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Shortage

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to get by with less priests. However, Bill Olsen, diocesan director of human resources, said no one should be surprised if the timetables of these plans get moved up.

"There's no more important topic right now," Olsen declared. The diocese "is going in a new direction, with a new strategic focus on how priests are assigned and developed."

That new focus will see higher incidences of non-priests in such administrative positions as pastoral administrators and business managers, said Olsen and Barbara Pedeville, diocesan director of recruitment and staff services.

"It's very evident that we must look structurally at other models to free up the time so our priests are concentrating their efforts on sacramental duties," Pedeville said.

Father Michael Conboy, who began as diocesan director of priest personnel in January, added that change is difficult but necessary. He said he often uses a quote from Father Theodore Hesburgh, CSC, former University of Notre Dame president.

"My basic principle is that you don't make decisions because they are easy; you don't make them because they're cheap; you don't make them because they're popular; you make them because they're right."

A new landscape

Olsen and Pedeville said that noticeable changes could occur by the time new parish administrative assignments take effect July 1. For instance, Father Conboy has drawn up a proposal that would make not only priests, but also candidates from a pastoral-administrator pool, eligible for all pastorates that become available.

Olsen and Pedeville said that the diocese is striving to increase the pool of pastoral administrator candidates, which currently stands at 11 people. Most pool members are women religious, deacons and/or parish staff members.

Father Conboy added that in many cases, a priest would be better utilized if he could serve in a community without being burdened with administrative work.

"Some are good for administration; others can serve in other ways," Father Conboy said.

Pedeville noted that pastoral administrators, also, may become overtaxed if they are responsible for both administration and pastoral care. She envisions a model in which a grouping of parishes would be served by "one strong business manager or administrative assistant."

This person, she said, would be responsible for such areas as buildings and

property; day-to-day operations; and personnel and policy issues. Priests would serve only in non-administrative roles.

Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of liturgy, said that such models may hark back to much earlier diocesan models. In the diocese's early years, "circuit rider" priests were utilized strictly for sacramental duty, going from town to town.

However, Workmaster said that if there's a widespread return to the priest-as-sacramental-minister-only model, priests would serve groups of churches within a much smaller geographic area. This arrangement, she said, would allow priests to form stronger bonds with parishioners.

"We have to be very careful, as we change the model, to not have a circuit rider who isn't committed to a community," Workmaster said.

Even if priests were to focus solely on sacramental duty, projections indicate that fewer than 70 full-time diocesan priests will be available by the year 2025. Pedeville warned that Mass schedules likely will be reduced more and more in upcoming years — and that parts of the diocese will have to grapple with the prospect of not having a regular Sunday Mass.

"In other countries it's not unusual to celebrate Eucharist once a month," Pedeville said. "It may be like that in the next generation."

For now, Workmaster said, diocesan parishes would be wise to keep cutting back on Mass schedules, especially when certain liturgies are sparsely attended.

"We got into a habit of doing Masses of convenience," she said. "We have existed in that model for too long."

Olsen and Pedeville also emphasized that the Rochester Diocese should not count on foreign priests as a solution. Although some African priests are currently serving in diocesan parishes, Olsen and Pedeville noted that they are sent here by their bishops for education purposes.

"Per capita, countries in Africa have less priests. And we'd be taking from them," Pedeville said.

Rather, Olsen said, the focus should be on developing vocations locally. An example of this, he said, is the diocese's hiring in 1999 of Patricia Finnerty as full-time vocations-awareness director.

Yet according to Finnerty, only six men from the Rochester Diocese are currently studying in seminaries — meaning that, from Father Conboy's perspective, short-term planning is also needed in addressing the priest shortage.

"First you have to assess what services can be offered by the ordained, then you have to say our numbers are limited. Then you have to look at other sources," Father Conboy said. He added that these issues are not limited to the Rochester Diocese,



noting that many other dioceses in the U.S. and other countries are exploring options to address priest shortages.

Church teachings

Meanwhile, the changes must comply with Canon 517.2 of the Code of Canon Law:

"If the diocesan bishop should decide that due to a dearth of priests a participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish is to be entrusted to a deacon or to some other person who is not a priest or to a community of persons, he is to appoint some priest endowed with the powers and faculties of a pastor to supervise the pastoral care."

