



## Intentional Planning Q and A

October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### **Background:**

Over the past several years, priests of the Diocese of Toledo have voiced their desire for more intentional planning of clergy assignments and parish configurations that takes into account the changes in demographics and parish participation during the past decade, as well as, the decreased number of priests available for active ministry.

Similar requests were repeatedly expressed during the early phases of the Diocesan Strategic Planning in 2018 and 2019, leading Bishop Thomas to institute “Healthy Clergy and Healthy Parishes” as Pillar #1 in the Diocesan Strategic Plan. The clergy, consecrated religious, and laity of the Pillar #1 team recommended the hiring of a full-time Pastoral Center staff member to coordinate Intentional Planning in our diocese. Andrew Reinhart was hired for this role in February 2021 and has begun moving the Intentional Planning process forward.

### **What is “Intentional Planning”?**

Intentional Planning is the process of strategically planning parish collaborations and clergy assignments to meet the spiritual needs of the people in our diocese. This process studies demographic changes in the population of our diocese, the number of priests available for pastoral service, and the need for greater evangelization within our diocese, especially of fallen-away Catholics. While this process is similar to “Pastoral Planning” conducted in many dioceses throughout the country, the focus of our diocesan process is not closing parishes nor imposing a “one size fits all” model of parish. Intentional Planning in the Diocese of Toledo includes changing clergy assignments by introducing custom parish configurations to meet each community’s needs.

### **What are the principles that will guide this process?**

The main focus of this process is increasing collaboration between nearby parishes, so they might become stronger and more vibrant *together*. Hopefully, increased cooperation will lessen “competition” between neighboring parishes, preparing them to work together in the mission of evangelization and outreach. The result will be healthier parish communities, collaborating to share the gospel, serve the poor, and celebrate the sacraments.



The Intentional Planning process will be informed by extensive demographic data, but, ultimately, recommendations will be made to Bishop Thomas and the Priest Personnel Board in light of broad consultation with clergy and consultation with laity. The goal of this process is not to create a “master plan” that will be imposed on the diocese all at once. Priests will be made aware of the potential vision for their parish when they are assigned, and they will be asked for input as they become familiar with their community. All potential changes will be iteratively refined year to year based on ongoing consultation and data collection.

In alignment with Pillar One of our Diocesan Strategic Plan, Intentional Planning aims to improve the health of priests in our diocese by defining assignments with realistic workloads that can be sustained by a declining number of clergy. Increased collaboration between parishes will be approached in a manner conducive to lessening the burden on the time of individual priests, reducing duplicated ministries and Masses, and greater sharing of the administrative burdens of temporal affairs with qualified laity, consecrated religious, and deacons.

### **Is the purpose of Intentional Planning to close parishes?**

No. Some parishes may close, but only if there is a significant lack of support and participation by parishioners and they recommend with their parish priest(s) or pastoral leader that a parish should be closed. Parishes that are struggling will be invited in to and guided through a discernment process that will help them either strategically approach their challenges in new ways or decide to more closely collaborate with a neighboring parish or parishes.

### **Who is involved in this process?**

Andrew Reinhart is serving as Parish Life Coordinator for Intentional Planning of the Diocese of Toledo. He is working closely with the Priest Personnel Board, the Pillar One Team of the Diocesan Strategic Plan, and Bret Huntebrinker, Senior Director of the Office for Discipleship and Family. Pastors, Pastoral Leaders, and Parishes will be invited to creatively work together in considering effective models for collaboration in their region of the diocese and sharing these ideas with those who are coordinating efforts at the diocesan level.

### **What is the timeline?**

The Intentional Planning process began in the summer of 2020 in select regions of the diocese. The entire diocese will become engaged in the Intentional Planning process from 2021 – 2026 as opportunities and needs develop.