

Bishop Larry Silva's Statement Regarding Planning for the Diocese of Honolulu

With my installation on July 21, 2005, as Bishop of Honolulu, I was blessed to inherit a diocese like no other. The more I learn about this special place and its special people, the more I appreciate those who preceded me in leadership, whose shoes I now humbly fill. As I cross these islands, I witness our youth filling their hearts with the joy of the Gospel. I see many parishes reaching out to feed the hungry. I preside at vibrant liturgies incorporating Pacific and Asian cultures. I am inspired by hundreds of lay men and women ministering in our churches and bringing Christ to our classrooms, our hospitals, and our prisons. I am moved by the dedication of our clergy and the commitment of our religious. It is indeed a privilege to be your shepherd.

I have greeted and spoken with thousands of people from a diversity of cultures, creeds, and walks of life. As I listen and observe, I recognize the challenges of our times. How can we more effectively communicate Christ to our young? How can we help the poor among us who face low wages, hunger, homelessness and insufficient health care? How do we fight drug addiction and mental illness? How can we fill our people's physical needs as well as the hungers only Christ can satisfy? We have done much. But the demands on our schools, charities, healthcare facilities, hospices, and places of worship often outstrip our capacity to respond. The shortage of local priestly and religious vocations hampers our efforts. Our priests, deacons, laity and lay leadership seek more training for ministerial opportunities. And collaboration across a multi-island diocese makes things more complicated and costly.

In light of this picture, I believe our diocese needs to initiate a strategic planning process. My vision for the future is that every parish will have a Gospel-inspired, enthusiastic, and skilled pastor. Every parish community will have trained pastoral and administrative support. Everyone, both Catholics and those of other faiths, will continue to have access to a welcoming parish inspired by the Word of God and nourished by its sacramental and liturgical life. Building on the information gathered from our Synod 2000 and the continuing Welcoming Parish process, our planning will help us identify needs for pastoral and lay staffing, facilities and services, and develop ways to meet those needs.

I have asked my Vicar General, Father Marc Alexander, to lead this planning process. Working with the Presbyteral Council, the diocesan staff, and the Diocesan Pastoral Council, he will assemble a team to coordinate the process and produce the plan that will guide our diocese into the future. I ask our clergy and lay leadership to fully cooperate and participate in this important endeavor.

Thank you for your prayers and efforts on behalf of the Diocese of Honolulu as together we seek, in the words of my episcopal motto, to "Witness to Jesus."