



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP • Diocese of Duluth

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My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you!

Because of the travails our Church is going through these past months, I have not been able to be present to you in the ways you desired. I am sorry, please forgive me. But you have not been without pastoral and spiritual care.

Father David Forsman and Father Elias Gieske have generously fulfilled their roles as pastors for you, accompanying you on your journey of faith and well representing me as extensions of the Office of Bishop. I have been in regular communication with them about implementing our Diocesan Strategic Plan. I know they have done their best in communicating with you.

Although you have known about the strategic plan for years, the implementation for Hillman as one of the last parishes in the Diocese to be merged comes as a shock to you. We can learn from your recent experience as you can learn from the experiences of all the other parishes who have preceded you in the implementation. With the best of intentions mistakes can be made, but the Lord calls us onward. Jesus taught us to be always ready: "Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come." (Matthew 24:42)

In the Implementation Handbook the Diocese prepared, we are reminded that no parish is orphaned. Every parish in the plan is received into a new parish family. The use and disposition of the buildings and grounds is discerned by the receiving parish. Our Diocese has many precedents where this has happened over the course of the nearly 130 years of our existence.

I do ask your cooperation with Fr. Gieske, your patience and your faithfulness. I know this is most difficult for you. I will remain open to recommendations from you, Fr. Gieske and our Presbyteral Council as we move forward in faith. You remain in my prayers and I humbly ask your prayers for me.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Paul D. Sirba
Bishop of Duluth