

Bishop ListECKi announces new configuration for the Quad Parishes

By FRANZ KLEIN
Staff Writer

ST. MARY'S RIDGE – In a March 3 letter to their pastoral councils, finance councils and trustees, Bishop Jerome E. ListECKi announced that four Cashton-area parishes sharing a pastor since the late 1980s will receive a new configuration that “hopefully will serve better the needs of the faithful and ... be more manageable for the priests who will provide pastoral care for you.”

In the new configuration – official July 1 – Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, St. Mary's Ridge; St. Augustine Parish, Norwalk; and St. John the Baptist Parish, Summit Ridge; will continue to share a pastor, while Sacred Heart Parish in Cashton will receive its own pastor. With nearly 300 families, Sacred Heart is by far the largest of the four parishes.

“It is my belief that this new configuration, which is in essence a simplification, will enable the parishes to live out their Catholic faith in a more fruitful manner,” Bishop ListECKi wrote.

“I emphasize to you that this is not the implementation of the diocesan pastoral plan,” the bishop also wrote. “We are not yet ready for the pastoral plan since the protocols for implementing the plan are not completed.”

Bishop ListECKi's letter was distributed to council members and trustees during a special meeting the evening of March 3 at St. Mary's. Present at the meeting to field questions from parish leaders was Monsignor Richard Gilles, diocesan vicar general, whom the bishop has appointed to oversee the implementation of the change. Also present were Andy Gaertner, director of the diocese's Stewardship and Development Office; Carmelite Father Amaladoss Kulandaisamy, parochial administrator; Deacon Samuel Schmirler, currently assigned to the Quad Parishes; and Father Steven Kachel, dean of the Sparta-Mauston Deanery.

Having one priest oversee four parishes – even with an associate, as was the case for many years – was a less-than-ideal compromise brought on by the “exigencies of the time,” Monsignor Gilles explained in a later interview.

“When you come down to it, it was the priest shortage,” Monsignor Gilles said. “Now, with the number of international priests in the diocese, and with – God willing – six ordinations this year, we're at the point where we can go back to the prior configuration.”

Father Amaladoss announced

the change to parishioners at Masses earlier this month, and said they have generally expressed satisfaction and happiness. He added that it comes as a relief to him as well, since it will allow him to minister more personally.

“Right now I am working with four parishes and giving all my time, but I cannot give more for specific things at a specific parish,” said Father Amaladoss, who has been parochial administrator – and the sole priest assigned to the four parishes since

last June. Senior priest Father James Miller lives in residence at St. Augustine's, where he says weekday Masses.

The priest personnel board has yet to choose an additional priest for the parishes, but Monsignor Gilles emphasized that “as of July 1 there will be two priests in place.”

Prior to the implementation process, Gaertner will be conducting SWOT analyses at each of the four parishes. SWOT – which stands for “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and

Threats” – is a popular business planning strategy, and Gaertner believes it will “allow parishioners themselves to determine the priorities for the parish.”

“It's a way of looking at where we are, what we're doing, what we'll need to be doing in the future, and, maybe, what we're doing that isn't working,” Gaertner explained. “People want to have a voice in the future, and we want to give it to them.”

Whatever the future holds, Father Amaladoss hopes the tri-

parishes – St. John's, St. Augustine's and St. Mary's – will continue their positive collaboration with Sacred Heart – especially in regard to Catholic education. Sacred Heart operates a Catholic grade school. St. Mary's own historic school – one of the oldest in Wisconsin – was forced to close its doors at the end of last school year.

“I shared with them the words of Mahatma Gandhi,” Father Amaladoss said. “Gandhi said, ‘Let us work together for unity and love.’”

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