



Implementation of the *On Mission for The Church Alive!* planning initiative in parishes will take place in phases, according to plans presented to the clergy.

Bishop David Zubik will announce all priest and deacon assignments in March 2018, along with “groupings” of new parishes. However, implementation will happen in stages, with pastors following guidelines.

The groupings of new parishes will be put in one of three categories:

- **Category A** will include parishes that need to come together immediately, either due to serious financial or demographic issues or because they have indicated a readiness to proceed. These mergers would occur within a year of a pastor being assigned.
- **Category B** will include the greatest number of parish groupings, with pastors bringing parishes together in one to three years.
- **Category C** will be comprised of a number of larger parishes. Final mergers within these groupings of parishes will be implemented in three to five years.

All pastors will be given “blueprints”—plans that will include the number of primary **worship sites** and **Masses** for each new parish, **staffing needs**, a process for combining **parish and finance councils**, development of common **ministry programs**, and a **timeline for merging**.

The parameters will allow the pastor to evaluate the needs of the new parish, build relationships with parishioners and customize plans to the local situation.

The parish groupings will accommodate the declining number of diocesan priests, from the **211 priests** currently serving in active ministry to a projected **112 priests** by 2025. At this time 44 priests are serving past the retirement age of 70, and another 42 are eligible to retire in the next five years.