

# **Diocese of Buffalo Action Plan**

## **A light unto my path...guiding us through 2026**



### **We Pray Together...**

Holy Father, from the beginning, you have brought people of goodwill together to bring about Your plan of love, life, and healing for the world. Now, in Your holy wisdom, You bring us together so that Your healing light might be experienced by more people in a deeper and healing way. Help us to unify our unique gifts and recognize that they complement each other through Your grace and will. Bless our work and let it always be grounded in love and respect for all, guiding us to truly live our mission as the Catholic Center for the Diocese of Buffalo.

We offer these prayers in Jesus' Holy name. Amen.

### **Introduction**

The Diocese of Buffalo is at a pivotal point in its long history as the predominant faith community in our region. We have an opportunity to emerge from the cloud that has been created by a loss of trust due to abuse cases and failures of past leadership. Recognizing constraints in financial resources, in 2020 the Diocese curtailed multiple ministries and filed for Chapter 11 Reorganization. Together, these events, coupled with overall societal views of religion and the pandemic, have led to a tremendous loss in the number of parishioners, particularly among the young.

Bishop Michael Fisher took on the role as Shepherd of this Diocese in January 2021 and embraced the planning underway to renew parish life. The plan was developed following rich input gathered in partnership with the Movement to Restore Trust and in listening sessions held for each Vicariate and responds to the trends of declining engagement, fewer priests, and an over-abundance of facilities. The Diocesan-wide "Road to Renewal" journey began two years ago and continues to reorganize our parishes into thirty-six "Families" of three to six parishes with one pastor for each Family. Further input to Diocesan planning was gathered during the 2022 Synod sessions: Listening in Love and Hope, Conversations about Church.

Bishop Mike has also asked that a broader plan to encompass additional areas of Diocesan life be prepared. He led this effort through articulating important goals for his ministry here in Buffalo:

- instill a sense of hope and renew faith,
- restore trust,
- develop leadership,
- align all around a common strategy, and lastly,
- deepen our commitment to share our talents within our community and to serve those in need.

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### **Mission**

The Diocese of Buffalo celebrates and invites ALL to experience the light of the Gospel and know God through living the teachings of Jesus Christ.

We are a Roman Catholic community of laity, clergy, and religious spread throughout the 8 Counties of Western New York.

### **Vision**

To heal and reinvigorate the Catholic Church here in WNY by serving the needs of women and men, young and old, rich, and poor, and including all cultures and races.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." Lk 4:18-19

### **Principles...the light of our baptismal call**

- Prioritize our Eucharistic Mission
- Demonstrate True Lay/Clergy Collaboration
- Be Transparent
- Ongoing Synodality
- Create safer environments
- Reach Outside Our Tent: Engage Diverse Populations
- Optimize Resources
- Inspire others

### **Core Behaviors...putting our principles into action**

*"CHRIST IS IN YOU" Rom 8:10*

- Authenticity: Living what we teach and preach
- Respect: Embracing the dignity of everyone
- Trust: Being trusting and trustworthy
- Transformation: Open to change and innovation
- Compassion: Empathetic and responsive
- Stewardship: Wisely using resources
- Repentance: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others

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### **GOAL 1: Renewal of Parish Life**

- Accomplish Road to Renewal Plan by creating 36 vibrant Families within 7 geographical Vicariates and 1 Campus Ministry Vicariate localizing the coordination of key pastoral functions
- Establish formal plans and measures for fruitful Family and Vicariate ministries using the following Pillars:
  - Spiritual Life
  - Forming Disciples
  - Stewardship
  - Liturgy
  - OutReach/InReach
  - Administration
- Form Catholics through ongoing evangelization and enrichment of Pillars within our Families of Parishes and Vicariates for fruitful parish ministry.
  - Pillars must encompass ways to engage youth, young adults and the changing nature of “family” in today’s society

### **GOAL 2: Forming Catholics**

#### **2A: Faith Formation**

Maximize opportunity of new Family of Parishes and Vicariate Structure to redesign:

- Faith Formation (including youth, adult and family faith formation, sacramental preparation, Order of Christian Initiation of Adults)
- Cultivate new strategies for adult formation

#### **2B: Catholic Schools**

- Develop sustainable plan to deliver excellence in both secular academics and Catholic formation for parochial and regional K-8 schools
- Evaluate ability to coordinate Pre-School Education as means for earlier initiation and engagement for Catholic formation for both child and parents.
- Strengthen Catholic identity at affiliated K-8 schools, high schools, colleges, and universities.



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### **2C: Clergy Education & Development**

- Establish comprehensive plan for Priestly and Diaconate:
  - formation
  - continuing education
  - on-going spiritual direction
  - Inculturation for extern priests
  - Strengthening of homiletics
  - Identify opportunities to transition functions to laity

### **2D: Staff & Volunteer Development**

- Establish a comprehensive plan for orientation, spiritual development, job skills, and resource training to meet the needs of Central Administrative Offices (Catholic Center), Vicariate, and Families of Parishes staffs
- Identify opportunities and provide training for lay volunteers and staff to assume expanded responsibilities allowing clergy to maximize spiritual and sacramental ministry

### **2E: Safe Environment**

- On-going education and assessment of practices to ensure we provide a safe environment and to restore trust

## **GOAL 3: Optimizing Financial Resources**

- Complete Reorganization: Chapter 11, including restitution for survivors of abuse
- Develop on-going financial plan for Catholic Center and funding models for shared expenses in Vicariates and Families of Parishes
  - Respond to the reality of decreasing offertory collections
  - Identify programs for alternate funding sources
  - Clarify need/opportunity for recruiting volunteers to new or expanded roles
  - Develop comprehensive property management plan
  - Address cemetery perpetual funding

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### **GOAL 4: Accountability**

- Reorganize operations to Maximize Efficiency
  - Prioritize functions structures, processes, and committees for opportunities to streamline, economize, and automate where practical
  - Migrate all Diocesan entities to a single payroll system, health plan, etc.
  - Develop consistent Job Descriptions, interviewing procedures, and skill sets needed for defined roles
- Renew effective governance for all Diocesan entities
  - Develop definable, measurable goals
  - Establish milestone “check-ins” to review progress

### **GOAL 5: Enlarge Our Tent**

Provide or enhance ministry and leadership roles to those previously disenfranchised or underrepresented.

