



*"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for wholeness...to give you a future full of hope."
Jer. 29:11*

December 10, 2018

Dear Parishioners:

Advent is preeminently a season of hope. As we enter into this Advent season, I am wonderfully filled with hope for our future. I am most grateful for the extraordinary planning efforts these last few years for our Catholic schools and the new Catholic Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts. And today, 32 of our parishes are now engaged in strategic planning – imagining new partnerships and collaborations for a stronger future. Throughout this winter and spring more parishes will begin their planning.

Many of you – more than 600 parishioners to date! – are participating in these initial planning efforts. You are setting us on the right course for strong collaboration, creative thinking, and inspirational goal-setting. You inspire me!

Last spring, I conducted Listening Sessions throughout the Diocese that were attended by over 1,500 lay people and priests. Maybe you were there. I listened to your needs, your concerns, and your new ideas. I now realize that the Diocese has to improve the ways we support our parishes with better administrative assistance, innovative programming, effective communications, and inspirational leaders. You need and deserve more from us, at the Diocesan level, than perhaps we have been providing in the past.

To accomplish this, I am inviting lay and clergy leaders from across the entire Diocese to come together to imagine and develop the kind of Diocesan services and ministries that can better support our parishes.

I need to engage people of vision – clergy and laity– and that is why I am writing to you. I need your counsel and advice – your time and talent – and I would like to personally extend an invitation to you to serve as a member of one of the following Diocesan planning commissions that will launch in February:

1. **Catholic Social Services Commission** will plan for significant growth and re-branding. They will galvanize their mission, vision, and goals, and create an operational plan for CSS that includes ways to partner with our parishes and schools. We can better serve the poor and marginalized of our society if we work together and not in parish or ministry silos.
2. **Youth and Young Adult Commission** will develop inspirational programming and recruit new leadership for the formation and evangelization of our "Generation Y" Millennials (born between 1980-1994, ages 24-38) and our "Generation Z" (born between 1995-2012, ages 6-23).
3. **Diocesan/Chancery Governance Commission** will evaluate the current operations and effectiveness of our chancery offices and ministries, and determine new ways to better serve our parishes. This Commission will have subcommittees to address the following:
 - a. **Communications** – to bring the Diocese into the 21st century and design systems for better database management, marketing, advertising, email, and social media.
 - b. **Human Resources** – to better support our parishes in their need to recruit, hire, train, and retain a committed and skilled workforce.

- c. **Finance** – to develop better methods and the proper administrative services to support our parishes with better accounting and financial management.
- d. **Property and Real Estate** – to provide better assessment services and resources to help parishes manage their physical properties now, and for the future.

These commissions will meet once a month for five or six months beginning in February. If you want to participate on one of these commissions, you will be expected to make the meetings a priority and attend them! (Some commissions, depending on the desire of the participants, may hold additional optional meetings.) They will be professionally facilitated, and support materials will be sent electronically to all participants. All planning communications will be via email. You must be able to use email.

If you are interested, but not sure that you want to commit, I encourage you to attend the first meeting when it is announced and then decide if it is the right committee for you. Please try it out!

To confirm your “Yes” to serve on one of the above commissions, register today on-line (only) at the Diocese of Fall River website: www.fallriverdiocese.org. Click on:



and then choose which commission you would like to serve on. Details about meeting dates, times, and locations will be provided for you as they become available.

You might have some questions concerning this planning process and the impact it will have on our Church. We will do our best to address them in our presentations and materials at our first meeting.

In the meantime feel free to address any specific questions or concerns to our Planning Administrative Coordinator, Gail Pregana-Souza at planning@dioc-fr.org.

Thank you in advance for your prayerful consideration. This transformation in our Church will only happen if we are all in this together, leading the way. Let us build the “future full of hope” that Jeremiah foretold. May God bless us on this journey of *Rebuilding in Faith and Hope!*

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.
Bishop of Fall River