

DIOCESE of LA CROSSE

Office of the Bishop

May 6, 2018

To Christ's Faithful of the Wausau Deanery and of the Diocese of La Crosse:

Dear Brother Priests and Deacons, Consecrated Men and Women and Lay Faithful Brothers and Sisters all,

May the Lord give you peace.

My greatest responsibility as diocesan bishop is providing for the pastoral care of the faithful of the Diocese of La Crosse. This, in fact, has always been the first responsibility of any diocesan bishop. One challenge each diocesan bishop must address in order to fulfill this responsibility is to match personnel and resources to the pastoral needs of the faithful. In our day the process of meeting this challenge has come to be known as pastoral planning.

Pastoral planning is best rooted in the diocesan Bishop listening to the needs of the people of the Diocese. In the recent past, this has resulted in the merging of parishes who understood their ability to live the gospel through a joining of resources. During this past year, the needs of the Hmong people within the Diocese of La Crosse have fostered much reflection to focus on the possible need of establishing a parish to serve this group of people who came to our Diocese in the past 40 or more years. The Hmong Community is new to Christianity. Their traditional spirituality is a form of Animism. Since coming to our diocese, a significant number of Hmong have embraced the Catholic faith. Their conversion from Animism to Catholicism requires special attention, so that the traditions of Animism are not erroneously carried over into Catholic practices. Since Animism and Hmong culture are intimately integrated, this process of sorting possible errors is challenging. Through a dialogue during this past year I have come to recognize the special needs of the Hmong community and the benefit of creating a parish with a pastor whereby this dialogue can continue to evolve and assist the Hmong Community as they deepen their understanding of Catholicism. The members of the Hmong Community desire to know their faith and have asked me to consider the possibility of pursuing this dialogue as a new parish.

Today, therefore, I announce the erection of a new Quasi-Parish to serve the Hmong people of our diocese. In 1987 my predecessor Bishop John Paul wrote the pastoral letter "On the Christian Welcome of the Hmong Population Among the Faithful in the Diocese of La Crosse." This letter introduced us to the Hmong people's history and our responsibility to welcome them as Christ would.

Since 1975, when the Hmong first started arriving in our diocese, we reached out to assist them with their transition to their new home first by sponsoring them, "the commitment of personal

energy, talent and time in helping the Hmong family to find a home and furnish it. Unfortunately, too often the relationship between the Hmong family and the American sponsor has ended there.” (OCW 13). Much has occurred in the over forty years since the Hmong first began to arrive in our country and settle in our diocese.

Bishop Paul wrote, “The Hmong people are at the same time both very close to us and strangers” (OCW 6). Over these past forty years the Hmong have drawn even closer to us and yet, for many of us, they remain strangers. We have reached out and ministered to them, welcoming them into our parishes, particularly at St. Anne Parish in Wausau. Presently the Diocese has come to understand the difference between a desire to integrate and the ability to achieve integration. While a desire for integration exists with the Hmong Community and the native population, the reality of our different cultures and languages places real barriers which require special attention to overcome.

The situation of the Hmong Community is quite different from other immigrant groups who have settled in our State and Diocese. So many of the immigrants who have settled within our State and Diocese in the past came from a Judeo-Christian background. This common thread in our history gives us a place of communion with each other despite our many cultural differences. This common strand is not present with our Hmong brothers and sisters. For decades before coming to America there was a Catholic missionary effort among the Hmong people. This effort, of course, resulted in Hmong people becoming our brothers and sisters through baptism and faith; yet much work is yet to be done. The realities of the refugee camps and their subsequent relocation to the United States has not provided sufficient time to establish a common vocabulary and understanding of basic Catholic beliefs. With this in mind, the ministry to the Hmong Community requires adjustments from us to assist in their assimilation and knowledge that will provide them an ability to feel comfortable within Catholic tradition.

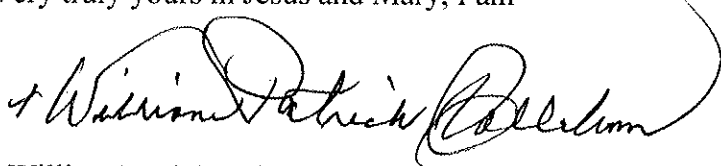
The Diocese also recognizes that the Hmong population’s presence in our midst provides a unique opportunity for evangelization. Wausau is the home of more than 7,000 people with Hmong heritage. Two other cities have significant Hmong populations for whom the Diocese will reach out and offer opportunities to grow into and be a part of the Catholic tradition: La Crosse and Eau Claire. Our eagerness to reach out to the Hmong community in language, culture, and hospitality continues to be the means by which we gain understanding and grow in common fellowship. With great hope in Jesus, this new parish will provide new opportunities for the Hmong Community to continue to grow. Presently the Hmong Catholic Community in Wausau is the second-largest Catholic Hmong group in the United States. As Bishop, I want to encourage this opportunity for those who have come to live within our Diocese.

