



Diocese of Ogdensburg

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

As you know, the landscape of the Church, as we have known it for generations, has been changing rapidly here in our beloved North Country. We continue to see so many of our family members move out of the area for a variety of reasons. The culture and public institutions that have long supported our faith no longer do so. The number of people in Church on Sundays continues to decrease. The number of Church vocations from our parishes have plummeted. We simply cannot continue business as usual.

Given the changing demographics, the Diocese of Ogdensburg has been engaged in pastoral planning for decades. We want to ensure that we continue to have vibrant parish families, given our limited resources (human and material). No parish in our Diocese is unaffected by our pastoral plans, including the parishes from the area where I grew up, where my own vocation was nurtured.

Every pastoral plan in the Diocese which has been presented to me is proposed by the local parish. As you know, under the leadership of your pastor, Father Giroux, the faithful in Malone have been participating in extensive dialogue, studying diligently how best to serve future generations of St. Andre Bessette parishioners. The plan presented to me is the fruit of much careful consideration by many parishioners. I have read many letters, met with your pastor, members of your pastoral staff and some parishioners who have expressed their concerns.

After much prayer and further consultation and with trust in God's providential care and concern for the faithful of Malone, I have decided to accept the proposed pastoral plan presented to me for St. Andre Bessette Parish, namely that the worship sites of St. Joseph's and St. John Bosco be closed with St. John Bosco relegated to oratory status. I know you are aware of how difficult a decision this has been.

Especially given the rich faith history of these two parish Churches, this will be difficult for many faith-filled parishioners to accept. Yet, I'm confident that your strong, persevering faith will be key to the future growth of Catholicism in Malone. Working together, as members of the One Body of Christ, focusing on the growth that this pastoral plan offers, we work together with the Gospel spirit of cooperation and harmony. We mustn't forget that we are Christ-led, Christ-fed, and Hope-filled.

I know that Father Giroux can rely on your prayers and support as the parish moves forward to implement this pastoral plan. To successfully implement the pastoral plan we must rely on the support and involvement of all parishioners. I am encouraged by the wonderful response of St. Andre's parishioners to date, and I know that your faithfulness and loyalty to your parish will be a valuable asset as we move forward.

Please know of my deep affection for the faithful of Malone and of my continuing prayers for you, your loved ones and the faith family of St. Andre Bessette Parish.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg