

DIocese OF PORTLAND
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

October 3, 2006

Members of the Cluster Planning Committee
Central Highlands Catholic Communities
45 High Street
Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426

Dear Members of Cluster 7 Planning Committee:

Congratulations on the presentation of a very exciting and forward thinking plan. It is obvious that you undertook the planning process with great enthusiasm, diligence and a great deal of seriousness.

After having carefully read your proposal and having reviewed it with my staff, the Presbyteral Council and the Episcopal Council, I am pleased to report that there is widespread support for the direction you have outlined. This means that I approve the move toward forming a single parish for the present parishes of St. Anne in Dexter, St. Thomas Aquinas in Dover-Foxcroft and St. Francis Xavier/St. Paul in Milo. St. Agnes in Pittsfield will remain a separate canonical parish, but with time will be incorporated into the administrative and pastoral functions of the cluster.

Although recommending that I approve the direction of the cluster plan and accepting the modified Model IV, my consultants did have some concerns and questions. First, there was a general consensus that the timeline could be tightened. We recommend the canonical merger of the parishes sooner rather than later. This will require a consultation with the people regarding possible names for the new parish, and a formal recommendation from you to me to bring to the Presbyteral Council, College of Consultors, and Finance Council. It seems to me that this should be done sooner rather than later to facilitate the next step.

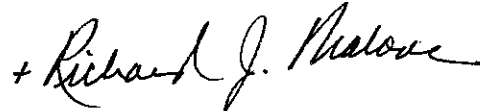
Secondly, we generally felt that selling all the existing properties and building a new parish complex to serve the newly formed parish is the best way to go in the light of future needs. There is, however, a concern whether this approach will be feasible. Therefore, I ask that you immediately begin a feasibility study on the question. The finance office is ready to assist in any way possible with this phase of the plan.

Lastly, I ask that Father Robichaud and Father Kerns make this letter known to all the parishioners of the cluster on the weekend of October 7th/8th, since Sue Bernard in the Diocesan Office of Communications will be issuing a press release on Monday, October 9, 2006, relative to my response to this cluster. Additionally, Sue can be supportive and helpful to you when and if calls come from the local media.

Once again, I congratulate you on the tremendous work you have done. I encourage you as you continue putting the structures in place that will then allow us to focus on our mission, namely, to proclaim the Good News to all. As you move forward, Bill Schulz, Director of the Office of Parish Planning and Evangelization, is available to assist you.

May God bless you with His peace. Please know that you are in my prayers.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard J. Malone". The signature is written in black ink and is preceded by a small plus sign.

Most Reverend Richard J. Malone
Bishop of Portland

cc: Father James Robichaud
Father Paul Kerns