish communities must be that place where those struggling to access basic resources have a place to turn, where there is always a shoulder to lean on and where no one is left to walk alone.”

Toward this end, listening sessions are being carried out across the Diocese with parishioners, parish leaders, pastors, parish and school administrators later this month and in October in order to identify opportunities for consolidation of educational and other essential ministries that serve vital needs throughout the region. While no conclusions have been defined at this early stage, the input of these sessions will inform decisions about how the viability and mission of parishes and schools will be better ensured by coming together as a “Family of Families” with other parish communities.

Relying on the guidance provided by the [\*“The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church,”\*](#) issued July 20, 2020, by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy, Bishop Scharfenberger noted that, “We must accept that it’s no longer an option for parishes and schools teetering on the brink of insolvency to maintain the status quo. As we look at other examples around the country, we must be willing to admit that traditional ways of thinking about parishes - as defined territory, property and buildings - is an obstacle to reimagining and reinvigorating Catholic life and ministry.”

The Diocese of Buffalo commits to transparent communication about the process to define a more sustainable model of Catholic ministry throughout the Western New York. Central to the work of renewal is the support and healing of those abused by members of the clergy. “Our hearts ache for those harmed by abuse at the hands of clergy and by the inadequate acknowledgement - even denial - of Church leaders regarding the pain they have been forced to suffer and endure through no fault of their own. Their healing as members of our Family of Faith must be our constant work and preoccupation,” said Bishop Scharfenberger.

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