



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

**THE VICARIATE LETTERS:
THE BISHOP'S REFLECTIONS ON THE STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS
OF THE PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**

**HIS EXCELLENCY,
THE MOST REVEREND EDWARD K. BRAXTON, PH.D., S.T.D.
BISHOP OF BELLEVILLE**

**JUNE 8, 2014
SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST SUNDAY**





“Are you willing? Am I willing? Are we all willing to be His witnesses? Are we willing to be witnesses of Jesus Christ as we work together for the revitalization of Common Meaning in our community of faith? Our celebration of the Chrism Mass and the Sacred Triduum, the Sundays of Easter, the Ascension of the Lord, and Pentecost revitalize our identity as baptized members of Christ’s Body sharing in the Priesthood of the Faithful. These celebrations deepen our gratitude for the Ministerial and Sacramental Priesthood exercised by the priests in our parishes who are essential in the formation of our Eucharistic communities. I hope they deepen our appreciation of the ministry of the Bishop in our midst as well. These days remind us that in washing the feet of the disciples at the Last Supper, Jesus Himself is calling us to be a community of “Foot Washers” relating to one another in all circumstances with patience and graciousness, acting always in good faith with an attitude of service, surrendering ourselves to Christ. Ultimately, when we surrender ourselves in faith to Christ in the Church, we are not giving up something. Rather, everything is being given to us. Through the mystery of the Word made flesh, Christ will manifest the shape of the Church to come through each of us to the extent that we work to live out our communion with each other.

Because of the wonder of the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, we know that Christ is with us. We feel His intimate warmth as He continues to breathe on us. We are His Spirit-filled witnesses in southern Illinois and beyond. He continues to need us.



He needs our eyes to continue to see.
He needs our ears to continue to hear.
He needs our mouths to continue to speak.
He needs our hands to continue to work.
He needs our feet to continue to walk.
He needs our bodies to continue to serve.
And He needs our hearts to continue to Love!”

+Edward K. Braxton
“We are His Witnesses”
Pentecost Sunday, 2006

THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

THE VICARIATE LETTERS: THE BISHOP'S REFLECTIONS ON THE STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS OF THE PARISH PARTNERSHIPS

“Learn your Faith. Love your Faith. Live your Faith!”

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*Because of the complexity of this undertaking and limited editorial assistance, there may be some errors in this text. If you find a substantial error, please forward the error and your suggested correction, in writing, to Mrs. Judy Hoffmann, the Bishop's Administrative Assistant.



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

JUNE 8, 2014
SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST SUNDAY
THE VICARIATE LETTERS

“A Time for Renewal: Bishop Braxton’s Introduction to The Vicariate Letters”

Dear People of God,

May the Grace and Peace of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit be with you!

I am writing to you about the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. In my letter introducing the **PASTORAL PLAN**, I wrote “Jesus Christ is the reason the Catholic Church exists and He is the reason why we are working to renew our Local Church...Our **PASTORAL PLAN** becomes a program of renewal when we commit ourselves anew: to be people of genuine prayer, to be people eager to be evangelizers by professing our faith in Christ, to be people dedicated to studying the Word of God and spreading the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church, and to be people who are truly generous, giving of our time, talent, and treasure to our parishes and our Diocese for the sake of the Gospel.” Pentecost is our time for renewal. I write this Vicariate Letter today to reflect with you on your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** for the **PASTORAL PLAN**, reminding you that we must confidently build the life of this Local Church upon Jesus Christ and His mission.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has urged us to see the ministry of the Church in a missionary key. “We must come out of ourselves and grow in boldness.” I ask you to hear these words of the Holy Father and take them to heart. Your work of putting the **PASTORAL PLAN** into effect at the parish level will not be successful unless we seize this opportunity to come out of ourselves and to be bold for Christ and His evangelizing mission. This is a call to place mission over maintenance. The mission of the Church does not always allow for the maintenance of the *status quo*.

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I would like to thank all of you for the seriousness and diligence with which you have responded to the mandates that I outlined in my **FORMAL RESPONSE TO THE PASTORAL PLAN**. By means of decrees and articles published in The Messenger, regular reports to the Presbyteral Council, and other announcements, I have kept you informed of some of the more significant results of implementing the **PASTORAL PLAN**. The hard work of the **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** in developing **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** has been at the heart of these developments. This Vicariate Letter contains reflections and instructions about the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** made in consultation with the Vicars Forane and the members of the **PASTORAL PLAN COMMITTEE**.

The members of the PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING COMMITTEE are:

The Reverend Monsignor John W. McEvelly, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia, Chairman, *ex officio*

The Reverend Monsignor Thomas D. Flach, Vicar Forane

The Very Reverend John C. Iffert, Vicar Forane

The Reverend Monsignor John T. Myler, Vicar Forane

The Very Reverend Mark D. Stec, Vicar Forane

The Very Reverend Eugene H. Wojcik, Vicar Forane

Deacon Robert Lanter, Director of the Permanent Diaconate

Sister Catherine Wellinghoff, A.S.C., Parish Life Coordinator of St. Paul Parish, Johnston City

Mrs. Sue Huett, Director of Pastoral Services, Director of Office of Worship

Mr. James V. Mroczkowski, Director of Temporal Affairs, Chief Financial Officer

Ms. Kathy Mulvin, Diocesan Pastoral Council

Mr. Thomas Posnanski, Director of Faith Formation, Director of Office of Catholic Education

It has taken some time to prepare this response because of the volume of materials received and because neither I nor any member of the **COMMITTEE** has been free to work on this full-time.

I have decided to send this response in the form of a letter to all of the parishes in each Vicariate because it is important for all of you to be aware of where we are at this stage of what will continue to be an on-going process. Parishes should distribute it as widely as possible. Place it on parish website, study it at Vicariate meetings, and review it at gatherings of the parish leadership. These introductory comments and the section pertaining to your **PARTNERSHIP** should be copied and inserted in the bulletin. This letter will also be available on the diocesan website at www.diobelle.org.

The text **BELOW** and continuing to the bottom of page five is from my April 2, 2013 **FORMAL RESPONSE TO THE PASTORAL PLAN**:

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In order to accomplish this, it will be necessary for the leadership of PARISH PARTNERSHIPS to develop a schedule of regular meetings. It is primarily at these meetings that the STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS should be decided upon and developed as fully as possible. If a PARISH PARTNERSHIP is having difficulty developing a model, the leadership should send questions and concerns, in writing, to the Vicar General by June 30, 2013. Each PARISH PARTNERSHIP must submit a 1-2 page report on the progress being made in developing an appropriate model no later than September 15, 2013. This will facilitate the process of developing the final draft by December 31, 2013.

The PARISH PARTNERSHIPS can be divided primarily into three groups intended to address specific pastoral situations:

- 1.) In dialogue with parish leadership, I have directed several PARISH PARTNERSHIPS to begin working immediately on a plan for bringing two or three parishes together as one, within a timeframe of one year or less. This is possible because of the maturity of the discussion in the parishes in question and the urgency of the need.
- 2.) When one of the priests departs from one of the parishes in question (due to transfer, retirement, failing health, or the recall of a *fidei donum* missionary priest), he will not be replaced. The pastors and the parish leaderships are being asked to begin work NOW on a proposal for the manner in which one priest will serve more than one parish community. This includes the possibility of merging one or more parishes. (This also applies to the situation of a Parish Life Coordinator who departs from a parish, when he or she is not likely to be replaced.)
- 3.) There are other cases of parishes that were joined together at an earlier date and are being served already by only one priest. These parishes must review the present arrangement. How well is it working? What can the leadership do to bring these parishes together in even greater and more effective collaboration? In some cases, should these parishes merge together as one community of faith?

The leadership of every PARISH PARTNERSHIP is required to develop a STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL for the future, when there will be only one priest to serve several currently existing parish communities. I am aware that the work of developing a STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL will vary in difficulty in different PARISH PARTNERSHIPS. In some cases, the process might be relatively easy. In other cases, it will be more challenging. In still other cases, the process may be quite difficult. And there may be a few cases where it seems almost impossible.

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Parishes should not hesitate to contact me or the Vicar General if they encounter seemingly insurmountable problems.

The timeframe, indicating that a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** detailing how the **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** will be structured must be submitted by December 31, 2013, clearly does not mean that the new structure necessarily takes effect on that day. It means that there is a real need to develop an actual model or plan of action that is specific and clear so that it can be implemented when it is needed, even if the need does not arise for five years or more. Obviously, if we are blessed with a growth in our Catholic population, an increase in vocations to the priesthood, and an influx of *fidei donum* priests, the implementation of some **PARISH PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** may be delayed indefinitely.

Several possible **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** are immediately evident:

- a.) Two or more parishes petition to merge and become one parish with only one church building;
- b.) Two or more parishes petition to merge and become one parish with one primary church building while one or two of the former parish church buildings are granted chapel status for occasional use, at least for a time;
- c.) Two or more parishes remain free standing (without a merger), maintain both churches, and develop a structure within which they can realistically be served by one priest. This would have to include necessary changes in liturgical schedules (Sunday Mass, Holy Days, Holy Week) and joining many parish committees and activities together;
- d.) Other **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** developed by **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** and proposed to the Bishop for his consideration.

This important excerpt ABOVE is from my FORMAL RESPONSE TO THE PASTORAL PLAN should be borne in mind as you read the rest of this Vicariate Letter.

I am happy to report that most parishes submitted their **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS**, as I asked, to the **COMMITTEE** by December 31, 2013. I have had extensive discussions with each of the Vicars Forane concerning your responses. They, in turn, shared their comments in writing concerning each **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. Their written observations have significantly contributed to the content of this Vicariate Letter. Many of the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** are well thought out and moving in the right direction. Some, however, are focused too much on the immediate future and **NOT** upon the **LONG-TERM** future of the parishes in their **PARTNERSHIPS**. In some cases, there is evidence of disagreements among the parish leaders making it difficult to make hard or realistic decisions for the future. A few parishes seem to be

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assuming that when a current Pastor retires, he will automatically be able to remain in his former parish and continue his ministry. But this decision will not be made until the Pastor actually retires. But, even if a Pastor should remain in his former parish for a time, the question that must be answered **now** is what the parishes will do **WHEN** there is only one priest to serve several parishes. It has also happened that a totally unrealistic proposal has been presented, causing some individuals to submit alternative proposals which they deemed more realistic. Remember that you are not free to change the mandate I have given you in my **FORMAL RESPONSE TO THE PASTORAL PLAN** without my approval. If your mandate is to bring two parishes together to function as one or to reorganize parish life in several parishes so they can be served by one priest, it is my wish and expectation that your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** will lay out in as much detail as possible how you think this can be accomplished.

One of the goals of this Vicariate Letter is to invite **ALL PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** to review their recommendations with a greater mindfulness of the long-term needs of the parish communities and the availability of priests to serve them. This especially means developing a realistic and workable Mass schedule, planning joint Holy Week services, developing a common religious education and sacramental preparation program, bringing Parish Pastoral Councils together, developing a joint parish bulletin, alternating venues for parish social events, and collaborating to offer ministries that no single parish could offer alone. The Clinton County ministry to Hispanic Catholics is a good example of a creative, shared, and coordinated ministry that serves the Body of Christ in a way that no single parish or community in the county could manage by itself.

Some of you have proposed developing an expansive vision of **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**. A few propose a shared mission and a single Parish Pastoral Council that assists the Pastor in developing a shared ministry among Catholics in communities and parishes that remain distinct, with the hope of cultivating greater unity. In other areas of the Diocese, the decision has been made to relinquish the maintenance of a distinctive parish identity and join with a neighboring parish to pursue the mission of Jesus Christ. This willingness to respond to the needs of the whole Church is an example that every parish must be ready to follow.

I note that some **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** have recommended a different Mass schedule to accommodate the parishes in their group by having one Saturday night Mass at one location and one Sunday morning Mass at the other location. This arrangement, already present in one or two of our parishes, is common in mission territories and it is becoming more common in dioceses in the United States. We know that, from the perspective of liturgical theology, this is a problematic arrangement. The Mass on Saturday night is a Vigil Mass. The assumption is that a Mass will be celebrated on Sunday morning in the same church. There may be no easy solution to this dilemma. At present, we seem to have no choice but to permit it out of pastoral necessity. I have

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also taken note of another challenging situation. How do you bring two relatively small parishes together when neither church has a seating capacity to accommodate the number of people who would need to attend on a reduced Mass schedule? I have encountered this difficulty in other dioceses. In some cases, the only solution has been to locate at least one Mass in a larger venue such as the parish hall or gymnasium. This is certainly not an ideal solution.

