

**PASTORAL PLANNING TASK FORCE NEWS
CEDAR RAPIDS DEANERY**

REPORT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to and in recognition of the current and future needs of the Church, a Catholic Pastoral Planning Task Force for the Cedar Rapids Deanery was convened in August of 2009. The Task Force was composed of members of each of the 23 parishes and representative groups in the Cedar Rapids Deanery. The Task Force was challenged to develop a conceptual, pastoral, long-range plan report with recommendations to foster the vitality of the Church in the Deanery today and into the future.

The Task Force met bi-weekly from August through December and recently finalized its report in February 2010. After consideration of relevant data, historic trends and projections for the future, the Task Force brainstormed ideas in six areas vital to parish life. Drafting committees with specialized education and pastoral experience received the ideas brainstormed by the Task Force and created documents that reflect those ideas. The drafting committees also challenged Task Force members to think more deeply about each area of brainstorming. The areas of Liturgy, Faith Formation, Stewardship, Social Justice, Parish Life and Finance were addressed. Each topic received three rounds of brainstorming, drafting, further reflection, and editing. The final report of the Task Force fully outlines the Task Force's work and its' recommendations to maintain and promote vitality in each of these areas. The full report is available at your parish office or on line at the Archdiocesan website: www.arch.pvt.k12.ia.us A brief summary follows.

Liturgy: Because the Deanery will possibly have two fewer priests by July 2010 and four to five fewer priests by 2015, the Task Force reviewed different ways of using priests, parish personnel, and parish facilities within the Deanery. Recognizing the Eucharist as the source and summit of our faith, the Task Force considered alternative structuring and staffing of the Deanery parishes to provide maximum access to liturgy in the future. This work resulted in the identification of 54 alternatives for serving the Deanery with five fewer priests by 2015. These alternatives will be presented to Archbishop Hanus for consideration. As the leader of the Archdiocese, the Archbishop will be responsible for making a final decision concerning the pastoral plan for the people of the Deanery.

Faith Formation: The Task Force recommends that the Faith Formation Committees in each parish/cluster systematically assess and plan programs to ensure all members of the community have opportunities for continuing formation. Specific planning and assessment tools have been identified. Greater sharing among the parishes/clusters of the Deanery is encouraged.

Stewardship: The Task Force is urging parishes and clusters within the Deanery to view Stewardship as a way of life. Particular emphasis has been placed on regular meetings of the Stewardship Committee in each parish/cluster with clear lines of communication to the rest of the Deanery and the Archdiocesan Stewardship Committee has been recommended. In addition, specific actions within each parish/cluster have been recommended to foster and promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Social Justice: Eight specific recommendations have been offered by the Task Force. All are intended to promote the development of a more cooperative model of Social Justice within the Deanery and with the Archdiocese in order to have a more united front and, thus, speak with a “larger voice”.

Parish Life: The Task Force recommends that each parish/cluster challenge all members of the community to participate in parish activities and affirm those who are active. The activities and ministries of and among the parishes and clusters should be assessed to specifically identify those that serve to build community.

Finance: The Task Force has clearly identified a desire in all parishes, but especially among smaller parishes and rural parishes, a desire for cooperative and where appropriate Deanery-wide efforts. The Task Force recommends sharing ministry, programming and staffing between and among parishes where the mission of the Church can be more effectively and efficiently pursued through such efforts.

Hispanic Ministry: During the 1990’s, under the direction and acknowledgement of the Archdiocese, Hispanic Ministry officially took its place in the Cedar Rapids Deanery landscape. The Task Force recommends that each parish/cluster become familiar with this special ministry and its challenges. The Task Force recommends that greater efforts be made to educate the faithful at the Deanery, cluster and parish level about the issues, challenges and successes of Hispanic Ministry and to provide opportunities for discussion.

The Task Force recognizes that successful implementation of its’ recommendations will require action at various levels, including parishes/clusters, the Deanery and the Archdiocese. Following the principle of subsidiarity, the Task Force has recommended that all activities be implemented at the basic level of organization in order that the universal mission of the Church can be effectively and efficiently pursued. The Task Force has identified recommendations for immediate implementation at the parish/cluster level and others for longer term consideration and development at the Deanery and Archdiocesan levels.

The Archbishop, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with input from the Episcopal Vicar, the Dean, the Pastors, the Priests, Personnel Advisory Board and Archdiocesan Lay Leadership will carry out the responsibility of sharing these recommendations and determining how to structure and staff the Deanery and best shepherd the 200,000 faithful throughout the Archdiocese who are under his care. The Archbishop had this initial response to the work of the Task Force:

In a letter of appreciation to the Task Force members Archbishop Hanus said:

“The Cedar Rapids Deanery Pastoral Planning Task Force has completed a remarkable achievement. The goal of pastoral planning is to gather input from all members of the faith community before final decisions are made. This task force has not only realized that goal but it has done so in a spirit of collaboration and on an unprecedented scale. Your report will be invaluable to me and archdiocesan leadership as we plan for the future of the Cedar Rapids Deanery and the entire Archdiocese.”