



**For Immediate Release**

## **Diocese of Buffalo Names Finalized Families of Parishes for Road to Renewal**

*Six Families of Parishes will soon begin pilot phase of program*

Buffalo, N.Y, Dec. 1, 2021 – The Diocese of Buffalo’s Road to Renewal effort which has the goal to reinvigorate the Catholic faith, fully optimize parish and diocesan resources, and increase the reach and impact of ministries throughout Western New York has announced the finalized Families of Parishes model.

Following vast consultation with clergy and the laity, a determination was made to group the Buffalo Diocese’s 161 parishes into 36 Families of Parishes. Of the 36 families, six families will soon begin a pilot phase implementation of the parish families’ model.

A Parish Model Task Force and a Diocesan Renewal Task Force (DTRF) were activated more than a year ago with the effort to look at best practices regionally and nationally to learn how other dioceses that are facing similar challenges of diminished financial resources and reduced church and school attendance, have successfully promoted the mission of the Catholic Church in their regions.

The DTRF is a collaboration of clergy and laity who studied, gathered input, and documented recommendations for the Diocese. After an extensive process of collaboration with clergy, parish leaders, and educators, it was determined that renewal could be accomplished by bringing parishes together into closer collaboration for a larger good known as “Families of Parishes.” This model of grouping parishes together to share resources is forming the foundation for similar efforts across the nation.

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# Diocese of Buffalo

## Office of Communications



### Families of Parishes Page 2

“The pilot introduction of the Family of Parishes model represents an important milestone on our Road to Renewal,” explained the Most Reverend Michael W. Fisher, Bishop of Buffalo. “The insights we’ve gained from so many – our pastors, deacons, lay leaders, educators and parishioners – have informed the decisions we are announcing today. The role of Catholic faith and ministry is essential in addressing so many needs across Western New York, including educating our young people. In combining our resources and refocusing our efforts at the parish level, I am confident that we can be even more impactful in the years ahead in fulfilling our mandate to spread Christ’s Gospel and fulfill our essential mandate of service.”

From an unprecedented gathering of input, that included 26 listening sessions with over 800 participants, an online survey with more than 1,300 contributors, significant numbers of meetings, emails and letters, a draft recommendation for parish families was presented to Diocesan leaders in early December 2020. In March, Fr. Bryan Zielenieski, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Swormville, was named the episcopal vicar for Renewal and Development, and tasked to lead the renewal effort by Bishop Fisher.

“We have had tremendous consultation and collaboration for the Renewal effort, explained Fr. Zielenieski. “The family model of parishes intent is truly an intentional discipleship that will bring the best practices and resources to our parish families by the clergy and laity working together. We will learn to minister together to increase our impact on our parishioners with a focus on Jesus.”

The six pilot Families of Parishes will begin the activation stage of working together in mid-January. Phase 1 of the Families of Parishes that includes 10 families of parishes will begin working together in October 2022, Phase 2 with 11 families of parishes is scheduled to begin collaboration in October 2023 and Phase 3 with nine families of parishes is slated to begin working together in October 2024.

For the full list of the 36 Diocesan Families of Parishes, as well as the six pilot families, please visit [www.roadtorenewal.org/families](http://www.roadtorenewal.org/families).