I am also aware that some have requested a change in your **PARTNERSHIPS**, suggesting that it is not a good match. Others think certain aspects of the **PASTORAL PLAN** are misguided and should be altered. I have acknowledged from the outset that no program for diocesan renewal and restructuring is perfect. But what we have is good and we should work with it, at least for the present. There were some **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** that proposed **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** quite different from my mandate. While a few of these may be workable, others clearly are not.

During the June 2, 2014 meeting of the Presbyteral Council, there was a discussion about the relationship between the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** and the practice of inviting *fidei donum* missionaries into the Diocese to assist us. It was suggested that perhaps the influx of international priests is delaying the implementation of the **PASTORAL PLAN**, since these priests serve in parishes that our Diocesan priests would be serving as their second or third parish, if the **PLAN** were being fully implemented. I suggested that, from my perspective, the service of *fidei donum* missionaries and the **PASTORAL PLAN** are complementary. This is because, at the present time, our Diocesan priests would not be able to take over all of the vacant parishes if the *fidei donum* priests all departed. I indicated that the situation will become even tighter with large number of retirements in the next few years. This is one of the reasons why the implementation of the **PASTORAL PLAN** must be gradual, dynamic, and organic. This was the first time this concern about our *fidei donum* priests has been raised with me. No priests have written to me expressing their desire to assume an additional pastorate. Therefore, I would like the Vicars Forane to discuss this question in a serious manner at an upcoming Vicariate meeting and report back to me. All priests (incardinated and *fidei donum*) should speak freely at these meeting. These are the questions: Do the majority of priests in your Vicariate believe that additional *fidei donum* priests should not be sought to succeed the priests we now have when their terms expire? Do they believe that, in spite of up-coming retirements and no immediate ordinations, our priests are willing and able to assume responsibility for these parishes without the introduction of additional Parish Life Coordinators? What would be a model for how this could be done? Clear and honest responses to these questions might be quite helpful, especially since it cannot be assumed that *fidei donum* priests will be available indefinitely.

It is my hope that all Priests, Deacons and Parish Life Coordinators will read all five Vicariate Letters in order to have an appreciation of where the entire Diocese is in this process. I would like the parish leadership to study carefully your Vicariate Letter. Share the contents of

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the whole letter with the members of your parish (e.g., distribute it in church, on your website), so they can be kept informed. The section addressing individual parishes is written so that it can be taken out and placed in the parish bulletin. However, in that format, your parishioners will not gain a full perspective. Please gather appropriate parish representatives together to discuss the instructions concerning your individual **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. I would ask the Vicar Forane to have a follow-up conversation with each Pastor, Administrator, or Parish Life Coordinator in his Vicariate. If necessary, this can be done by telephone. All parish leaders and parishioners should keep in mind that all important information and decisions concerning the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** will come in writing either from me personally or Monsignor McEvelly, V.G. You should not give serious consideration to rumors, idle talk, and speculation passed by word of mouth.

Every PARISH PARTNERSHIP must respond to this Vicariate Letter. In some cases, the responses may be brief because I have asked for only moderate changes in or additions to your STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL. In other cases the response MUST be more extensive because I have asked for significant changes in and additions to your STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL. You are asked to give this response a high priority.

Please submit your brief statements or your revised STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS to the Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia as soon as possible. However, knowing that summer is at hand, the responses may be submitted as late as (but NO later than) Monday, November 10, 2014, the Feast of Pope St. Leo the Great.

Once I have approved your revised STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS, they should not be filed away. They should be regularly reviewed by your Parish Pastoral Councils and broader parish leadership. Make sure you are implementing as much of your STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL as you can now, doing so by stages and in dialogue with my Vicar Forane. They should serve as guideposts in the work of planning and mission development for the future. They should help all of us anticipate the shape of the Church to come.

This Vicariate Letter is intended to be the only response in this format. It brings to a conclusion the third phase of this consultative process. If a PARISH PARTNERSHIP does not respond to this Vicariate Letter, or if it fails to further refine its STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL as directed in this Letter, additional direct communication will come from me or the Vicar General. If necessary, the PASTORAL PLAN COMMITTEE, guided by the appropriate Vicar Forane, will propose a STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL to me for the PARISH PARTNERSHIPS that fail to participate effectively in this consultative process.

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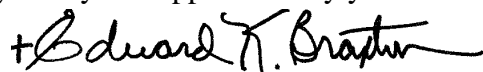
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As I conclude this introduction to **THE VICARIATE LETTERS: THE BISHOP'S REFLECTIONS ON THE STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS OF THE PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**, I would like to remind all of you of the importance of maintaining a spirit of prayer throughout this process. Please establish the practice of praying for the parish(es) that make up your **PARTNERSHIP**. Please keep in mind that the ultimate goal of **THE PASTORAL PLAN** is the renewal and rebuilding of Catholic life in our parishes. Allow me to mention again two very helpful books: The Story of a Catholic Parish Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, Making Church Better, (Ava Maria Press 2013) by Father Michael White and Thomas Corcoran; and A Struggle for Holy Ground: Reconciliation and the Rites of Parish Closure (Liturgical Press, 2004), by Father Michael Weldon, O.F.M. Reading these books with a prayerful spirit and discussing them with one another will provide you with useful insights and practical suggestions.

Please remember that the responses to the Vicariate Letter by the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** are due in the Vicar General's office by Monday, November 10, 2014.

Once again, I wish to express my appreciation to everyone who has been working with a seriousness of purpose and an open spirit to develop a truly useful and realistic **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that will guide our communities of faith into the next twenty-five years of the history of this Local Church. The work before us is a time for renewal; the time for a new Pentecost in our day. Come O Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of Your Divine Love!

Prayerfully and appreciatively yours in Christ,



The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Ph.D., S.T.D.
Bishop of Belleville

Given from the Diocesan Curia on the 8th day of June, The Solemnity of Pentecost, in the Year of Our Lord 2014.

(SEAL)

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THE LETTER TO THE METRO EAST VICARIATE

Dear Monsignor Myler,

Dear Priests, Deacons, Religious, Parish Life Coordinators, and the Christian Faithful of the Metro East Vicariate:

Peace be with you!

I will now turn from these general observations in order to speak to the situation of each parish in the Vicariate and to provide directions concerning the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** submitted by **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** for my consideration.

The Cathedral of St. Peter, Belleville / St Mary, Belleville

Reverend Monsignor John T. Myler, V.F. / Reverend Christopher Anyanwu

The Cathedral of St. Peter Parish and St. Mary Parish form a unique **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** because of the very nature of the Cathedral Church. As the mother Church of the Diocese from which the Bishop presides over the Local Church, the Cathedral cannot be easily suppressed or incorporated within the boundaries of a neighboring parish. Nor would liturgies ordinarily celebrated by the Diocesan Bishop (e.g., Ordinations, Midnight Mass, Holy Week, etc.) be regularly scheduled in a neighboring parish. Nevertheless, the Cathedral Parish experiences growth and decline like every other parish. The demographics, school population, and financial resources are affected as families and households of different sizes and ages move in or out of the parish. Outside factors, such as the building of the Cottages of Cathedral Square and the much discussed probable closure and relocation of St. Elizabeth Hospital, long a major presence in the area, may also have a significant impact. The Cathedral also has additional expenses because of the size and age of the edifice and the many diocesan-wide liturgical celebrations that occur there. While every parish in the diocese has a unique identity and worth, the cathedral is not “just another parish.” The entire Diocese benefits from the life of the Cathedral Church from which the Bishop speaks as the principal teacher of the Catholic faith and in which every effort should be made to exemplify excellence in liturgy and preaching.

Acknowledging all of this, it remains true that the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** will ultimately have an impact on every parish in the Diocese, including the Cathedral. Only the passage of time and the evaluation of a variety of resources will determine how and when the **PASTORAL PLAN** will affect the life of the parish.

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Your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has the mandate to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will be able to be served by only one priest.

I am grateful that the Cathedral Rector, the Administrator of St. Mary, and your parish leadership groups have met regularly to explore this model. I note the changes you are making in your Mass schedule for Holy Days. You have coordinated your faith formation in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and you are collaborating in youth ministry (CBAY). You have a variety of Outreach ministries, such as St. Vincent de Paul Conferences which might easily be joined together. Both parishes have significant music ministries. Can these assets be employed as a means of bringing the two parish communities together socially? Your conversations about the best way to go forward with your schools in a joint educational ministry of area children are commendable, and I urge you to persevere in your plans. These Schools Restructuring Talks may determine the manner in which Catholic elementary schools will survive in the city.

You propose to remain two separate parishes. There may be wisdom in this for the reasons cited above. However, it is challenging to think of how this can be accomplished with only one priest. Please bring your Parish Pastoral Councils and other major committees and organizations together regularly to try to outline what the ministry in the two parishes might look like with only one priest. Obviously, a component of that future model will entail increasing the number of well trained Lay Ecclesial Ministers in positions of leadership. This will take boldness, creativity and thinking outside of the box. I hope you will not need to implement this joint parish structure in the immediate future. However, there is true wisdom in having a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** in writing that can be put in place at short notice.

As you know, Father Christopher Anyanwu is a *fidei donum* missionary priest on loan to us from the Archdiocese of Onitsha, Nigeria. If, for some unexpected reason, he were to be called to his Archdiocese, your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** is not sufficiently developed for Monsignor Myler to be able to assume the ministry and administration of both parishes at this juncture. Father Anyanwu has generously offered himself in service. He comes to you from a different ecclesial and cultural environment. I invite the People of God at St. Mary Parish to offer him greater assistance in getting to know the faithful and their needs. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

Blessed Sacrament, Belleville / Our Lady Queen of Peace, Belleville

Reverend Matthew J. Elie / Reverend Monsignor John W. McEvelly, V.G.

Blessed Sacrament Parish and Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, like many other parishes, should ideally each have their own parish priest. Indeed, in the past, parishes of their size and larger sometimes had a Pastor and a Parochial Vicar. For more than six years, Monsignor McEvelly served as Pastor of both parishes, until I relieved him of one pastorate because of his

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position as Vicar General. Now, in our present circumstances, my mandate to your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** in the **PASTORAL PLAN** is to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will be served by only one priest.

I am very aware that this is a difficult model to put in place for a number of reasons, including the size of the parishes, their very distinct personas, and the fact that they have two vibrant schools between them. Like every parish, these communities of faith need to place a renewed emphasis on the selection and training of mature Lay Ecclesial Ministers. Present circumstances suggest that the day when you will have only one priest between you is in the not too distant future.

I have studied the efforts you have been making to prepare for that day. In the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** you have proposed, you are reorganizing and restructuring the administration of your parishes. Your Parish School of Religion classes are shared. You have as a goal to collaborate in presenting the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Please move forward with this as soon as possible. Your Outreach by means of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference is vitally important; please work to grow and share in your mission outreach. Are there ways for you to organize these ministries together?

You are wisely and appropriately preparing for the day when you will be two parishes served by only one priest. When the day comes that you have only one priest, it will not be possible to easily maintain two of everything. As you revisit your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**, look for ways to be more detailed about the future. Would it be possible to have a joint bulletin? Could you have one Parish Pastoral Council, or could your Councils meet together? Could the same be done with your adult education programs? I know you are already arranging your Sunday, Christmas, Holy Week, and Holy Day Mass schedules to accommodate having only one priest. Please follow through on that. You may want to experiment with several possibilities in order to learn which times might best suit the preferences of the faithful.

I am very concerned about the long-term future of your schools and the schools of the other Belleville parishes. Years of studies and considerable financial investments have not yet resulted in a city-wide plan that will strengthen our Catholic elementary school presence while acknowledging that we have more Catholic schools than we need in the city. The process of addressing this is difficult and, at times stressful, but I must insist that your school leadership commit itself anew to active, constructive School Restructuring Talks that will lead to practical, realistic results. Looking ahead, the only means you have of ensuring continued quality Catholic education for your children and your children's children is by means of close cooperation, leading to workable decisions. Although you mention that both parishes and your respective schools are financially viable and have stable populations at this time, this can change in one

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year. NOW is the time for you to continue your discussions for bold new ways to share parish and school ministries. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Henry, Belleville / St. Augustine, Belleville

Reverend Kenneth J. York / Reverend Monsignor William P. McGhee

St. Henry Parish and St. Augustine Parish are well known parishes in the city of Belleville. As you know, the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** will ultimately have an impact on every parish in the Diocese, including those in Belleville. Only the passage of time and the evaluation of a variety of resources and circumstances will determine how and when the **PASTORAL PLAN** will affect the life of your parishes.

