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Pastoral plan presented for deanery input

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DURAND – They came to St. Mary’s in Durand from every parish in that deanery on March 20. The Blessed Sacrament had been removed, and a projection screen stood before the altar. Still wearing ties, some of the men in the pews had come directly from work, an indication of how important this meeting was to them.

Father David Kunz and several other members of the diocesan pastoral planning committee sat up front. They were at St. Mary’s to present the working version of the proposed diocesan pastoral plan, and to solicit comments and suggestions from members of the deanery.

Father Kunz, who serves as co-chair of the committee, was the main presenter that evening. He said Durand’s was the 13th deanery presentation he had given, with one last talk slated for the diocesan Pastoral Council on March 31. An amended plan will go before Bishop Jerome E. ListECKI by July 1.

“Tonight I would like to begin a conversation with you about the Church, a conversation about your parishes,” Father Kunz told the gathering.

Calling the pressing issues that instigated pastoral planning, such as the declining number of priests and changing demographics, “elephants in our living room,” Father Kunz said the bishop had



Pastoral Planning Committee co-chair Father David Kunz speaks with parish leaders from the Durand deanery at St. Mary’s Church in Durand March 20. The priest laid out the proposed pastoral plan, which could eventually reduce to 75 the number of parishes in the diocese, while still keeping all but one church building open and in use. He asked pastors to discuss his presentation with their pastoral councils, and to come up with concrete suggestions for its improvement.

asked the committee to plan for a “worst-case scenario.”

Father Kunz explained that the proposed plan only calls for the closing of a single church building, and instead focuses on what he termed a “reconfiguration” of the diocese’s parishes. According to the proposal, 75 of the diocese’s parishes would be termed “parish centers,” while the remainder would be attached to the parish centers as either “liturgical satellites,” “church buildings,” “oratories,” or “private chapels.”

“All those things you think of as parish” will be at the parish center, Father Kunz said. Liturgical satellites will have

Sunday Mass, in addition to the other sacraments and catechesis. The sacraments will be celebrated and catechesis will take place at church buildings, while there is “a great deal of flexibility” regarding the use of oratories.

“Nothing says that a building designated as a church building couldn’t become a parish again,” Father Kunz said, explaining that priests and parishioners from different parishes will have to learn to overcome their differences and work together in the meantime.

“This is a proposal and is not set in stone,” Father Kunz emphasized as other committee members passed out a

paper detailing the proposed reconfiguration of the Durand Deanery. “We’ve gotten some good, concrete suggestions to modify the plan” in other deaneries, he said, adding that implementation of an approved plan would not take place for at least a year and a half, and even then only gradually, “based on the need of the time.”

Father Kunz asked pastors to take what was presented and meet with their pastoral councils. “Pray and discuss what we’ve talked about tonight,” he said. “Ask yourselves, if this plan was accepted by the bishop, could you live with it – not like it, but live with it?”