

(Sept. 2014)

Be Not Afraid

World Meeting of Families

by Bishop John M. LeVoir

The World Meeting of Families is scheduled to take place Sept. 22-27, 2015, in Philadelphia. The theme for the meeting is “Love is our mission: the family fully alive.” Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, archbishop of Philadelphia, has been working very hard to make this event a success.

The World Meeting of Families begins with a four-day congress at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia and concludes with a papal Mass on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The 2015 Congress expects to register between 10,000 and 15,000 attendees. The anticipated papal Mass, once officially confirmed, is expected to attract between one and two million people.

I am hoping that many from the Diocese of New Ulm will make a pilgrimage to participate in the World Meeting of Families and the expected visit of Pope Francis. The organizers of the World Meeting of Families have developed a comprehensive plan for lodging that will provide accommodations at the most reasonable prices available. Hotel rooms and room blocks will be available to individuals, groups, and pilgrimage and tour companies. The organizers are working closely with all who wish to attend and will provide a wide variety of lodging options.

Archbishop Chaput writes: “St. John Paul II, hailed as the Pope of the Family, created the World Meeting of Families in 1994 in Rome to explore the critical role the family plays in society and to give families opportunities to talk about the challenges and blessings that all families have.

“Our theme, ‘Love is our mission: the family fully alive,’ was inspired by the early Church Father St. Irenaeus, who wrote, ‘The glory of God is man fully alive.’ The glory of men and women is their capacity to love as God loves – and no better means exists to teach the meaning of love than the family. His Holiness, Pope Francis, also inspired the theme. He embodies the message of mercy, joy, and love at the heart of the Gospel.”

For more information on the World Meeting of Families, please see its Web site at www.worldmeeting2015.org.

New Pastoral Center Open House

The open house on Friday, Aug. 1, for the new Pastoral Center building was a rousing success. The weather was perfect. The day opened with Mass outside of the new Pastoral Center. About 200 people attended, with some 25 priests concelebrating. Archbishop John C. Nienstedt was present. He was very happy to see that the project that was begun when he was bishop of New Ulm had been completed. Bishops Lee A. Piche, auxiliary bishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and Donald J. Kettler, bishop of St. Cloud, were also present.

At the conclusion of Mass, the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession to the tabernacle in the chapel of the Pastoral Center. The building was blessed and a simple lunch was served. Staff members gave tours all day long. It is estimated that 1,000 people were given tours of the new building. I was stationed at the front door, welcoming people as they arrived and sending them on their way after they finished their tour. I heard many, many positive comments.

I am grateful for all who participated in the day. I am particularly grateful for the Pastoral Center staff; they did an outstanding job of accommodating everyone who came. I am thankful to God for this building and ask him to bless the efforts of the Pastoral Center staff to assist the parishes in carrying out the new evangelization in the Diocese of New Ulm. If you have not seen the new Pastoral Center, please come for a visit.

Pastoral Planning

I ask that parishioners and pastoral leaders of each parish continue to discuss the future of their parish. The “Fourth Plan for Parishes” calls for each parish to look honestly, charitably, and prayerfully at its future by asking questions.

For example, what does the future look like for the parish in five years, 10 years, and 20 years? Will the Catholic population be growing, diminishing, or remaining constant? Will the average age of the Catholic population be going up, going down, or remaining stable? What do these trends mean for the parish and the need for pastoral care in the parish, in the area, or in the AFC?

Are we enthusiastically engaged in the new evangelization? In other words, are we actively encouraging those Catholic neighbors who are no longer attending Mass to come home? Are we prepared to listen to these Catholics patiently and lovingly? What does this mean for the future of the parish?

What is the financial status of our parish? Will revenue be able to cover expenses as time goes on? Should our parish be looking at a merger with a neighboring parish?

Given that the projected net loss of priests in the diocese over the next three years is 20 percent (42 priests to 34 priests), how can the priests best exercise their ministry in the diocese and in our area? Do we need to reconfigure the AFC so that people can be served adequately – especially with respect to the sacraments – as the number of priests decreases?

If the parish is considering a large expenditure for a roof, boiler, windows, or other project, is the project the best use of funds as the parish looks to the future? Looking to the future, is incurring the proposed expense good stewardship? Are there other churches in the proximate area that have the facilities that are being proposed for the parish? Can a simpler project be planned that meets the needs of the parish and takes into account these nearby facilities?

We are at a juncture in our diocese where we need to take these questions and other pertinent considerations to prayer and discuss them among ourselves honestly and charitably. I continue to offer my assistance and the assistance of the Pastoral Center staff in these discussions. I ask Mary, Our Lady of New Ulm, to pray for us.