Your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has the mandate to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will be able to be served by only one priest. I am very aware that this is a difficult model to put in place for a number of reasons, including the size of the parishes and their very distinct personas. Like every parish, your communities of faith need to place a renewed emphasis on the selection and training of mature Lay Ecclesial Ministers in order to fulfill your mandate.

I am pleased to note the initial efforts you are making. These include collaborating in your liturgical life. You are adapting your Mass schedule for a total of three Sunday Masses (one Vigil and two Sunday morning). This will be challenging, but necessary, when the time comes. Your liturgical collaboration must include Holy Days as well as Holy Week. With one priest, it will not be possible to duplicate the Triduum. Please consider models for joint celebrations. **Nota Bene:** It will be difficult for one priest to celebrate the many funerals in your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**, where many of the Christian Faithful are growing older. The fact that a Deacon is assigned to St. Augustine Parish will provide some assistance. In addition, Father York, who no longer has responsibilities at the Chancery, will soon be released from a number of pastorates. Hopefully, this will allow him to be engaged in more pastoral ministry.

Your plans to combine sacramental preparation programs and collaborate on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the Parish School of Religion, youth ministry, and Bible study courses, along with a number of social outreach activities, are on the right track. If you remain as two freestanding parishes, your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** should have a joint concern for your school. Both parishes in your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** must actively and aggressively participate in the vital Schools Restructuring Talks. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

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St. Luke, Belleville /St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, Belleville

Reverend Monsignor David M. Darin / Sister Grace Marie Mueller, S.S.N.D., Parish Life Coordinator

St. Luke Parish and St. Teresa of the Child Jesus Parish are prominent parishes in the city of Belleville. As you know, the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** will ultimately have an impact on every parish in the Diocese, including those in Belleville. Only the passage of time and the evaluation of a variety of resources and circumstances will determine how and when the **PASTORAL PLAN** will affect the life of your parishes.

Your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has the mandate to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will be able to be served by only one priest. This means that, at some point, you will no longer have a Parochial Vicar. For many years, you have been blessed by the ministry of Sister Grace Mueller, S.S.N.D. However, at some point in the future, St. Luke parish may not have a Parish Life Coordinator. This must be kept in mind as you revisit your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. The presence of Deacon Robert Lanter on the pastoral staff is a very positive asset. I am very aware that your parishes are very different in size and personas. St. Teresa has a vibrant school which requires a great deal of attention and resources, especially as you introduce a new principal and a new location of the preschool program. Like every parish, your communities of faith need to place a renewed emphasis on the selection and training of mature Lay Ecclesial Ministers in order to fulfill your mandate.

Since your parishes have been linked together long before the promulgation of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**, you have a long history of collaboration, under the leadership of one Pastor. Your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** already cooperates in your liturgical life (including a joint liturgy committee and a shared Sunday and Holy Day Mass schedule). You should work on a schedule for a shared Sacred Triduum, anticipating the day of one priest. The fact that you work together on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Youth Ministry, and programs for those who are in need is the very foundation for your shared identity. I now ask you to build upon this and do even more together such as attending each other's social events and considering occasional joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils and other important parish committees. Each week, your parish bulletins should include key information about your neighbor's parish life.

Though you hope to remain two "separate" parishes with one Pastor, I ask you to revise this proposal and further develop your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. It must be one that brings you closer together in every way possible. In the future, changes in your parish populations may well call you to consider an even greater unity. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

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Holy Childhood, Mascoutah / St. Pancratius, Fayetteville / St. Liborius, St. Libory

Reverend Kenneth J. York

The somewhat unexpected death of Monsignor Jerome D. Hartlein on December 1, 2013 was not only a source of sadness but also a source of urgency compelling me to look closely at the pastoral needs of his former parish and the full implication of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** in the area. It is well known that the **PASTORAL PLAN** will ultimately have an impact on every parish in the Diocese. But, in some cases, it will be sooner rather than later.

Very soon, I hope to announce my appointment of The Reverend Paul J. Wienhoff to serve as Pastor of ALL THREE parishes. Your new Pastor will also have other Diocesan responsibilities. At the same time, I hope to appoint a Parochial Vicar to Holy Childhood who will also assist with sacramental ministry and other pastoral duties at St. Pancratius Parish and St. Liborius Parish. These three parishes must be brought into the closest possible collaboration. Parishioners are urged to cooperate in this process and be patient with changes that may necessarily be made. Things being as they are, I cannot say how long you will have the service of a second priest. This means you have no choice but to begin to reorganize and streamline your parish ministries in a way that anticipates this possibility.

Holy Childhood Parish, St. Pancratius Parish, and St. Liborius Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** with a mandate from me to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will eventually become two parishes served by only one priest. (The passage of time, the changing populations, and the evaluation of a variety of resources and circumstances may make it necessary to raise the question of only one parish with the possibility of one or two chapels. Eventually, at least one of these will probably be suppressed. Your new Pastor will guide you in your discernment and make recommendations to me.) You must **NOW** revisit your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** as we begin to move more rapidly toward that goal. Please make this a high priority. I am very aware that this is a difficult model to put in place for a number of reasons, including the very different sizes of the parishes, their unique histories and ‘personalities,’ and the fact that one parish has an active school, requiring considerable attention. Like other parishes in similar situations, your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** must place a renewed emphasis on the selection and training of mature Lay Ecclesial Ministers to assist you in fulfilling your mandate. Holy Childhood has a vibrant school which requires a great deal of attention and resources, especially as you introduce a new principal. I encourage your continued support.

I note that you occasionally come together for Confirmation and Reconciliation. You must now look to a more extensive sacramental sharing. Please study your Mass Schedule carefully

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and prepare to make any needed changes in the Sunday and Holy Day schedule. Look especially at Christmas and Holy Week. Even with two priests, it is not possible to have three distinct celebrations of the Sacred Triduum. Intensify your cooperation in all forms of Faith Formation and Social Outreach to those in need (going beyond youth ministry, “soups and speakers,” services to the poor and pro-life activities.) What, for example, are you doing in Adult Religious Education, Evangelization? **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Clare of Assisi, O’Fallon /Corpus Christi, Shiloh

Reverend James E. Deiters / Reverend Monsignor James E. Margason

St. Clare of Assisi Parish and Corpus Christi Parish recently experienced the joy of erecting and dedicating new churches. Both parishes seem to be fairing well in their new houses of worship and working hard to retire the debts incurred by these building projects. In the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**, I gave your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** the mandate to begin working together NOW to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will be able to be served by only one priest. This remains your mandate. As you know, the approval for these two new churches (one very large) in close proximity to each other was given by my predecessor. At the early stages of these projects, I expressed my misgivings to both pastors and others about the wisdom of establishing two new church sites. These misgivings were not about the willingness of the two communities to make the sacrifices necessary to raise the funds to pay for these new edifices. I knew they would do so.

My misgivings and concerns were and remain about the long-term need for two freestanding church buildings and parish structures in such close proximity. These misgivings were based in part on the dynamics of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** that I had not yet announced but which was well developed in my mind. Only time will tell whether or not there will be sufficient growth and stability in the Catholic population to warrant two parishes. The related question concerns the ability and the need for one priest to serve these communities of faith from two churches and parish structures. It is unrealistic to speak of a long-term **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** which presumes that a retired Pastor will somehow remain in place in retirement and continue his ministry. The **PASTORAL PLAN** is looking down the road to that time when neither of the present Pastors will be in place. Then what? Or, more challenging still, what will we do if one of the present Pastors were to be suddenly incapacitated? Then what?

I am pleased to note that, currently, you celebrate communal Penance Services and joint Confirmation. You are partners in the operation of and support for your Catholic school, which I hope will continue as a strong Regional Catholic School. You work together in your care for

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those in need through joint efforts of your St. Vincent de Paul Society. But, this is not enough.

As I said above, only time will tell if you really can remain two separate parishes served by one priest. How would this work? You propose one Pastor overseeing two Parish Pastoral Councils and two Finance Councils, and two of all of the other major parish committees. To that you would add a joint advisory committee to meet regularly with the Pastor. How regularly would this committee meet? Who would be on it? How would you avoid redundancy of agendas? I need to see this spelled out in more detail to be persuaded that this is a viable model for your **PARTNERSHIP**.

You must make future **PARTNERSHIP** meetings a high priority and all appropriate persons from **BOTH** parishes must participate regularly in all of these meetings. You must go beyond the modest proposals made so far and outline a realistic manner in which you will respond to my mandate. This requires genuine long-term planning. Should circumstances unfold in such a way that there is no need to implement the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that I am asking for, it may not be followed, but we need to have it, because we may well need it. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Nicholas, O'Fallon / St. Joseph, Lebanon

Reverend Monsignor William J. Hitpas / Mrs. Brenda A. Pehle, Parish Life Coordinator

St. Nicholas Parish and St. Joseph Parish constitute a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** with a mandate from me to begin working together **NOW** to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will be able to be served by only one priest. As a part of this process, I am appointing Monsignor Hitpas as Pastor of St. Joseph Parish, with the understanding that the parish will need to continue to have a Parish Life Coordinator and a sacramental minister. Nevertheless, it is my expectation for Monsignor Hitpas to offer real guidance and oversight to St. Joseph Parish.

Please revisit your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** with the help of your new Pastor and refine and expand it without including the somewhat unrealistic expectation that the “retired diocesan priests would also be asked to help as needed.” While St. Joseph Parish has had the regular services of a retired priest for Sunday Mass, too many parishes are including this in their **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** with the seeming expectation that every retired priest is going to be available to regularly celebrate Sunday Masses. You inform me in your **MODEL** that you “have not had a shared Worship experience.” Nevertheless, you are wisely planning for “three Masses at St. Nicholas and one Mass at St. Joseph.” You should move to this schedule as soon as possible.

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I am pleased that the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is now shared, as is Adult Faith Formation. It is likewise helpful to know that the social outreach to the people of your parishes who are in need is often collaborative. You must now begin to increase your collaboration in every way that is possible.

Only the passage of time and the measure of population growth and decline will determine the wisdom of your proposal of *remaining* two parishes, served by only one priest. Asking one priest to oversee two Parish Pastoral Councils, two Finance Councils, and two of all of the other major parish committees may prove unviable. Even if a Parish Life Coordinator is caring for the day-to-day ministry, it is the Pastor who is ultimately responsible to the Bishop for the proper governance of each parish. Please elaborate on your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**, examining all of the ways in which St. Nicholas Parish and St. Joseph Parish can be brought to closer association in as many aspects of ministry as possible.

You are partners in the operation of and support for St. Clare of Assisi Catholic School, which I hope will continue as a strong Regional Catholic School. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Joseph, Freeburg / St. Agatha, New Athens

Reverend Mark D. Reyling / Very Reverend James M. Nall, J.C.L.

St. Joseph Parish and St. Agatha Parish, as a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**, have a clear mandate from me in the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. You are to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will be served by only one priest. I must say your modest response has been disappointing and my efforts to speak with the parish leadership about the situation have only been partially successful. For this reason, I must ask you to begin anew.

While your parishes are not that far apart physically, I have the sense that the distinct histories of the parishes and the communities in which they are located as well as the history of parish leadership may have contributed to a degree of psychological distance that is not easily overcome. I am aware that a proposal was made to reassign your parishes to different **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**. However, I found the reasons given by the Vicar General for not making this change to be sound ones. Therefore, for the good of the Catholic Church in Freeburg and New Athens and the people you serve (including the children in your schools) a serious and diligent effort must be made to give greater clarity and fullness to your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**.

Your recent input and note are a good start, but only that. Please begin **NOW** to rework the Sunday Mass schedules, as well as the weekday Mass schedule. I think this must be done without presuming the availability of “a retired priest to help.” Too many parishes are working from this unsure premise. The schedule should be one that a single priest is able to celebrate the liturgies.

