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Serving the Catholic Community of the Diocese of La Crosse

April 20 pastoral planning meeting replaced

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LA CROSSE – Due to the absence of a bishop, a pastoral planning meeting between all of the priests of the diocese and their bishop, scheduled for April 20 at St. Mary Parish, Tomah, has been canceled.

The meeting between the priests and their bishop has been replaced by a meeting of the pastoral planning subcommittees. The purpose of the original meeting was to generate feedback through the execution of a case study to refine the pastoral planning protocols.

Monsignor Richard Gilles, diocesan administrator, said, after consultation, that a decision has been reached that the priests will not be meeting. “The reason for changing the meeting is that the presence of the new bishop is considered very important,” Monsignor



Gilles said. “Having a meeting now would communicate to the priests that this is ‘how it is,’ and that the protocols are somewhat set even though they will not have been formally promulgated. If a new bishop were to come in and have another meeting and take things in a different direction, it would cause confusion.”

Initiated by (then) Bishop ListECKI in 2005, the Pastoral Plan is a response to demographic shifts and a declining number of priests. The Plan, which is considered a “contingency plan” and to be implemented only if it is needed,

could potentially reduce the number of parishes in the diocese from 165 to 75 while not closing any church buildings.

Phase I of the Pastoral Plan concluded in 2008, when Bishop ListECKI gave his approval. Now underway is Phase II, which has as its stated goal the establishing of practical guidelines for implementation. Meetings held in the deaneries during October and November of 2009 gave parish staff, trustees, pastoral and finance council members and parishioners the opportunity to offer feedback in regard to proposed guidelines. An article in an upcoming edition of *The Catholic Times* will focus on this feedback and how it is being taken into account.

The subcommittees meeting on April 20 are tasked with addressing the following areas: Finance and Incorporation, Communications and Public Awareness, Staff Development

and Formation, Transitions in Parish Life and Governance and Consultation.

“Having a meeting of all the subcommittees will help us continue to refine the protocols and to prepare us to help present a more worthy product at a later date to all the priests,” Monsignor Gilles said.

Monsignor Gilles also said that diocesan chancellor Ben Nguyen will take over for him as chairman of the Steering Committee. Christopher Carstens, director of the Office of Sacred Worship for the diocese, will serve as co-chair.

Nguyen said his chairing the Steering Committee was necessitated by Monsignor Gilles’ extra duties as diocesan administrator in the absence of a bishop. “Our main goal will be to keep honing the existing protocols,” he said. “The new bishop will be able to tweak it and add to it as we go forward with Phase II.”