

Vicariate: Pgh Diocese Report & Update, Dec. 16, 2008

Preliminary:

At the direction of Bishop Zubik, in July 2008 an Ad Hoc Committee on Regional Vicariates, made up of diocesan administration, priests, deacons and lay leaders, was established. This Ad Hoc Committee was charged with exploring a Regional Vicariate structure to assist the Bishop in his pastoral governance. Appointed by the bishop, Regional Vicars would represent the Bishop to parishes and assist him in administration, pastoral planning and liturgical events at the parish level. The Regional Vicars would also help to communicate parish needs and concerns to the Bishop.

The Ad Hoc Committee developed a basic presentation on the canonical issues involved in the Vicariate structure, the consultation that needs to take place, and a rough timeline for implementation. The fall deanery meetings of 2008 were the first step in the consultation process. At the fall deanery meetings, the general concept of Regional Vicariates was introduced and feedback solicited. That feedback was obtained through a questionnaire involving general information on Regional Vicariates, priests' concerns about Regional Vicariates and an open-ended solicitation for comments. This produced over 560 questions from our priests and deacons covering 15 general areas of concern (see attached document, "Responses to Questionnaire on Regional Vicariates" for the complete listing of questions raised).

Work Groups.

After the deanery meetings, the Ad Hoc Committee met in October to organize the input from the questionnaire. Six Work Groups were established to address the issues raised in clergy sessions:

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Work Group #1: Determine the interrelationship between the regional vicars and central administration and how that will affect the number and kinds of services provided by the central administration, the staffing required for those services, and the budget implications.

Work Group #2: Develop a proposed list of those areas where the regional vicar has "ordinary executive power," that is, what "administrative acts" he can perform and what acts the diocesan bishop reserves to himself.

Work Group #3: Develop a profile/ministry description of the regional vicar as well as the process and timeline for soliciting names from the priests and deacons of the diocese

Work Group #4: Develop a proposed budget for the Regional Vicar, which necessarily will include proposing residence, office space, staffing, administrative, and operating expenses, etc.

Work Group #5: Develop criteria for organizing the 214 parishes into three, four or five regions and then apply those criteria to develop one or more scenarios for each option.

Work Group #6: Develop an internal and external communication plan to accompany both the process of study and recommendation as well as the implantation of regional vicariates. Throughout November and December, the Work Groups have met to address those issues to which they have been assigned. On November 5, 2008, a consultation was held with all diocesan staff members for the purpose of presenting the general outline of the Regional Vicariate proposal and soliciting their input. In the November 21, 2008 universal home delivery issue of the Pittsburgh Catholic, Bishop Zubik introduced the topic of regional vicariates to the general Catholic population. In that issue, a question-and-answer feature was published on vicariates (copy attached). January 2009. The Ad Hoc Committee will meet on January 8, 2009 to review the reports of the Work Groups and to prepare a preliminary draft proposal on Regional Vicariates. The draft proposal will be reviewed by the Administrative Board of Central Administration, the Priest Council and diocesan Pastoral Council. The feedback from those groups will be incorporated into the proposals.

That modified material will be sent to pastors in preparation for the spring deanery meetings. Included in that mailing will be materials to assist pastors in soliciting input from parish staff, Lay Ecclesial Ministers, Parish Pastoral Councils, and Finance Councils and lay leadership in preparation for the spring deanery meetings that will begin at the end of February. The spring deanery meetings will focus on Regional Vicariates to solicit additional input and discussion with Bishop Zubik. After the spring deanery meetings, we will begin refining the proposals and moving toward the final round of consultation during the summer months in anticipation of implementation, which is scheduled for October 2009.

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Diocese of Pittsburgh

111 Boulevard of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1618

Phone: 412-456-3010 • Fax: 412-456-3185

E-mail: daz@diopitt.org • Website: www.diopitt.org

Office of the Bishop

Dear Brother Priests and Deacons:

December 17, 2008

As we approach the feast of Christmas, I wish you all the blessings of this joyous season and a very happy New Year. As chair of the ad hoc Committee on Regional Vicariates, Bishop Bradley has assembled the attached material for your review. This is in keeping with my assurance that you would be kept informed about how the plans concerning Regional Vicariates are proceeding. The attached material includes:

1. The compilation of the questions, concerns, and comments raised by our brother priests and deacons during the September/October 2008 fall deanery meetings.

2. A "Regional Vicariate Report and Update" that outlines what has taken place since the deanery meetings and how we will proceed until the next consultation with all the priests and deacons during the Spring deanery meetings.

3. The question-and-answer article on Regional Vicariates that appeared in the November 21, 2008 Pittsburgh Catholic.

As you read these materials, I remind you of our six-fold admonition from the fall deanery meetings: Pray; reflect; Question; be positive; be open; be reasonable. Because it is absolutely vital that parish staffs and lay leaders are a part of this discussion and consultation, I will be writing to you again at the end of January with material for you to solicit input from your staff members and parish lay leaders on the regional vicariate proposal. The change to a regional vicariate structure will affect every parish in the diocese. It is vitally important that those in parishes who will be working in this new structure be familiar and informed throughout the

process. The material supplied in late January will be aimed to assist you in that necessary consultation. I hope the attached material is helpful in keeping you aware of our progress. If you have any questions concerning the attached material, please give Bishop Bradley a call.

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

Your brother in Christ,
Most Reverend David A. Zubik
Bishop of Pittsburgh

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Exploring New Means of Pastoral Governance for the Diocese of Pittsburgh

At the direction of Bishop Zubik, the Diocese of Pittsburgh has begun to explore a regional vicariate structure to assist the Bishop in his pastoral governance. This would be done by structuring the diocese through the creation of regional Vicariates administered by regional Vicars. These Regional Vicars would represent the Bishop to parishes and assist him in administration, pastoral planning and liturgical events at the parish level. They would also help to communicate parish needs and concerns to the Bishop.

The Bishop has formed a committee made up of members of diocesan administration, priests, deacons and lay leaders to explore this issue. He introduced Regional Vicariates for consultation with the priests at this fall's deanery meetings and has met with pastoral administration staff to explore the topic. The following may be helpful in understanding the proposed change. Why is this change in diocesan governance being

considered? The basic purpose is to embrace what the Bishop has called for in his first pastoral letter/ "The Church Alive!"

The Bishop's goal is to grow the Church of Pittsburgh and to encourage excitement about the faith at the parish level. A primary goal of "The Church Alive!" is to establish a closer service relationship between the Bishop and his pastoral administration and the parishes. This new form of governance would:

- Facilitate a more cooperative effort among parishes, clusters of parishes and other faith communities in the Diocese.
- Strengthen the Bishop's connection with the life of the parishes.
- Allow appropriate **decisions to be made at the regional level.**
- Improve parishes' contact with the Office of the Bishop, through the regional vicar.
- Enhance the exchange of information and services between central administration and parishes.

What is a "Regional Vicar"?

A Regional Vicar is a qualified priest with pastoral and administrative experience appointed by the Bishop to oversee a specific region of the Diocese. He assists the Bishop in the exercise of his pastoral office in that region and represents the Bishop on a daily basis to the

clergy, religious and laity. The Regional Vicars represent the Bishop to the parishes in issues of administration, parish planning within their regions and sacramental life.

What does a Regional Vicar do? The Bishop determines the areas of direct responsibility for the Regional Vicars in their regions based on the

needs of the Diocese. The Bishop, in other words, will make the final "job description," but only after a very wide consultation among pastoral staff, priests, parish leadership and the laity as a whole. In general, it could be expected that within his region a Regional Vicar will:

- Coordinate pastoral care
- **Determine parish** and regional pastoral **needs**
- Serve as the administrative representative of the bishop
- Promote collaboration among parishes
- Visit local parishes regularly and **help in local decision-making**
- Address issue, problems and concerns that arise in a particular Regional Vicariate and attempt to resolve them at the local level.

Regional Vicars would give parishes greater local autonomy by working with a vicar who knows them well. It will also mean that some pastoral administration tasks could be eliminated, turned over to the Regional Vicars or returned to the parishes. How will this impact the current diocesan pastoral center and its ministry? The basic functions served by diocesan central administration will need to be continued, either at the diocesan level or through the Regional Vicars. As part of the planning for this change/ pastoral administration secretariats/ department heads and staff will review all tasks and responsibilities. However/ there is no intention to re-create all the functions of pastoral administration through "mini diocesan centers" on the local level. While certain tasks and responsibilities that are currently part of pastoral administration could be decentralized, pastoral administration will remain vitally necessary to assist the Regional Vicars in their responsibilities while continuing those tasks in many key areas of pastoral ministry that must be performed at the diocesan level for the diocese as a whole. New tasks and new responsibilities for diocesan pastoral administration could develop as well to assist the Regional Vicars/ particularly in areas of importance that will emerge in the new structure.

How many Regional Vicars will be appointed? That is in the beginning stages of being studied. It is considered unlikely/ however, that there would be more than five Regional Vicars or fewer than three. Does the Regional Vicar have to be a bishop? It is not required that he be a bishop/ but it is required that he be a priest. The authority of a Regional Vicar derives directly from Canon Law by virtue of his appointment by the diocesan bishop. He possesses the same general authority in his region as a vicar general does for the entire diocese. That authority exists only as long as the term of his appointment.

Is this something new in the Church? Regional Vicariates developed for the universal Church from the Second Vatican Council and subsequent

Church instructions/ including the 2004 Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops. There are a number of archdioceses/dioceses throughout the United States which already operate with this type of governance. Is there a timetable on this change in the Diocese?

The process is underway to consult with key constituencies on this governance model and the ad hoc committee is working to create a detailed plan regarding the vicariate structure. There will continue to be consultation on the plan as it develops but there is a hope that this can be operative as early as October 2009.