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The fact that you have a Deacon who is active in your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** is an asset. Keep in mind, however, that a Deacon is not permanently assigned to his home parish. In time, he may be needed elsewhere. Continue your joint programs for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Pre-Cana, and sports. Try to add a shared social outreach to those in need, joint social events, and shared bulletin information about these efforts. Please be faithful to your statement that your Parish Pastoral Councils will meet in alternative months. However, the goal of becoming one Council must be a high priority. Only in this way will the parishes learn about each other. Only in this way will the governance of the two parishes come together. I know from personal experience how difficult this is. I served as Pastor of two very distinct parishes that had been joined together. The delicate balance of unity could only be accomplished by vigilance, constant effort, and patience. One of the most challenging parts of this effort may well be the relationship between your two schools. I must insist that the leadership of your fine schools participate actively and faithfully in the School Restructuring Talks that I have mandated. The **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** really will eventually have an impact on every parish, including your own.

Please keep in mind that unforeseen circumstances could suddenly bring it about that you have only one priest. Please prepare NOW with all seriousness and in a spirit of fellowship for that day. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

St. John the Baptist, Smithton / St. Michael, Paderborn / St. Augustine of Canterbury, Hecker
Reverend Stanley J. Konieczny / Reverend Monsignor Marvin C. Volk / Reverend Von C. Deeke

St. John the Baptist Parish, St. Michael Parish, and St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish are a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** with a specific mandate from me to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will be able to become two parishes served by only one priest. That mandate remains in force, in spite of informal comments you may have heard. Only a letter from me or the Vicar General can alter the mandate of a given **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. Your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** must be more fully developed and thought through so that it CAN be put in place when (or if) the time comes. Currently, St. Michael Parish has a retired priest in residence who is providing the day-to-day ministry. However, that arrangement will not last indefinitely. We have no reason to assume that another retired priest will be available to continue in this somewhat unusual arrangement. (As I relieve Monsignor Volk of his position as Pastor of St. Michael Parish, I am appointing Father Stanley Konieczny to be the Pastor of St. Michael Parish.)

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I cannot foresee any realistic circumstance which will make it possible for your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to remain three parishes served by three priests. The sizes of your parishes in terms of Mass attendance, older and younger parishioners, etc., and the distance between your parishes all suggest that St. John the Baptist Parish will eventually become the principal parish in the **PARTNERSHIP** as the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** is gradually implemented. At that time, St. Michael Parish and St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish might become chapels of St. John the Baptist, or one of the two might be joined to the other. I do not know that this will happen. My goal is to convey to all of the Christian Faithful in the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** the obvious fact that things are NOT going to remain the same for the indefinite future. You are being asked to revisit your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** and address the hard questions about your **long-term future** and prepare a truly realistic proposal, even if it will not be put in place for a number of years.

I urge your continued support of St. John the Baptist Catholic School. I encourage the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to examine thoroughly the long-term future of the school as part of your revisiting the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**.

I am grateful for the report in which you list the things you are already doing together; it is especially good that you are exploring ways for your priests to share visits to shut-ins and administering the Anointing of the Sick. Please make those explorations specific plans. I am pleased that you are looking at your Sunday Mass schedule, proposing four Masses for the three parishes. You wisely anticipate the time when two vigil Masses and two Sunday Masses will be offered in your **PARTNERSHIP**. You should also be looking at Holy Days, Christmas, Holy Week, etc.

You indicate that you think it might be “premature to consider combining staffs.” I am not sure this is correct. Have you done a careful inventory of who does what and how long it takes them to do it? Do you have services that are being duplicated? Is there an important dimension of pastoral ministry that is being neglected? Adult Education? Evangelization? Should staff make-up be changed and augmented with well prepared Lay Ecclesial Ministers? These are not simple questions and they may have no ready answers. You should not act in haste. But, it is not premature to be asking them. **NOW** is the time to ask them and to work out at least tentative answers.

NOW is the time to consider and (where appropriate) begin to implement a **MODEL** that will bring you together in a different pastoral configuration that will strengthen the Catholic Church in your area. You must keep in mind that three parishes with three resident priests will not be possible in the near future. Keep in mind as well that it is all but impossible for one priest

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to administer three parishes, including one school that requires attention. Be creative (think outside of the box) and caring as you deepen, expand, and develop your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

SS. Peter and Paul, Waterloo

Reverend Osang Igdabo, CM

SS. Peter and Paul Parish and the former Immaculate Conception Parish in Madonnaville (now incorporated within the boundaries of SS. Peter and Paul Parish) constitute a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to which I gave the mandate of developing a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you could become one parish by May 1, 2014. You fulfilled this with a Mass of Thanksgiving on April 27, 2014. This critical transition was accomplished under the leadership of Father Osang Igdabo, CM, a *fidei donum* Missionary priest on loan from the Vincentian Province of Nigeria. (Nota Bene: This means his superiors could call him home if they have need of his services,)

Your pastoral restructuring was accomplished by the careful implementation of the directives of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. The parishioners have acknowledged that Immaculate Conception Parish in Madonnaville has long been far too small to function as a viable, free-standing parish. The pastoral life of the parishes has been limited to one Mass on Saturday evening. You also acknowledged that there was no reasonable hope for anticipating a change due to the history and demographics of the community. The small, but vibrant, faith community was already partially incorporated into the neighboring parish of SS. Peter and Paul Parish. The decision to merge the parishes was taken after a diligent consideration of all of the factors involved and after a degree of consensus was reached by the members of the parish family.

As is almost always the case, this process has been difficult, even painful, for many. Every parish has a unique history, personality and culture. Every church building is filled with memories and symbols of past devotion and generosity. Neither the parishioners of a given parish nor I are ever eager to see a parish close. Various alternatives were proposed and considered. The possible courses of action for the long-term future of the Catholic Church in the area were examined carefully. I had to act in a manner consistent with my **FORMAL RESPONSE** to the data collected in **THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. While most of the Christian Faithful have accepted my decision, with regret, I feel confident that this decision was the wisest course of action.

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All who lived within the boundaries of the former Immaculate Conception Parish have now made SS. Peter and Paul Parish their community of faith. You were formally welcomed during a celebration of the Eucharist at a Mass of Welcome celebrated at SS. Peter and Paul Parish on Sunday, May 25, 2014.

The work of your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has not been completed. Indeed, the greater part of your work lies before you as you find the way of bringing the once distinct communities of faith together, allowing individuals opportunities to become actively involved in the life of your parish. Hurt feelings and pain must be healed by a wonderful spirit of hospitality and shared fellowship. This will take time as the Christian faithful from both parish families are enriched by each others' traditions and customs. Please inform me of your progress in your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** update.

I applaud the work you are doing in your new school facility and I encourage your continued support of Catholic education. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Patrick, Tipton / St. Mary, Valmeyer / Our Lady of Good Counsel, Renault
Reverend John Kizhakedan, C.M.I. / Reverend Urban Osuji, C.M. / Reverend Roger R. Karban

St. Patrick Parish, St. Mary Parish, and Our Lady Good Counsel Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to which I have given the mandate to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will become one or two parishes served by only one priest. This remains your mandate and it has not been sufficiently addressed in your proposal. I must ask you to review and expand your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** keeping in mind the fact that two of your pastoral leaders are not incardinated in this Diocese. As *fidei donum* Missionaries, their superiors could recall them at any time, if they have need of their services. The third pastoral leader has recently experienced serious health concerns. Please submit an expanded, well thought out proposal making specific suggestions about the appropriate pastoral, structural, and administrative changes that should be made in order to fulfill your mandate. This is to be done even if you do not personally see the immediate need for such a proposal. I want to have a realistic outline of a workable **PASTORAL MODEL** in hand when the need arises, which could happen most unexpectedly.

I am grateful for the thought you have put into what you have proposed. Although you are “not doing anything together” in Worship, I foresee the day when you will need to ‘do something together.’ Please report to me on the effectiveness of your planned “joint parish vacation Bible

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study.” I would also like to learn about the manner in which you “work together with the St. Vincent de Paul.” These are modest, but worthwhile steps towards your goal.

I do not think your proposal to remain three parishes served by one priest is a realistic long-term arrangement. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to imagine the manner in which one priest could possibly lead, guide, teach and sanctify the Christian faithful in three parishes while, as you suggest, keeping your current administration at each parish. In a serious manner, please explore ways to be more realistically restructured; your parishes should come together in Worship, in Faith Formation, and in Outreach in as many ways as possible, with a realization that at some point demographic realities may move you to becoming one parish. Perhaps you might benefit from consulting with Father Stec and Father Beatty who gradually brought the four parishes in Gallatin County together in close harmony served by one priest. Eventually, after a tornado destroyed St. Joseph Church in Ridgway, we erected a single parish, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, with three temporary chapels. You may never need this arrangement, but the very nature of our **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** calls for us to be prepared.

In some **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**, it has happened that the pastoral leaders could not reach an agreement on a realistic proposal. As a result, individual pastoral leaders prepared their own personal **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** for the future of all of the parishes and submitted it to me individually. Each of you should feel free to do the same by your November 10, 2014 deadline. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

St. James, Millstadt / Holy Family, Cahokia

Reverend Monsignor Marvin C. Volk / Reverend Paul R. Wienhoff

St. James Parish and the historic Holy Family Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to which I have given the mandate to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which your two parishes are able to be served by only one priest. Pastoral circumstances make it necessary for the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** to go into effect sooner than we had anticipated. Beginning in July, Monsignor Volk will serve as Pastor of Holy Family Parish. In order for this arrangement to succeed, it may be necessary to seek out and train qualified Lay Ecclesial Ministers to assist the Pastor with his responsibilities. It will be necessary for the parishioners of both parishes to be patient and cooperative as this new arrangement is gradually put into place. I hope to appoint a Sacramental Minister to assist you at a later date.

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I appreciate the discussions you have had (individually and as a group) anticipating this new pastoral arrangement. I share your desire to maintain and strengthen the school at St. James as it relates to the two parishes.

As you indicate, your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has a special, seemingly insurmountable challenge because the size of the Church building at Saint James and the number of people who come to Sunday Mass makes it difficult to consider reducing the Mass schedule. What adjustments can be made in order to accommodate the Faithful who currently attend Mass at your two parishes? What can you do to develop a workable Holy Day (especially Christmas and Holy Week) Mass schedule? Other dioceses have faced this challenge, especially in mission territories where one priest sometimes serves 90,000 Catholics with one church and thirty mission stations, and the help of Lay Ecclesial Ministers. I think you are being called to think outside of the box. In order to explore solutions to this very real problem, develop a **MODEL** that could be implemented in the medium term (3 to 5 years). For example, could additional seating be gained by reconfiguring the seating arrangement? Alternatively, a dignified setting for the Sunday Eucharist might be created in a gymnasium or other setting that would allow for increased capacity at a principal Mass of the week. I would be the first to agree that it is far better to worship in a “sacred space” so designated, but the day may soon be at hand when you or those who come after you may have no other choice. You must bring an unselfish and sacrificial attitude to the task of envisioning the best way to reorganize your communities of faith in the way that allows the Catholic Church to flourish in Millstadt and Cahokia.

Your mandate does not propose that you merge into one parish. It states only that you will be served by only one priest. Your suggestion that you could hire another priest to help out as a “solution” that would cause the “least disruption” seems short sighted. The number of healthy, retired, priests willing to be involved in more than sacramental ministry is not large. And, over time, that number will decrease. If you were to become two parishes served by only one priest, I know of no priest available who could be “hired to help out.” If you were served by only one priest, I fear that some “disruption” may be inevitable. I think you have a very real incentive to reexamine your proposals and see if any of the “problems” offer the opportunity for renewal and re-envisioning parish life. This will certainly entail finding creative ways to bring your Worship, Faith Formation, Outreach and Administration closer together for a more effective ecclesial life. I also encourage the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to examine thoroughly the long term future of the school as part of your revisiting the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

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Immaculate Conception, Columbia / Sacred Heart, Dupo

Reverend Monsignor Carl E. Scherrer / Reverend Paul R. Wienhoff

Immaculate Conception Parish and Sacred Heart Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to which I have given the mandate to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which your two parishes are able to be served by only one priest. Pastoral circumstances make it necessary for the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** to go into effect sooner than anticipated. Beginning in July, Monsignor Scherrer will serve as Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish. In order for this arrangement to succeed, it may be necessary to seek out and train qualified Lay Ecclesial Ministers to assist the Pastor with his responsibilities. I hope to appoint a Sacramental Minister to assist you at a later date.

The new church building complex at Immaculate Conception Parish and the growth of the community, and the more modest church building at Sacred Heart with its smaller population, are a strong reminder that the Church in her essence is not a building at all but the baptized people of God gathered around the altar in worship of the Father. It is for this reason that great effort is made to provide pastoral ministry to all of our communities, large and small, to the extent that this is possible. Like other **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**, I plainly see that this new arrangement is very challenging. However, it is my hope that, with possible assistance, it is a workable arrangement.