The establishment of a quasi-parish is the first step towards responding to the special needs of the Hmong Community. With the assignment of Rev. Alan T. Burkhardt as full-time pastor, I am confident that with his pastoral leadership, knowledge, and personal care for the People of God, he will lead and guide the discussions and actions necessary to bring the Hmong Community into a new level of communion and understanding of Catholic life. The quasi-parish, “a definite community of the Christian faithful in a particular church, entrusted to a priest as its proper pastor but not yet erected as a parish because of particular circumstances”(c. 516 §1) is equivalent to a parish and will provide an appropriate environment by which to accomplish

the important missionary work of bringing the message of Jesus to their lives. The Church has continued in its history to reach out to peoples who have not encountered Jesus and the gospels. The Diocese of La Crosse is honored to be involved in this missionary work by which we "welcome the Stranger" and help them to feel at home in our Catholic tradition and faith.

I offer my fervent prayers and very warm wishes for all who are directly involved in this great missionary event. I place our intentions for its success in the hands of The Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Mother of Good Help. God be with you all!

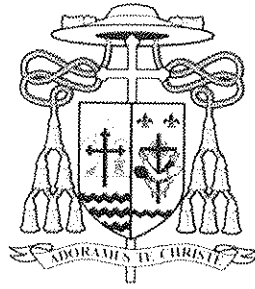
Very truly yours in Jesus and Mary, I am

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+William Patrick Callahan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

+William Patrick Callahan
Bishop of La Crosse

WILLIAM PATRICK

By the Grace of God and



the Favor of the Apostolic See

BISHOP OF LA CROSSE

DECREE

In the past our diocese had many personal parishes based on the ethnic origins of the immigrants that settled in particular areas of our diocese. The last number of decades, personal parishes have given way to territorial parishes where membership is based where a person resides. Until now the only remaining personal parishes are the Newman parishes on some secular university campuses. During this past year, however, the needs of the Hmong people within the Diocese of La Crosse have caused much reflection to occur as to the possible need of a parish to serve this group of people who came to our Diocese in the past 40 or more years. The Hmong Community is new to Christianity. Their spirituality is characterized as Animism. Since coming to our diocese, a significant number of Hmong have embraced the Catholic faith. Their conversion from Animism to Catholicism requires special attention, so that the traditions of Animism are not erroneously carried over into Catholic practices. Through a dialogue during this past year I have come to recognize the special needs of the Hmong community and the benefit of creating a parish with a pastor whereby this dialogue can continue to evolve and assist the Hmong Community in deepening their understanding of Catholicism. The members of the Hmong Community desire to know their faith and have requested me to consider the possibility of pursuing this dialogue as a new parish.

Willingly desiring in all things to promote the greater glory of God and desirous of providing for the good of souls; and considering the petitions made to me by several members of the clergy and lay faithful for the creation of a new parish; and having ascertained that there are sufficient means and resources for the support of the pastor and for the proper maintenance of the temporal goods of the parish; and having heard the Presbyteral Council on February 8, 2018, I have decided that the proper care of souls requires the eventual creation of a new parish in Wausau, Wisconsin, serving the Hmong community of Marathon County and the surrounding area.

Therefore, having faithfully observed the requirements of the law and wishing to provide more suitably for the spiritual and pastoral care of souls, invoking the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His Mother, the Blessed Ever-Virgin Mary, I, the undersigned Bishop of La Crosse, exercising my ordinary power, herewith create and erect in accordance with canons 515 §2, 516 §1 and 518 the personal quasi-parish of Mary, Mother of Good Help in Wausau, Wisconsin with all the rights, obligations, and privileges granted it by law. I am granting the status of quasi-parish so that the Hmong community along with its pastor can organize and take the proper steps toward establishing a personal parish.

This personal quasi-parish has been created and erected for the Hmong domiciled in the entire Diocese of La Crosse. This quasi-parish is assigned to the Wausau Deanery under the care of its first pastor, the Reverend Alan T. Burkhardt.

In the allocation of patrimonial goods, rights, and obligations, equity and justice must be observed, and the intention of the founders and donors must be respected.(c.122 1°-2°)

This decree is to take effect May 8, 2018 the Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Easter.

Given at La Crosse on the first day of May in the year of Our Lord 2018.


Bishop of La Crosse

SEAL


Chancellor