

Conversation between Archbishop Dennis Schnurr and Father Len Wenke

The current situation of the Church in the archdiocese presents us with various challenges as the Church has experienced throughout the ages, but Christ always give us the grace and wisdom we need. We continue with God's help. We look forward to a future full of hope.

One story of the Bible that inspires and encourages the archbishop is that of the disciples of Emmaus. They had their fixed ideas and expectations what the Church should look like in their day and they were confused. But, after the explanation and teaching of Christ and the breaking of the bread, they understand better. Christ is with us also.

We see the challenges and we have our own ideas and expectations of how the Church should go on in our day. The Church depends on many lay people prepared to work with her. We have many deacons and seminarians. We have more seminarians now than we have had for ten years.

Pastoral Regions

Pastoral regions began through a 2005 study on the lack of priests. There are 215 parishes and we have formed 100 pastoral regions because we need to "share" priests. Currently we have 100 parishes sharing priests.

We have resources, programs of preparation for lay people and deacons. We are attentive to the need to develop the talents, especially of priests who need training on how to work in more than one parish. Already we have worked on this new model of ministry with lay people assuming more responsibilities.

Now we have one person, Father Len Wenke, designated to concentrate on this future study. He is in charge of investigating the needs of the parishes and furthering the study. He does it through communication, meeting with and listening to the members of parishes.

The Church recognizes that change is not easy. In fact, it can cause sorrow in some but, on the other hand, one can see it as a time of hope. As the times change, so does the Church have to change. The Church always wants to attend to the concerns and doubts of its people. It is essential that we remain in the Church to dialogue and express ourselves. Upon speaking with Jesus, the disciples of Emmaus understood the perspective of Christ of his mission for the Church and their hearts burned within them. They experienced a new energy and hope.

Tell the Church what you think. The Church wants to listen. Christ is still with us. The archbishop concludes with a thank you to everyone. He reminds us of the prayer for vocations that we pray at Mass. He wants us to pray for him and he assures us also of his prayers for us.