The fact that it is possible to have one office at the service of both parishes will certainly be of help in coordinating the pastoral life of the two parishes. Now that the projected arrangement has become a reality, there will surely be new opportunities to explore ways to coordinate parish administration, liturgical life, educational ministry, social services to those in need, and other activities in a manner that is beneficial to the Church community. The people of Sacred Heart have experienced “sharing a priest” for many years; the arrangement will be “new” for the people of Immaculate Conception. You have taken very good initial steps: planning to adjust your Worship schedule, cooperating in Formation (education, youth ministry, Pre-Cana), and many varied Outreach programs. You have made very reasonable and practical plans for sharing Administration: representatives on boards of both parishes, and a shared staff. No doubt, special attention will need to be given to your Parish Pastoral Councils. Two separate councils or a joint structure that would include all for one meeting during which the issues of each parish can be considered. It will be necessary for the parishioners of both parishes to be patient and cooperative as this new arrangement is gradually put into place.

Your mandate is to work to remain two parishes served by one priest. As you prepare to take new steps to strengthen your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** in light of that mandate, I urge you to keep before you the vision of unity in diversity, one family of Faith.

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I share your desire to maintain and strengthen Catholic education in the community, and appreciate your hope of building a new school building. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Augustine of Hippo, East St. Louis /Immaculate Conception, (Lithuanian) East St. Louis
Reverend Carroll Mizicko, O.F.M. / Reverend Kenneth J. York

St. Augustine of Hippo Parish and Immaculate Conception Parish (now a Chapel) constitute a unique **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. Your mandate from me was to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** making it possible for you to be served by one priest. However, at the heart of this mandate was my instruction that Immaculate Conception Parish should petition for the status of chapel. You who faithfully attend at Immaculate Conception have known for many years that the parish was not functioning in the manner of an ordinary parish. Historically, the parish has served generations of Lithuanian Catholics. You have also acknowledged that Immaculate Conception cannot be considered a viable parish according to the criteria contained in the Parish Viability Form of **THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. However, I agree that the closure of the church would mean that an historic center for the Lithuanian Catholic community would be lost.

For these reasons, I decreed the suppression of the Parish of Immaculate Conception and established the church building as a Chapel of St. Augustine of Hippo Parish. As a Chapel, the former parish church becomes a sanctuary designated by me as a place for divine worship.

As a Chapel of St. Augustine of Hippo Parish, Immaculate Conception Chapel continues to be one of only two centers of Catholic worship in East St. Louis. Because of their different histories, these two communities have had very limited contact in the past. Now, they will have a formal relationship with each other as a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** and because of the service of the Pastor of St. Augustine of Hippo as your Pastor. In fidelity to **THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** which has joined the communities together, you are now asked to refine your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** in ways which will ensure contact between the parish and the chapel. You should find ways by means of which you can enrich each other and enhance the Catholic presence in the community of East St. Louis. While preserving your own traditions, you are now charged to look for opportunities to invite each other to worship and to share in fellowship. You should work together in search of ways in which you can assist those in the area who are in need. Such simple shared activities would go a long way in making it more apparent that your two vibrant and distinct communities of faith are members of the one Body of Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

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Holy Trinity, Fairview Heights / St. Stephen, Caseyville / Holy Rosary, Fairmont City

Reverend C. Raymond Schultz / Reverend C. Raymond Schultz / Reverend David M. Wilke

Holy Trinity Parish, St. Stephen Parish, and Holy Rosary Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to which I have given the mandate to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which your three parishes will be served by two priests, one of whom will be fluent in Spanish. While each of the **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** has certain challenges, I realize that your arrangement presents particular difficulties. Not only is there a degree of distance, but also there are distinct demographic make-ups, complex histories, and dramatic population shifts, as well as language and cultural differences. You have great contrasts: Holy Rosary has regrettably experienced the closure of its school in recent years and Holy Trinity has recently built a new church complex with a growing new school and considerable indebtedness. You have dramatic changes in language and cultures: St. Stephen has experienced a very rapid growth in its Spanish speaking population; whereas Holy Rosary has long been a center for Spanish speaking Catholics, especially those coming from Mexico. At the same time, both parishes continue to serve the English speaking communities who have resided there for many years. It is fortunate that, at this time, you have two priests in place who are not only fluent in Spanish but also knowledgeable of the rich cultures of peoples who are the fastest growing population in the Catholic Church in America.

Your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** indicates the efforts you are making to develop a workable Mass schedule for Sundays and Holy Days. (If you had only two priests, Holy Week would pose a problem.) You speak of shared Faith Formation programs and a coordinated ministry in service to those in need in your communities. I would be interested to know the degree to which all three parishes are involved in these coordinated efforts.

In your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**, you propose “two options: St. Stephen and Holy Rosary could be served by one priest or all three parishes could be served by one priest, assisted by additional Spanish-speaking clergy, if available”. Certainly, in either arrangement, it would be imperative to have a Spanish speaking priest as a part of the ministry. I am not sure that any priest could serve all three parishes effectively unless there were additional Deacons and extremely qualified Lay Ecclesial Ministers in place. You currently have three priests. **THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** anticipates that you may well have only two in the years ahead. Certainly, one of the two would need to have a particular commitment to Hispanic ministry. You are fortunate to have two Deacons in your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. Do either of them have an interest in learning Spanish?


As you go forward, it is of utmost importance that both of the current Pastors are committed to new ways of sharing ministry. This means faithfully attending and actively

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participating in **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** meetings. It also means having a sufficient degree of flexibility and openness to lay the foundations for those who will come after you. Look for opportunities to bring your people together for cultural and social events. Help them to resist a narrow parochialism and expose them to the true catholicity of the Church. My hope is that even though your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has a number of built-in challenges, your joint efforts and regular contact with the Christian faithful will gradually lead to a resolution to at least some of the thorniest challenges. **Please continue to pray and work with me for vocations to the priesthood from your parishes.**

Be at peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Edward T. Braxton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

BISHOP

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THE LETTER TO THE NORTH CENTRAL VICARIATE

Dear Father Iffert,

Dear Priests, Deacons, Religious, Parish Life Coordinators, and the Christian Faithful of the North Central Vicariate:

Peace be with you!

I will now turn from these general observations in order to speak to the situation of each parish in the Vicariate and to provide directions concerning the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** submitted by **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** for my consideration.

St. Dominic, Breese / St. Augustine, Breese

Reverend Patrick N. Peter / Reverend Charles W. Tuttle

I am happy to see that St. Dominic Parish and St. Augustine Parish are engaged in a good deal of shared ministry. You cooperate in maintaining All Saints Academy. You share religious education programs, youth ministry, and many activities. Furthermore, your plan allows for the addition of a lay or religious Pastoral Associate to assist the Pastor in his duties.

As you revise your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**, however, I urge you to (1) be even more generous and self-sacrificing in your efforts to establish a shared life and mission, and (2) to be very realistic about the leadership that one priest can offer — even with the help of an effective Pastoral Associate. Maintaining entirely separate committee and leadership structures, while adding another layer of committee work in the coordinating council, seems quite unrealistic to me. I encourage you to explore the manner in which your parishes can build a shared life and mission and move in the direction of my mandate to become a united Catholic community in Breese.

You are partners in the operation of an support for All Saints Academy Catholic School which I hope will continue as a strong Regional Catholic School.

The current schedule of five Sunday and Vigil Masses will obviously be unworkable when only one priest serves your community. You must work to develop a Mass schedule that can be served by one priest, allowing for weddings and other special occasions that occur on Saturdays and Sundays, without relying on the regular assistance of a retired or a so-called “supply” priest.

Finally, it is understandable and laudable that you have encouraged parishioners from St. Anthony Parish in Beckemeyer to participate in many of the religious education programs

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that you now share. While St. Augustine and St. Anthony share a pastor, this is a very natural development. However, continuing to encourage this situation may hamper the development of the parish partnership that includes St. Anthony Parish, St. Mary Parish in Carlyle, and St. Teresa Parish in Marydale. I encourage the parish leadership of St. Anthony in Beckemeyer to consider how best to help foster the development of shared faith formation efforts in their new **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. George, New Baden / St. Mary, Trenton

Reverend Eugene J. Neff / Reverend Joseph C. Rascher

St. George Parish and St. Mary Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish are now participating with parishes in Clinton County in a common celebration of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. You also jointly provide support for the important ministry to Hispanic Catholics. You also come together for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation for your young people. Additionally, you exchange invitations for parish programs--especially faith formation programs. I note you are currently planning "pulpit exchanges," a shared partnership mission, and a Pastoral Associate who will assist the Pastor when your parishes are served by only one priest. I commend you for these important efforts at cooperation. However, what you have proposed does not go far enough when looking to the long-term.

I must ask you to revise your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. In this revision, you must propose ways in which you can move beyond sharing individual programs and resources. Please take the opportunity to re-imagine what your parishes would look like if you truly shared a common mission. Both parishes with a single mission, the mission of Christ to proclaim the Good News to all. Look for specific ways to reorganize your parish life for this shared mission. This should include aligning ministry efforts, sharing parish leadership structures, and developing a greater degree of sharing of parish life. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Boniface, Germantown / St. Cecilia, Bartelso

Reverend Monsignor James A. Buerster / Reverend Monsignor James A. Buerster

With the untimely death of our beloved Father Henry Fischer, your parishes have experienced the full impact of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** in a sudden, painful, and unexpected manner. I commend the leadership and the faithful of both parishes for embracing this reality in a way that honors Father Fischer's characteristic unselfishness. I particularly want to acknowledge Monsignor James Buerster for generously serving as pastor of St. Boniface and St. Cecilia for nearly a year now. While he has indicated

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that he is willing and able to shoulder this additional pastoral responsibility, everyone must realize that this arrangement has a real impact on him and the Christian Faithful of both parishes. I anticipate that it will be necessary to maintain this arrangement in the years ahead.

At this juncture, everyone at your parishes must understand that Monsignor Buerster will not have his present level of energy and stamina forever. A future Pastor may not be able to serve the two parishes in their present configuration. I now urge you to update your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** in a way that will allow for even greater collaboration and a more profound sharing of church life and mission between the people of St. Boniface Parish and St. Cecilia Parish. I realize that this will be a challenge because each parish has a unique history and traditions. Nevertheless, this must be done. Please begin by studying which activities that now take place separately in each parish can be joined together, including all forms of religious education and sacramental formation. Experiment with joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils and having shared committee structures. It would be wise to examine your Mass schedule. Can the number of Masses be reduced? Try to allow at least two hours between the starting times of all Vigil and Sunday Masses. Look ahead to next year's Christmas and Holy Week schedule. Do not assume that an additional priest will be available. Can you accommodate one Triduum celebration, alternating Churches during the three days? **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Mary, Carlyle / St. Anthony, Beckemeyer / St. Teresa, Marydale

Reverend George A. Mauck / Reverend Charles W. Tuttle / Deacon Robert Lippert, Parish Life Coordinator / Deacon Charles A. Litteken

I am happy to see that your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has incorporated several important and realistic aspects within your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. Please move ahead in the formation of a single Parish Pastoral Council for all three parishes. I urge you to aggressively explore the possibility of employing an administrative professional to assist the Pastor in managing the temporal goods of the parishes. I encourage you to revisit your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** with an eye toward an even greater collaboration in those aspects essential to parish life, especially faith formation. You must embrace every opportunity to minimize duplicating and triplicating parish structures.

As I stated in my remarks about St. Dominic Parish and St. Augustine Parish above, the participation of St. Anthony Parish in Beckemeyer in every aspect of the life of this **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** is imperative for this process to work. If St. Anthony Parish maintains its current association with the two parishes in Breese for catechesis and sacramental formation, I have a serious concern that this may undermine the development of a shared identity, mission, and formation effort in this **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. Please keep your focus on your mandate. You

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must prepare to be served by one priest with an awareness that the three parishes will eventually become two. I also encourage your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to explore ways to support All Saints Academy Catholic School as a Regional Catholic School for your **PARTNERSHIP**. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Francis, Aviston / St. Rose, St. Rose / St. Felicitas, Beaver Prairie

Reverend Daniel L. Friedman / Reverend Edward F. Schaefer / Sister Diane M. Turner, S.S.N.D., Parish Life Coordinator

I appreciate the serious effort that you have put into developing your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. I am encouraged by the cooperative spirit that has led you to engage in a number of pastoral activities in a unified way. I think you should aggressively look for additional ways that you can reduce duplication and triplication of pastoral activities. Your proposed **MODEL** anticipates that the three parishes will each maintain its own Parish Pastoral Council, religious education program, etc. Then you would superimpose another level of organization and staff sharing for the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. I do not think this is a wise course of action. I must ask you to revisit your **MODEL**, keeping in mind your mandate. The three parishes will become two, under the leadership of a single priest, sharing a closely coordinated vision and mission. Please begin by studying which activities that now take place separately in each parish can be joined together, including all forms of religious education and sacramental formation. Experiment with joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils, a shared parish bulletin, and shared committee structures.

Your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has a special, seemingly insurmountable challenge which you state clearly. The limited capacity of your church buildings would seem to require that a single priest would need to celebrate five Sunday and Vigil Masses each week in order to accommodate the faithful who currently attend Mass at your three parishes. Other dioceses have faced this challenge, especially in mission territories where one priest sometimes serves 90,000 Catholics with one church and thirty mission stations and the help of lay ecclesial ministers. I think you are being called to think outside of the box. In order to explore solutions to this very real problem, develop a **MODEL** that could be implemented in the medium term (3 to 5 years). For example, you might consider an expansion or reconfiguration of existing space of one of your churches in order to maximize capacity. Alternatively, a dignified setting for the Sunday Eucharist might be created in a gymnasium or other setting that would allow for increased capacity at a principal Mass of the week. I would be the first to agree that it is far better to worship in a “sacred space” so designated. But the day may soon be at hand when you or those who come after you will have no other choice. This would certainly be the case if you are required to reduce the number of church buildings from three to two. You must bring an unselfish and sacrificial attitude to the task of envisioning the best way to reorganize your communities of faith in the way that is best

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for the Catholic Church to flourish in Aviston, St. Rose, and Beaver Prairie for years to come. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Bernard, Albers / St. Damian, St. Damiansville

Reverend John J. Joyce / Reverend John J. Joyce

St. Bernard Parish and St. Damian Parish have been functioning, to a certain degree, as a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** for many years, under the leadership of several individual Pastors. As I have said before, however, every parish in the Diocese will eventually feel the impact of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. I have the impression from a variety of sources that these parishes have become somewhat less vital in recent years. I did not see strong expressions of efforts at renewal in your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. I am aware that the Deacon has been exercising a special degree of leadership in these communities of faith. I now ask that the Pastor, Deacon and lay leaders renew their enthusiasm and dedication. Call forth additional lay leaders for the work of revitalization. Please begin by studying which activities that now take place separately in each parish can be joined together, including all forms of religious education and sacramental formation. Experiment with joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils, a shared parish bulletin, and shared committee structures.

I ask the parishes of St. Bernard Parish and St. Damian Parish to **expand** your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** with more details and specifics concerning the ways in which you are moving toward greater collaboration and the embrace of a shared mission and coordinated ministry. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Mary, Centralia / St. Lawrence, Sandoval

Reverend Justin Olisaemeka / Reverend Monsignor James A. Buerster

St. Mary Parish and St. Lawrence Parish have been served by only one priest for some time. You indicate the various positive steps you have taken to work in closer harmony. You have joint Parish Pastoral Councils and Finance Councils. I now instruct you to follow the proposals in your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**: adjust the Mass schedule to reduce to three Vigil and Sunday Masses. Set up specific programs to encourage shared social and outreach activities. Be vigilant about the status of your school at St. Mary Parish. Make every effort to secure its stability for the long term.

Father Justin Olisaemeka, a *fidei donum* missionary priest from the Archdiocese of Onitsha, Nigeria, has generously served you for the past seven years. In July, that service will

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come to an end. We happily thank him for sharing his many gifts with our Local Church. It is my intention to send Father Dale Maxfield to you to succeed Father Olisaemeka. It will be for all of the Christian Faithful to help him learn the needs of the parish and aggressively continue to implement the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. He must keep before his eyes your mandate. Not only are you to be served by one priest, but also you are to actively study the possibility of becoming one parish.

Concerning St. Mary School, I strongly encourage everyone to continue the support of the school and efforts to increase enrollment and fundraising. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Theresa of Avila, Salem / St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Kinmundy
Reverend Robert J. Zwilling / Reverend Robert J. Zwilling

St. Theresa of Avila Parish and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish have had a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** structure prior to the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. Since the promulgation of the **PLAN**, your Pastor, Father Zwilling, has guided you to a greater level of collaboration in many of the ministries in your communities. Your two small parishes in close proximity must now go even further. Since you will be receiving Father Larry Lemay as your new Pastor, it is imperative that as many agreed upon changes as possible should be put in place while Father Zwilling is still present. This will make the ministry of Father Lemay easier. It will be for him to press forward with even more areas of shared structures, ministries, committees and communications. The reality of the state of the Church in your communities makes it necessary for you to develop a realistic projection of the manner in which you can fulfill your mandate to examine the possibility of becoming one parish with a single mission and vision. Please continue to pursue your 5-year plan regarding the viability of your parish school. I am pleased that you hope to reach the 40% support goal indicated in the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Ann, Nashville / Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Posen
Reverend Andrew J. Knopik / Reverend Bernard C. Goedde, Jr.

St. Ann Parish and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish have made rather modest proposals for their **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. I am concerned the elements in your **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** are not sufficiently forward looking for the long-term. Your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** continues to propose maintaining two separate parishes. You suggest this can be accomplished by working out a Mass schedule that could be feasible when you have only one priest. You further suggest that each parish will retain its own Parish Pastoral

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Council, Finance Council and other key parish committees. You indicate that it will be necessary to create additional structures for coordination between the two parishes.

I do not think this is adequate. The day when you will be served by only one priest may not be far away. Prior to that date, it is necessary for you to develop a response to my mandate that you explore the possibility of becoming one parish, even if that structural change does not happen for some time. I urge you to consider a greater sharing of church life and mission over time, and to reconsider how your Council and committee structures might best promote that unity while being of real assistance to the priest who will serve you. Please begin by studying which activities that now take place separately in each parish can be joined together, including all forms of religious education and sacramental formation. Experiment with joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils, a shared parish bulletin, and shared committee structures. This should be accomplished while both current Pastors are still in place. Otherwise, I fear a heavy burden will be placed on the shoulders of the Pastor who inherits the neighboring parish.

Concerning St. Ann School, I strongly encourage everyone to continue the support of the school and efforts to increase enrollment and fundraising. I also encourage your **PARTNERSHIP** to pursue a long term plan to become a Regional Catholic School for your neighboring **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Barbara, Okawville / St. Anthony, Lively Grove

Reverend John J. Joyce

Only time will tell whether or not the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** of St. Barbara Parish and St. Anthony Parish will be able to remain as distinct parishes. Your new pastor should guide you through a very serious examination of this question. Your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** suggesting that you maintain two distinct parish identities served by only one priest is acceptable for the present. However, a shared Mass schedule, separate Parish Pastoral Councils, governance committees, and religious education programs may not be wise for the long run. While it may be difficult, you must begin to think more realistically about the future. Please examine your rather modest **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** and determine which activities that now take place separately in each parish can be joined together, including all forms of religious education and sacramental formation. Experiment with joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils, a shared parish bulletin, shared committee structures. The **PASTORAL PLAN** challenges all parishes to be bolder in facing the future. The comfortable parochialism of the past is inadequate for the present and the future.

Now that I am appointing Father Steven Poole as Pastor of both parishes, in accord with **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**, I must insist that you move toward

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a far greater level of cooperation in order to fulfill the mission entrusted to your communities of faith in the new structure of **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Charles Borromeo, DuBois / St. Michael, Radom

Reverend Oliver Nwachukwu / Reverend Dale A. Maxfield

St. Charles Borromeo Parish and St. Michael Parish is a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to which I have given a clear mandate. You are to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by which you will be able to be served by only one priest. Indeed, it is my intention to appoint Father Oliver Nwachukwu as Pastor of St. Michael Parish, in accord with the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. For this reason, I now ask you to outline in detail the way in which this arrangement would work for your parishes. I urge you to expand your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** in a way that will allow for even greater collaboration and a more profound sharing of church life and mission between the people of St. Charles Borromeo Parish and St. Michael Parish. I realize that this will be a challenge because each parish has a unique history and traditions. Nevertheless, this must be done. Please begin by studying which activities that now take place separately in each parish can be joined together, including all forms of religious education and sacramental formation. Perhaps a shared **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** bulletin? Experiment with joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils and shared committee structures. Please review your Mass schedule. Try to allow at least two hours between the starting times of all Vigil and Sunday Masses. Look ahead to next year's Christmas and Holy Week schedule. What if only one priest is available? Can you accommodate one Triduum celebration, alternating Churches during the three days? As you know, some parishes are already doing this. Developing this new arrangement will be a challenge, for a variety of reasons. But it is a challenge I urge you to face. A greater sharing of church life in your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** will require close cooperation for the sake of the renewed evangelization in southern Illinois. I encourage your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to continue support for St. Ann Catholic Elementary School so it will be viewed as a Regional Catholic School for your **PARTNERSHIP**. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Mary, Mt. Vernon / St. Barbara, Scheller

Very Reverend John C. Iffert, V.F. / Reverend Dale A. Maxfield

St. Mary Parish and St. Barbara Parish, like several others in your Vicariate, have a mandate from me to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** for your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** by which you will be able to be served by only one priest. Indeed, it is my intention to appoint Father Iffert, V.F., as Pastor of St. Barbara Parish, in accord with the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR**

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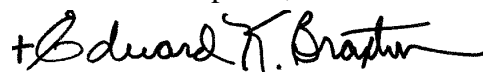
THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING. For this reason, I now ask you to outline in detail the way in which this arrangement would work for your parishes.

How can you facilitate even greater collaboration and a more profound sharing of church life and mission between the people of St. Mary Parish and St. Barbara Parish? I realize that this will be a challenge because each parish has a unique history and traditions. Nevertheless, this must be done. Please begin by studying which activities that now take place separately in each parish can be joined together, including all forms of religious education and sacramental formation. Perhaps a shared **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** bulletin? Experiment with joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils and shared committee structures. Please review your Mass schedule. Try to allow at least two hours between the starting times of all Vigil and Sunday Masses. Look ahead to next year's Christmas and Holy Week schedule. What if only one priest is available? Can you accommodate one Triduum celebration, alternating Churches during the three days? As you know, some parishes are already doing this. Developing this new arrangement will be a challenge, for a variety of reasons. But it is a challenge I urge you to face. As you revisit your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** with a focus on greater collaboration and unity, I invite you to consider seriously the possibility that in the future your two parishes might become one, even though that is not in your mandate.

Concerning St. Mary School, I strongly encourage everyone to continue the support of the school and efforts to increase enrollment and fundraising. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

Be at peace,



BISHOP

THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

THE LETTER TO THE WEST VICARIATE

Dear Father Wojcik,

Dear Priests, Deacons, Religious, and the Christian Faithful of the West Vicariate:

Peace be with you!

I will now turn from these general observations in order to speak to the situation of each parish in the Vicariate and to provide directions concerning the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** submitted by **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** for my consideration.

Mary Help of Christians / St. Mary Divine Maternity, Ellis Grove

Very Reverend Eugene H. Wojcik, V.F. / Reverend Benjamin J. Stern

Mary Help of Christians Parish and St. Mary Divine Maternity Parish have a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** that has focused in a special way on supporting and maintaining St. Mary Catholic School in Chester. This is a critical effort for the continuance of a regional Catholic Elementary School educating young people from both communities and beyond. Now, because of the mandate you have received from me, the leadership of the parishes has developed a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that anticipates the day when you will be served by only one priest. It is important for you to note the experiences of other parishes where the need to move from two priests was necessitated suddenly, without warning. Do not delay in adapting your Mass schedules for Sundays and Holy Days. You should also explore the possibility of sharing Holy Week services. Experiment with models of combined Triduum Liturgies, perhaps alternating church locations. When there is only one priest, it will be virtually impossible for him to duplicate Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil Liturgies. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal tells us: "If the celebration of the Passion of the Lord on the following Friday does not take place in the same church, the [Holy Thursday] Mass is concluded in the usual way and the Blessed Sacrament is placed in the tabernacle." You may want to re-think your schedule in order for the faithful to experience the Transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament to an altar of repose and the opportunity to continue adoration before the Blessed Sacrament for a suitable length of time on Holy Thursday night.

