



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

## DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

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June 29, 2020

To the Clergy of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston:

On this feast day of Saints Peter and Paul, I thought it appropriate to express my gratitude to you for the wonderful service you render to the people of this Diocese. You and the people you serve are constantly in my prayers.

Upon my arrival as Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston less than one year ago, it was immediately clear to me that I needed to work with our consultative bodies, Diocesan staff and our professional advisors to ensure that fiscal resources are wisely used to advance the mission of the Church. It is also necessary to work to provide financial security for generations to come.

In my January letter to the Faithful, I mentioned that “as I have been telling Diocesan staff and the priests’ council for a couple of months, the Diocese has been living above its means. I didn’t do that in my parishes nor in my personal life, nor can our families live that way. I don’t think the Diocese can do that either.”

The Diocese has seen a reduction in the value of its investment portfolio due to the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic and a drastic reduction in oil revenues. Guidance from our professional advisors indicates that we need to be very conservative when budgeting for unrestricted operating income from these sources. Concurrently, I am very thankful our Diocesan consultative bodies and administrative staff for their diligent work and commitment to prudent financial stewardship of our Diocesan Church. Their leadership and advice are greatly appreciated.

This week, the Diocesan Finance Council unanimously recommended a plan that cuts our operational budget from \$22.6 million in FY 2020 to \$15.6 million in FY 2021, a reduction of more than 30 percent. Much of this budget is made possible by a reorganization of Diocesan operations and reflects the need to make some very difficult decisions regarding the size of our payroll and the status of pastoral centers in the Diocese.

My brother priests, while we are called to be ministers and not financiers, we do have an obligation to be good stewards of the financial blessings bestowed on this Diocese. Therefore, I have approved the following reorganization plan, which was reviewed and critiqued by our Presbyteral Council, College of Consultors, and Diocesan Finance Council. The major elements of that plan are:

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### PASTORAL CENTERS

Beginning August 1, 2020, operations at the Mary Help of Christians Pastoral Center and the Priest Field Pastoral Center will cease. The Saint John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston will remain in operation. I do wish to explore opportunities with partner non-profits to repurpose the two closed pastoral centers for a continued use in Catholic ministry.

### CAMP BOSCO

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, operations at Camp Bosco were cancelled for the 2020 season. While the camp is closed, the Diocese will begin evaluating its options with the hope of reopening the camp in the future.

### CHANCERY OPERATIONS

A number of changes have been made in Chancery operations. Six positions have been eliminated as a result of attrition and continued downsizing will occur with the offering of an early retirement incentive for certain employees and reorganization of offices.

The Diocese will also be making changes to its health insurance coverage options with new coverage beginning January 1, 2021. With the addition of Gap insurance through a third-party insurer, we hope to save nearly \$2 million on our self-insured medical plan each calendar year while also keeping affordable health care options for staff members at the Diocese and those in parishes, schools, and Catholic Charities. The plan will continue to provide for quality health care.

### NEW DEPARTMENT: EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS

Ministry to young people will continue in a variety of ways, but we are announcing that the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, as well as Campus Ministry, have been combined with the duties of the Office of Faith Formation to form the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis under the direction of Mr. Daniel Maul. He will now have the title of Director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis. A new Associate Director of Evangelization and Catechesis will be hired soon. The name change focuses on our need to evangelize and catechize. The thrust of the office will be to assist parishes and their mission to evangelize and catechize both youth and adults.

### STREAMLINING COMMUNICATIONS

We are bringing *The Catholic Spirit*, Website Development, and Communications & Marketing together into one unit thus streamlining Diocesan communications efforts. In another cost saving measure, we will cut production of the *Spirit* in half, from 24 issues to one monthly issue. At the same time, electronic communication strategies have already begun and will be further developed.

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In total, through attrition and position elimination, 35 positions are affected by the reorganization plan, a number which could increase depending on how many staff elect to take an early retirement package.

The above changes are not driven solely by financial considerations, but by a desire to position the Diocese to carry out its mission of bringing Jesus Christ to the people of our State. Like a fighter training for the next fight, we must trim down so that we have the agility and strength to meet the challenges we face not only to live our faith but to share it with others. We also must try to leave a legacy from our Diocesan resources for future generations of West Virginia Catholics rather than seeing it dwindle each year and eventually run out.

The challenge before us is to believe what St. Paul tells us: *God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having what you need, you may have an abundance for every good work* (II Corinthians 9:8). With trust in the Lord, even if we are rather poorer in financial resources than we were before, we can become richer in faith and learn as we move forward, to use the resources we possess in a prudent and focused way to support our common mission.

May God bless you and keep you strong in the service of His people!

Fraternally in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark E. Brennan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Most Reverend Mark E. Brennan  
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston