



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

- **Is 11:1-10**
The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD.
- **Psalms 72**
Justice shall flourish in his time and the fullness of peace forever.
- **Romans 15:4-9**
May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another. Welcome one another, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God.
- **Mt 3:1-12**
Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.

Vision 2020

Seeing a Future Full of Hope

DECEMBER 2019

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

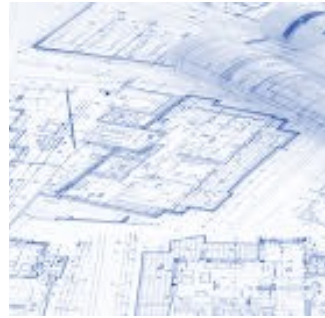
Shaping a Blueprint for the Future of the Diocese

In today's homily for the Second Sunday of Advent, Bishop Bambera explained to us that it is time for the whole Church of Scranton to take a good look at the life of our parishes and to project a future vision in response to God's call today.

Your Pastors have taken first steps in this conversation in recent deanery meetings, and now it is essential to broaden this conversation to include all of the faithful.

Bishop Bambera pointed out to us the reality of change in our world and in our local communities, and so we know that we will continue to face and

respond to change within the church. "I'm inviting all of the faithful," he said, "to simply focus on how we best engage the mission of



the gospel in these changing times." Some of these changes include shifting demographics, differing attitudes about formal church participation, and diminishment in numbers of ordained priests

available to serve as full-time pastors.

In the coming year, then, Bishop Bambera is asking us to continue working together to fashion a "blueprint" if you will—a pathway for our local Church, tailored to each deanery and to each parish—for how we will meet both the challenges and the opportunities we will face in the next ten year period.

In his homily he stressed that, "while every parish is similar in what it is being asked to do and to be, each parish will respond to this process in ways that are unique to its situation and circumstances."

Rooted in the Vision of Servant Leadership

Excerpted from Bishop Bambera's 2011 Pastoral Letter, Wounded and Loved, Regathering the Scattered

When we assume that our journey of faith is just about personal holiness and generosity alone, we forget that the mission of Jesus is to bring the good news of salvation to the ends of the earth. We forget that there is one God and Father of us all. We neglect a critical mystery of faith that in giving we receive; that in dying to self we are born to eternal life. We need to **return ourselves to this larger view of our communion and mission**: a vision of life together that restores our sense of being part of something larger than ourselves and greater than our personal inadequacies. Let us together serve the mission of Jesus Christ to gather the scattered back into God's loving embrace. This mission is not our own, nor is the power to achieve it. Let us rely on the power and grace of the promised Spirit of Jesus! My brothers and sisters, once we begin to appreciate that we are loved by God, the desire to embrace the life of the One who loves us also begins to grow. The Lord's challenge to us who receive His very body and blood is that we allow our lives also to be broken and poured forth in loving service of our sisters and brothers.



2019

Planning Guidance for Each Deanery

Guiding the overall process are these planning assumptions as common elements across the Diocese:

- The benchmarks for vibrant parishes are in accord with the vision expressed in Bishop Bambera’s Pastoral Letter, especially *pages 7-13*;
- In every local circumstance, efforts are made to best utilize the particular ministry gifts of the clergy and, at the same time, to mobilize the gifts of all the baptized;
- Each deanery blueprint implementation is unique, and may consider such questions as: number of worship sites, Mass schedules and wise investment of resources;
- No deanery is planning in isolation – the circumstances in one may occasion change in another;
- Parish pastoral plans are respected and help to inform deanery level plans;
- Recommendations from deaneries or parishes are brought to Diocesan review;
- Parishes in linked relationship, sharing a Pastor, will be given additional planning support to evaluate and craft the best path forward;
- Every parish calls forth those individuals whose capacity for pastoral leadership could be developed through vocational discernment for priesthood, religious life, lay ministry or permanent diaconate.

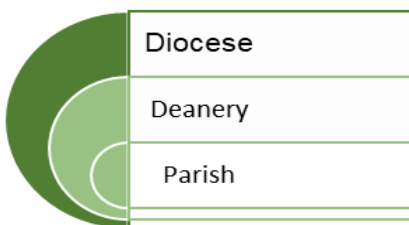


We, the Catholic community of the Diocese of Scranton, are called through Baptism to imitate the servant leadership of Jesus Christ. In union with our Holy Father, the Pope, we proclaim the Gospel faithfully, celebrate the sacraments joyfully, and boldly promote life, justice and peace in northeastern and north central Pennsylvania.

Questions for Reflection and Dialogue

1. Bishop’s pastoral letter, quoted on reverse side, says parishes need to “return to a larger view of our communion and mission.” What would this look like for us? What would we be doing differently? How would this help us respond to the kind of changes in church and society which Bishop mentioned in his homily?
2. The Advent gospels challenge us to keep our eyes on the goal of our journey — to make God’s vision of a world of peace and justice even more true and visible in our part of the world. What will happen to this mission of the church as we have fewer priests to serve as full-time Pastors?
3. What could the members of our parish do to prepare for the reality of additional change in pastoral leadership in the coming years? How can we work with neighboring parishes to sustain the life and mission for which we are baptized?

What is a Deanery?



The Diocese of Scranton includes 118 parishes in 11 counties of northeastern and north central Pennsylvania. These parishes are grouped geographically, for collaboration and mission effectiveness, into 12 Deaneries. Each deanery may have 8-12 parishes. The Pastors and PLCs serving in a given Deanery select one from among themselves to serve as the local leader, or Dean. In the Diocese at present, the Deaneries are:

- | | | | |
|------------|---------------|--------------|----------|
| Carbondale | Honesdale | Stroudsburg | Scranton |
| Sayre | Williamsport | Wilkes-Barre | Hazleton |
| Pittston | Clarks Summit | Dunmore | Kingston |