If you make this change, keep in mind that other prayer and devotional services such as Stations of the Cross and the Liturgy of the Hours can be provided at the other church. These can even be led by one of the faithful. It is important to note that these devotions do not take place at the same time of the Triduum services, nor are they a substitute for them.

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Please work together in the creation of a joint bulletin and website; combining Confirmation and other sacramental preparation programs, including a regional Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults; and joining parish youth groups. There is wisdom in your plans to explore, before the time of need, the manner in which two parishes will provide financial support of one priest and shared staff members. Depending how the ministry is divided, this may not always be a simple fifty-fifty arrangement.

I am aware that in the past history of the two parishes there have been differences and disagreements. For this reason, it would be advantageous for the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to place a high priority on maintaining joint leadership meetings, especially of your parish Pastoral Councils and social outreach committees. Please make a deliberate effort to plan social and educational events that bring parishioners from both parishes together. By increasing opportunities for the parishioners to join together to get to know each other better, you will make it easier for them to begin to work together with respect and in a collaborative spirit. Revisit your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** and work out the details of how you will conduct a joint Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults for your own **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** and with nearby **PARTNERSHIPS** as well. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Boniface, Evansville / St. Pius V, Walsh / Our Lady of Lourdes, Sparta / St. Joseph, Willisville

Reverend Benjamin J. Stern / Reverend John Agbasiere, S.M.M.M. / Reverend John Agbasiere, S.M.M.M. / Reverend Leo J. Hayes

St. Boniface Parish, St. Pius V Parish, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, and St. Joseph Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** with important interaction with the neighboring **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** of St. Mary Divine Maternity Parish and Mary Help of Christians Parish discussed above. There is also a significant connection with the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** of St. Andrew Parish, St. Elizabeth Parish, and St. Ann Parish discussed below. This is clearly due to the overlap of Pastors. However, there are also differing understandings of the scope and ultimate implications of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**, and other factors. While I have followed all of the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** discussions with interest, I have been particularly attentive to these two **PARTNERSHIPS** because of my knowledge of particular challenges posed by the configuration of these parishes and the various communications that I have received from different participants in your conversations which have been, at times, rather difficult. Aware of the good faith and the good intentions of all involved, the Vicar General and I are aware that certain fundamental differences can only be resolved by decisions made at a level higher than the local parish leadership. We are prepared to make those decisions. We can see no

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way forward that disregards my clear mandate that you begin to prepare for the day when these four parishes will become two, served by one priest.

I want to encourage your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to strongly consider supporting and maintaining St. John Catholic Elementary School so that it will be viewed as a Regional Catholic Elementary School that benefits several **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**.

I commend the pastoral leadership shown in the efforts to begin the process for the eventual presence of only one priest in the **PARTNERSHIP**. You should begin immediately the work of establishing joint Confirmation and other sacramental opportunities among the parishes, including the merger of Pre-Cana and marriage preparation programs, and the creation of new forms of communication among the parishes (i.e., a joint parish bulletin, a **PARTNERSHIP** directory, if possible, a combined **PARTNERSHIP** website).

Regretfully, the single page, large print “**FINAL STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**” submitted to the Vicar General is not final at all. Indeed, it is completely inadequate and completely unacceptable. Though the document contains the signatures of two of the three pastoral leaders in the **PARTNERSHIP**, (Reverend John Agbasiere, S.M.M.M. name is absent). I am well aware that it does NOT represent a consensus. In many ways, it simply preserves the *status quo* and places unrealistic and unnecessary burdens on the shoulders of one priest. The sentence at the end of the so-called “**STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**” (“Training of a good priest may be required for this to work smoothly!”) is certainly an understatement!

Each of your four parishes has long histories and cherished traditions. Many of the Christian faithful have a loyalty to and a love for their individual parishes. We must be sensitive to this parochial affection. However, barring some completely unforeseeable development, the long-term future of these four communities is two parishes served by one priest. This need not come about immediately, but it must be planned for especially as transitions take place in pastoral leadership. I must, therefore, direct you to begin anew to develop an authentic and acceptable **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** with only two parish sites. The first of these should be Our Lady of Lourdes, which is the largest and strongest parish and anchor to neighboring communities. The second should almost certainly be St. Boniface, because of its size and location, even though there are concerns about indebtedness and needed expensive repairs on the church steeple. Initially, St. Pius V and St. Joseph might remain open as chapels of the nearest parish, particularly to accommodate funerals. The final determination about the future of these sites would be made at a later date. This will only come about after the conversation with the Faithful of these parishes is reopened with a clearer explanation of the dire situation the Diocese

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will be facing in the very near future with the number of priests in active ministry declining significantly.

Because of the largely unfruitful conversations up to this point in your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**, you may be concerned that a reopened consultation will not lead to progress. That would be unfortunate. However, if that is the case, it may be necessary for the parish leadership to meet with me and the Vicar General in order to facilitate the dialogue. If that is not helpful, other measures may have to be taken. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Andrew, Murphysboro / St. Elizabeth, Ava / St. Ann, Raddle

Reverend Gary P. Gummersheimer / Reverend Leo J. Hayes / Reverend Leo J. Hayes

Because of a certain overlap of this **PARTNERSHIP** with the above **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** of St. Boniface Parish in Evansville, St. Pius V Parish in Walsh, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Sparta and St. Joseph Parish in Willisville, I am addressing you here, out of the sequence of my **FORMAL RESPONSE TO THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. Much of what I have said above applies to the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** of St. Andrew Parish, St. Elizabeth Parish, and St. Ann Parish. Therefore, I will not repeat it here.

Thank you for the efforts being made to support St. Andrew Catholic School. This generosity and hard work make it possible to maintain and continue a regional Catholic Elementary School in the area that benefits several **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS**. I commend the pastoral leadership shown in your efforts to attempt to begin the process for the eventual presence of only one priest in the partnership. In particular, I am grateful for the joint meetings which have been held during the past year.

Concerning the so-called “**FINAL STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**” submitted to the Vicar General, I must say, as I said above, it is not final at all. Indeed, it is completely inadequate and completely unacceptable. Short of sharing a priest and the financial support of a priest, there is little evidence that other joint attempts at renewal and restructuring have been discussed and recommended. The proposal to keep three separate parish sites, maintaining St. Andrew Parish, St. Elizabeth Parish, and St. Ann Parish, is not viable. In the future, when only one priest is to be assigned, it will be unrealistic to presume that the pastoral obligations can be properly divided among the different locations. We can see no way forward that disregards my clear mandate that you begin to prepare for the day when these three parishes will become two, served by one priest.

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I now direct the Pastors and the parish leadership of the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to read the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** with fresh eyes. Reevaluate the suggestion contrary to my mandate to maintain three parish sites. St. Andrew Parish is obviously the anchor of this **PARTNERSHIP**. One of the remaining two parishes should almost certainly become a chapel, for the time being. This action may further necessitate the reopening of a dialogue on other pertinent issues for the renewal including a re-evaluation of a Mass schedule and other joint opportunities in the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**.

Because of the largely unfruitful conversations up to this point in your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**, you may be concerned that a reopened consultation will not lead to progress. That would be unfortunate. However, if that is the case, it may be necessary for the parish leadership to meet with me and the Vicar General in order to facilitate the dialogue. If that is not helpful, other measures may have to be taken. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. John the Baptist, Red Bud / St. Patrick, Ruma / Adorers of the Blood of Christ Convent / St. Joseph, Prairie du Rocher

Reverend Monsignor Dennis R. Schaefer/ Reverend Monsignor Dennis R. Schaefer / Reverend Monsignor Daniel J. Jurek / Reverend Monsignor Daniel J. Jurek

The **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** of St. John the Baptist Parish, St. Patrick Parish, Adorers of the Blood of Christ Convent, and St. Joseph Parish have already successfully implemented an important aspect of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** by following my mandate and expanding the boundaries of St. Joseph Parish to embrace the families of the former parish of St. Leo in Modoc. This was accomplished in a very positive manner due to the pastoral leadership of Monsignor Daniel Jurek and the cooperation of the People of God. As a result, two of the parishes in your **PARTNERSHIP** are now one.

I note the positive efforts in the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** to bring about greater collaboration between St. John the Baptist Parish and St. Patrick Parish. I encourage even greater efforts such as joint forms of communication (e.g., creating common calendars and link websites). Is it possible to have joint sacramental programs, youth activities, and religious education programs for adults and children? These efforts would strengthen the pastoral and sacramental life of the **PARTNERSHIP**. Careful attention should be given to the demographics and size of the Catholic community at St. Patrick in order to discern future directions. The two priests serving these parishes must always keep in mind the pastoral needs of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ Convent in working out new Mass schedules and other pastoral activities. Your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** seems to be progressing well with its **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. Please do not

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become complacent. Remain vigilant and attentive to additional ways in which the Church in your area can be strengthened and renewed. St. John the Baptist, St. Patrick, and St. Joseph have a parish partnership that is focused in a special way on supporting and maintaining St. John the Baptist Catholic School in Red Bud. This is a critical effort for the continuance of a Regional Catholic Elementary School educating young people from both communities and beyond.

Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.

St. Bruno, Pinckneyville / St. Mary Magdalen, Todd's Mill

Reverend Augustine Ibezimako / Reverend Bernard C. Goedde, Jr.

St. Bruno Parish and St. Mary Magdalen Parish have been successful in maintaining St. Bruno Catholic School. This has assured the continued presence of a regional Catholic Elementary School for your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. I note with appreciation the significant pastoral leadership shown in your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. This is of the greatest importance since Father Ibezimako, a *fidei donum* missionary priest from the Archdiocese of Onitsha, Nigeria could be asked by his Archbishop to return to Nigeria, if the need arises. You must keep your eye on my mandate and work out specific details concerning how this **PARTNERSHIP** will be served by only one priest. To this end, you must prepare a workable area-wide Mass Schedule for Sundays and Holy Days. It is important for you to note the experiences of other parishes where the need to move from two priests was necessitated suddenly, without warning. Do not delay in adapting your Mass schedules for Sundays and Holy Days. You should also explore the possibility of sharing Holy Week services. Experiment with models of combined Triduum Liturgies, perhaps alternating church locations. When there is only one priest, it will be impossible for him to duplicate Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil Liturgies. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal tells us: "If the celebration of the Passion of the Lord on the following Friday does not take place in the same church, the [Holy Thursday] Mass is concluded in the usual way and the Blessed Sacrament is placed in the tabernacle." You may want to re-think your schedule in order for the faithful to experience the Transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament to an altar of repose and the opportunity to continue adoration before the Blessed Sacrament for a suitable length of time on Holy Thursday night.

Pursue combining Confirmation formation, Reconciliation, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a shared Parish School of Religion, Adult Education opportunities, and Vacation Bible School. When possible, have joint social and recreational events. If this is feasible, it has the potential of strengthening and renewing the pastoral and sacramental life of your **PARTNERSHIP**. In this way, the people in the two parishes will come to know each other better which will be a real advantage when there is only one priest. In addition, the decision to combine resources by

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having one **PARTNERSHIP** secretary and a shared bookkeeper is an effective use of resources. It is of utmost importance for the **PARTNERSHIP** to continue to sponsor joint leadership meetings. At the present, you are proposing to maintain two Parish Pastoral Councils with one representative attending the Council's meetings of the other parish. I have reservations about the effectiveness of this arrangement. Please revisit this suggestion and at least experiment with occasional joint Parish Pastoral Council meetings. When you have only one priest available, a joint Council meeting will be essential. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

Sacred Heart of Jesus, DuQuoin / Immaculate Conception, Tamaroa

Reverend Joseph O. Oganda / Reverend Oliver Nwachukwu

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish and Immaculate Conception Parish have a mandate from me to work now on a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that spells out in a detailed manner how the parishes can function if they were to be served by only one priest. (Indeed, I will soon be appointing Father Joseph O. Oganda to assume the Pastorate of Immaculate Conception while retaining his position at Sacred Heart Parish.) More than that, you have been charged to give serious consideration to the possibility of one day becoming one parish. While this is something you and your parishioners may hope will not happen, we know that it could very well happen. Keep in mind that Father Oliver Nwachukwu is a *fidei donum* missionary priest from Nigeria, serving at the pleasure of his superiors.

