



**CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF YOUNGSTOWN**

*Office of the Bishop*

**Most Reverend George V. Murry, S.J.**

**144 West Wood Street  
Youngstown, Ohio 44503**

May 24, 2008

Dear Parishioners,

Over the last nine months the Tri-Parish Transition Team has met and suggested ways that the Catholic population of Ashtabula can be effectively served as we face challenges with regards to changing demographics, finances and fewer priests. I write to you today to express my gratitude to them, my appreciation to you for your patience and share with you the plan that has been recommended by the priests and parish representatives, and to which I give my full support.

Effective May 24, 2008, Father Joseph Ruggieri will assume the pastoral leadership of Mother of Sorrows Parish in addition to the pastorate of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish. Father Philip Miller will continue to pastor St. Joseph Parish and the Mission. Both will continue to be present at each of the parishes assisting you in your spiritual journey. Please note that at this time the canonical status of each parish will remain unchanged. In other words, each parish will remain open.

I have spoken with Fathers Miller and Ruggieri regarding the importance of continuing the extensive work begun by the Transition Team. This process demands the development of distinct Parish/Pastoral Councils, along with the input of well-informed Finance Councils. Each Parish/Pastoral Council will be asked to provide quarterly reports of progress to the Vicar of Administration and Diocesan Planning, who will be responsible to monitor the work and to report to me.

It is important that these consultative bodies investigate and ponder significant pastoral issues and develop creative and effective responses to the issues facing the particular needs of the Ashtabula area. Likewise it is imperative that these consultative bodies along with parish leadership are committed to open and honest dialogue with parishioners about their needs and hopes for the future.

In a spirit of mutual cooperation I am confident that we will be able to meet the spiritual needs of the Catholic population in the City of Ashtabula.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend George V. Murry, S.J.  
Bishop of Youngstown

GVM/gd