That canon came under further scrutiny in the November 1997 Vatican document "Instruction of Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-

Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests." The document states, in part that "It is unlawful for the non-ordained faithful to assume titles such as 'pastor,' 'Chaplain,' 'coordinator,' 'moderator' or other such similar titles which can confuse their role and that of the pastor, who is always a bishop or priest."

The Vatican instruction further states that Canon 517.2 does not permit non-priests in "directing, coordinating, moderating, or governing the parish; these competencies, according to the canon, are the competencies of the priest alone."

The document also voiced concern that an emphasis on placing non-priests in administrative roles may discourage development of young men for the priesthood.

However, Father Kevin McKenna, diocesan chancellor, said that the Rochester Diocese complies with Canon 517.2 by assigning a priest moderator for parishes with pastoral administrators. Father Robert Ring, pastor at St. Margaret Mary Church in Apalachin and former diocesan director of priest personnel, serves as the priest moderator for most of the diocese's pastoral administrators.

Workmaster served on a committee with St. Bernard's Institute faculty to address the 1997 Vatican document. The key term, she noted, is that non-priests may not assume the title of pastor, coordinator, etc. This is different, she said, than if a bishop or priest moderator were to make a specific appointment.

Father McKenna said that because the pastoral-administrator model is relatively new, the Rochester Diocese — as well as others using similar models — will require further dialogue with Rome to ensure a mutually satisfying arrangement.

"We're still fine-tuning it, trying to be consistent with both the norms of the church and the needs of the people," Father McKenna said.

NEXT WEEK: Diocesan priests discuss the personal impact of the priest shortage.

Pastoral administrator list

By Mike Latona
Staff Writer

Pastoral administrator is the model under which a deacon, brother, woman religious or other layperson carries out most parish functions normally handled by a pastor. A notable exception is the celebration of certain sacraments, particularly the Mass. In parishes that have a pastoral administrator, Masses are usually conducted by a resident priest who is not pastor or by an assisting priest who resides away from the parish.

Permanent pastoral administrators are assigned to four-year terms. Each may serve up to three terms (12 years) at any one parish. Comparatively, priest pastors also are limited to 12 years at a parish, in the form of two six-year terms.

The first permanent pastoral administrator in the Rochester Diocese was Sister Anne Michelle McGill, SSJ. She has served at St. Gabriel's Church, Hammondsport, since 1994.

Permanent pastoral administrators are drawn from a diocesan pool. Among the requirements are a master's degree, as well as extensive pastoral and/or administrative experience.

In the case of temporary pastoral administrators, these same attributes are desired, but not required. Temporary pastoral administrators are frequently assigned when a pastor goes on sabbatical or leaves a parish suddenly.

The permanent pastoral administrators currently serving in the diocese are: Charlotte Bruney, St. Vincent DePaul, Churchville

Dean Condon, Guardian Angels, Henrietta
Sister Alice Cooney, SSJ, St. Joseph's, Rush

Deacon Michael Mahoney, St. Mary, Scottsville
Sister Anne Michelle McGill, SSJ, St. Gabriel's, Hammondsport
Sister Mary Wintish, RSM, All Saints, Lansing.

Those currently serving as temporary pastoral administrators are:
Sister Jacquelyn Reichart, RSM, Our Lady Queen of Peace, Brighton
Sister Joan Cawley, SSJ, Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community.

Sister Cawley also belongs to the pool of pastoral-administrator candidates maintained by the diocese. Should any of these people take on a pastoral administrator position, they would leave the position they currently occupy. The other pool members are:

Michele Bertot, pastoral associate, St. Margaret Mary, Irondequoit
Patricia Curtis, pastoral associate, St. John the Evangelist (Humboldt Street), Rochester

Deacon Raymond Defendorf, pastoral associate, Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community

Nancy DeRycke, campus minister, State University of New York College at Brockport

Sister Diane Dennie, SSJ, pastoral associate, St. John of Rochester, Perinton
Deacon Dan Hurley, St. Mary Our Mother Church, Horseheads

Deacon David Palma, campus minister, Rochester Institute of Technology
Sister Joan Sobala, SSJ, administrative team, Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester
Sister Barbara Stinard, RSM, pastoral associate, Church of the Good Shepherd, Henrietta

Sister Chris Treichel, OSF, pastoral associate, St. John the Evangelist (Humboldt Street), Rochester.

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