



1070 Waterloo Street  
London, Ontario N6A 3Y2  
519-433-0658 x 238  
Fax: 519-433-0011  
jbezzina@dol.ca

To: Directors of Education  
From: Joe Bezzina, *Episcopal Liaison for Catholic Schools*  
Re.: Questions regarding implementation of the Families of Parishes  
Date: January 6, 2020

Bishop Fabbro and our parish leaders know and appreciate the unique and precious gift of publicly funded Catholic education in Ontario. School Boards and schools play “a significant role in facilitating a meaningful relationship between the parish and home” (*Renewing the Promise*, p.9). When parents and students have questions about the faith and the work of the Church, they often turn to school personnel for answers. As we implement a Families of Parishes model, we are aware that this transition may lead to different questions. While we hope that those with questions will turn to the parish team for answers, we are aware that some may turn to you. Below are some talking points and answers.

### **The Mission and Vision of the Diocese of London and our Parishes**

The Diocese of London is committed to being *a mission-oriented Church that forms disciples of Jesus*. It is this mission that directs our work and ministry; spiritual and pastoral care of all people is very important to us. As we focus on becoming a mission-oriented Church some things will change, but our commitment to the Gospel message and action will remain our focus.

### **Why the “Families of Parishes model”?**

The Families of Parishes model was chosen to give our parishes, and thus our parishioners, the stability needed to be mission-oriented parishes that form disciples of Jesus.

### **What does a Families of Parishes model look like?**

In this model three, four or even five parishes are grouped together. The individual parishes are not closed or merged; each remains a distinct parish.

### **How will the pastoral leadership of the parish be affected by the implementation of the Family of Parishes?**

In this model a single pastor is appointed to lead each of the parishes within the Family of Parishes. His main responsibilities will be to proclaim the word of God, celebrate the sacraments and provide pastoral care for the people in the grouping. He will oversee the work of the other ministers in the grouping, who will form the pastoral team. It is very likely that there will be a second or maybe even a third priest assigned to the grouping, working hand-in-hand with the pastor. The vision affirms that the current complement of deacons, lay ecclesial ministers, and staff members will continue to serve within the Family. However, their responsibilities may shift to be more responsive to the entire Family’s needs.

Like a family, a parish is bound together in a communion; and like a family that teaches and models a life of service, a parish is a spiritual home that forms disciples to go out into the world. Like a family they will, hopefully, be characterized by close cooperation and sharing in realizing the common goal of being mission-driven.

### How will this affect Catholic Schools?

Over the years the schools and their local parishes have supported each other. This will continue but there will be a few changes. Anticipating that the implementation of the Family of Parishes model, representatives of all stakeholders and employee groups from the six Catholic School Boards, the Diocese and priests, deacons and lay ecclesial ministers worked together to ensure that best practices were identified and affirmed. Bishop Fabbro promulgated: *Pastoral Care of Our Catholic Schools* in 2017 and can be found on the dol.ca website ([click here](#)).

### Where do I find information regarding my own Family of Parishes or the one serving my school community?

Discussion of the transition to Family of Parishes can be part of the on-going dialogue between school and parish leadership. The Parish web sites and bulletins will also have up-to-date information. As an active member of your parish community, you will hear about the mission and vision of the Church at the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist.

Following the Diocese of London social media platforms and reviewing the material at dol.ca, will also deepen your awareness. Should you have any questions you can contact the Pastoral Services Team at 519-433-0658 or [PastoralServicesAdmin@dol.ca](mailto:PastoralServicesAdmin@dol.ca).

### As a person working in Catholic Education, how can I best support the transition?

- **Live out our baptismal faith:** “Jesus established the Church to be missionary and we share in that mission through the gift of baptism. In this sacrament we are given the great commission to go forth, infused with the divine virtues of faith, hope and love, and make disciples by witnessing to Christ and his Gospel” (p. 7).
- **Teach the faith:** Catholic School Boards have invested in Religious Education programs to ensure that all children continue to grow in the faith. Teach this Bishop’s approved curriculum and program, and seek ways to infuse the faith in all you teach and do.
- **Witness the faith:** Saint Pope Paul VI reminded us that the world needs witnesses and our young people are asking us to be witnesses of the presence of Jesus in our lives.
- **Participate in the parish community:** “It is in the Eucharist where we find the most perfect ‘faith formation program,’ and we are evangelized, catechized and made holy as we are drawn into the mystery of salvation” (p. 23).

“Catholic Schools are places where children and young people may find solid and enduring values to give hope, meaning and purpose to life through an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ” (p. 15). Each day there are examples of the diocesan mission and vision alive in the six school systems which are part of the Diocese of London as those involved in Catholic Education give “powerful witness to the presence of Jesus...” (cf. p. 17).