You must keep your eye on my mandate and work out specific details concerning how this **PARTNERSHIP** will be served by only one priest. To this end, you must prepare a workable area-wide Mass Schedule for Sundays and Holy Days. It is important for you to note the experiences of other parishes where the need to move from two priests was necessitated suddenly, without warning. You should also explore the possibility of sharing Holy Week services. Experiment with models of combined Triduum Liturgies, perhaps alternating church locations. When there is only one priest, it will be virtually impossible for him to duplicate Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil Liturgies. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal tells us: "If the celebration of the Passion of the Lord on the following Friday does not take place in the same church, the [Holy Thursday] Mass is concluded in the usual way and the Blessed Sacrament is placed in the tabernacle." You may want to re-think your schedule in order for the faithful to experience the Transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament to an altar of repose and the opportunity to continue adoration before the Blessed Sacrament for a suitable length of time on Holy Thursday night.

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I appreciate the efforts you made in supporting St. Bruno Catholic School. By doing so, you provide assurance of the continuation of a regional Catholic Elementary School for your **PARTNERSHIP** and beyond. I commend the significant pastoral leadership shown in the efforts to begin the process for the eventual presence of only one priest in the partnership. Particularly, the work accomplished in the following areas: the creation of a joint bulletin, combining Confirmation and sacramental programs, joining parish youth groups, and harmonizing Parish Pastoral Councils and Finance Councils. All of these will strengthen the pastoral and sacramental life of your **PARTNERSHIP**. It would be advantageous for the partnership to continue to work on continued joint leadership meetings and to increase opportunities for the parishioners to join together to get to know each other better. You must review your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** and make sure that your **PARTNERSHIP** formulates a specific plan on how best to share a common staff and to develop a fiscal plan for the manner in which the parishes will share the financial support of a single priest and an overlapping staff. You may rightly assume that you will not need these structures in the immediate future. Nevertheless, you need to know what you will do when you do need it. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Francis Xavier Parish, Carbondale / Newman Catholic Student Center, Carbondale **Reverend Robert B. Flannery / Reverend Larry A. Lemay / Mr. Timothy Taylor**

St. Francis Xavier Parish and the Blessed Cardinal Newman Catholic Student Center constitute a unique **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. The two communities, though neighbors, are not both parishes. Having served as the pastor of a large suburban parish and as Director of Calvert House, the Catholic Student Center at the University of Chicago, I am keenly aware of the differences.

Your mandate from me is to determine a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that will demonstrate how you can be served by only one priest. I know that this is not an easy mandate to fulfill. A few individuals have written to me expressing their view that this would be a good idea and that both places would be strengthened by one strong leader at the helm. These writers have always neglected to tell me how we would serve Holy Spirit Parish in Carterville, which has usually shared a priest with the Newman Center.

I appreciate the efforts being made by St. Francis Xavier to support attendance at St. Andrew Catholic School in Murphysboro, thus assisting in the continued presence of a regional Catholic Elementary School. The parish's efforts in maintaining a joint Parish School of Religion Program with St. Andrew Parish is also worthy of note.

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I commend the significant pastoral leadership shown in the efforts being made to prepare for the future joining of St. Francis Xavier Parish and the Newman Catholic Student Center with one full-time priest. Particularly, the preparations made in updating the area Mass Schedules, joint Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, joint Reconciliation, Pre-Cana and Youth Ministry programs, and a joint Business Manager/bookkeeper/health insurance coordinator. These initiatives allow for greater renewal and availability of resources and efficient use of personnel. It would be advantageous to continue to sponsor joint leadership meetings and to increase the opportunities for the parishioners and the leadership of the Newman Catholic Student Center to get to know one another better. Please continue to work on specific details regarding the position of a joint business manager/bookkeeper/health insurance coordinator. This position clearly allows for an efficient use of financial resources for the **PARTNERSHIP**.

It would be wise for the **PARTNERSHIP** to continue to work on continued joint leadership meetings, and increased opportunities for the Christian Faithful and staff to join together at social events that would allow them to get to know each other better. If a way can be found to bring these two ministries together, the spacious rectory at St. Francis Xavier has the potential of being used in creative new ways. This **PARTNERSHIP** can only find a path to full realization by being in conversation with Holy Spirit Parish. Now that Holy Spirit Parish is in a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** with Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Herrin, that dialogue may eventually have an impact on your current arrangement. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Mary, Anna / St. Joseph, Cobden

Reverend Federico Higuera / Reverend Uriel Salamanca Cipagauta

St. Mary Parish and St. Joseph Parish have very different histories and “personalities.” One thing the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has in common, however, is the ever increasing Hispanic Catholic population in the area. We are fortunate to have two native Spanish speaking priests to serve them. We are particularly grateful for the presence of Father Salamanca, a *fidei donum* missionary priest from the Diocese of Engativá, Bogotá, Colombia. You face particular challenges because, while caring for the unique, sometimes urgent, pastoral needs of those for whom Spanish is the native language, you must also provide dedicated pastoral care to the English speaking members of your parish communities. This is not always easy.

I am very aware that at the time the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING** was being developed, St. Mary Parish experienced very severe tension associated with the service and the departure of a long-serving member of the parish staff. I received a considerable number of letters from parishioners expressing completely opposite

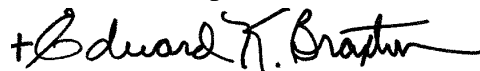
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opinions about what happened during this difficult transition. Some were eager to lay all of the blame at the feet of one person or another. Others said there had been a clash of personalities and leadership styles. Still others faulted me for not entering into the internal affairs of the parish and determining who was “right” and who was “wrong.” I mention this not to open still healing wounds. I do so because I know this difficult situation has had an impact on both parishes and it has resulted in some parishioners changing parish affiliation. It is my hope that this distressing experience will not undermine the effort on the part of your **PARTNERSHIP** to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** to prepare for the day when you will be served by only one priest.

I commend the pastoral leadership shown in the efforts being made to fashion a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that prepares for the day when, according to my mandate, your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** will be served by only one priest. Particularly, the preparations made in updating the area Mass Schedules, combining the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and sacramental programs, joining parish youth groups and Vacation Bible School, and the efforts to create common forms of communication including a joint Parish Directory. It is of the utmost importance for the **PARTNERSHIP** to continue to sponsor joint leadership meetings and to increase opportunities for the parishioners to join together to get to know each other better. At the present, you are proposing to maintain two Parish Pastoral Councils. I have reservations about the effectiveness of this arrangement. Please revisit this suggestion and at least experiment with occasional joint Parish Pastoral Council meetings. When you have only one priest available, a joint Parish Pastoral Council meeting will be essential. Please work diligently to develop common sources of communication for the **PARTNERSHIP**, such as joint parish bulletins, directories, and websites. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

Be at peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward T. Braxton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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THE LETTER TO THE SOUTH VICARIATE

Dear Msgr. Flach,

Dear Priests, Deacons, Religious, Parish Life Coordinators, and the Christian Faithful of the South Vicariate:

Peace be with you!

I will now turn from these general observations in order to speak to the situation of each parish in the Vicariate and to provide directions concerning the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** submitted by **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** for my consideration.

St. Joseph, Benton / St. Andrew, Christopher / St. Mary, Sesser

Reverend Joseph L. Trapp / Reverend Peter D. Balili / Reverend Peter D. Balili

St Joseph Parish, St. Andrew Parish, and St. Mary Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** with a mandate from me to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that prepares for the day when your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** will be served by only one priest. This is a challenging mandate for several reasons. The three parishes have distinct histories and personalities and the Christian faithful are deeply invested in their individual parish. Many of the Christian Faithful do not have significant social contact with parishioners from the other two parishes. In the past, there has been some tension between individuals in the parish communities as certain pastoral difficulties were being addressed. Father Joseph Trapp, who has served long past the usual retirement age, has announced his intention to retire next year. And Father Balili, a *fidei donum* missionary priest from the Diocese of Tagbilaran in the Philippines, could be called back to his home Diocese at any time his Bishop wishes. This situation necessarily creates a degree of uncertainty because it is not possible to know who will guide the process of determining how you will be served by one priest and assist your **PARTNERSHIP** in examining the related difficult question about the long-term need for three separate worship sites.

While these questions are difficult, I appreciate the efforts you have made so far in your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**. You are working on a realistic Mass schedule for Sundays, Holy Days, Christmas, and Holy Week. (I am not sure this schedule will be sustainable by one priest.) If your **PARTNERSHIP** is to be successful, it is imperative for you to have regular meetings of the leadership of all three parishes. The fact that you have created by-laws for your **PARTNERSHIP** meetings and established a seniors' transportation "call list" indicates that you are thinking of very practical ways to move forward.

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You should also be considering ways to increase opportunities for the parishioners to join together to get to know each other better. You should examine your Parish Pastoral Council's meeting schedule. I urge you to begin having occasional joint Parish Pastoral Council meetings. In this way, the three communities will become more knowledgeable of members of neighboring parishes. When you have only one priest available, a joint Parish Pastoral Council meeting will be essential. Please work diligently to develop common sources of communication for the **PARTNERSHIP**, such as joint parish bulletins, directories, and websites. The fact that you do not know who your future leaders may be should not be used as rationale to maintain the *status quo*. While we do not know when or how, we do know that the realities of your situation dictate that your pastoral structures will be changing. The more you do now to prepare for the future, the better it will be. It is important for you to note the experiences of other parishes where the need to move from two priests was necessitated suddenly, without warning.

Since the completion of this Vicariate Letter, we have experienced the unexpected departure of Father Balili from his position as Administrator of St. Andrew Parish and St. Mary Parish. Unfortunately, this has created a critical situation for this **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. It is premature to say when and how this unfortunate situation will be resolved. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. John the Baptist, West Frankfort / St. Aloysius-Sacred Heart, Royalton-Zeigler **Reverend Sean M. Palas / Reverend Sean M. Palas**

Many years before the publication of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**, St. John the Baptist Parish and St. Aloysius-Sacred Heart Parish were already living in a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. With wisdom and foresight, the People of God guided by their Pastors realized that the only way in which these three small parishes could survive was by combining two parishes (St. Aloysius and Sacred Heart) and bringing them together with St. John the Baptist under the leadership of one priest. This arrangement has led to combining and sharing a variety of ministries. My mandate to you is to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that will bring the parishes together in even greater collaboration.

I urge your continued support for St. John Catholic Elementary School. I encourage the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** to examine thoroughly the long term future of the school as part of your revisiting the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**.

Do not think that simply because you have long been two parishes served by one priest that your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** has been realized. This is not the case. Indeed, the fact that you have been in this arrangement for sometime may have led to a sense that there is no need to move to closer forms of collaboration. But in truth there is an urgent need for you to do so. We never know

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when our pastoral leaders may experience health or personal challenges that diminish their ability to be fully present and to lead and guide their parishes. You have had this experience during the past year. I know well that it has been a difficult and uncertain time. I am deeply appreciative of the support and cooperation that you have given your Pastor. I regret that I am not able to tell you what the long-term provision for your parishes will be.

I understand that, due to the circumstances, your parishes were not able to submit a fully developed **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by December 31, 2013. I am pleased with the accomplishments and future directions for the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** that were briefly stated in your September 15, 2013 initial draft. It is my hope that you will proceed to develop a more complete **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by November 10, 2014. This can be done by the Parish Pastoral Council leadership. Please begin by studying which activities that now take place separately in each parish can be joined together, including all forms of religious education and sacramental formation. Experiment with joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils, a shared parish bulletin (if you do not already have one), and shared committee structures. Please review your Mass schedule. Try to allow at least two hours between the starting times of all Vigil and Sunday Masses. Look ahead to next year's Christmas and Holy Week schedule. When only one priest is available, have you worked out the best way to celebrate the Sacred Triduum celebration?

I am confident that you will continue to support the good efforts of your communities of faith. Together, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and the cooperation of one another, I trust that you will persevere even in the face of the unknown future. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Joseph, Marion / St. Paul, Johnston City

Reverend Monsignor Thomas D. Flach, V.F. / Sister Catherine Wellinghoff, A.S.C., Parish Life Coordinator

St. Joseph Parish and St. Paul Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** with a mandate from me to build on your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** of two parishes served by one priest and to bring the parishes closer together in greater collaboration. Your proposal for a schedule for Sunday Masses, Holy Days, Christmas, and Holy Week are a helpful move in the right direction. However, you must be looking further down the road for long-term arrangements. What, for example, do the demographics and population shifts in Johnston City suggest about the probable size of St. Paul Parish in fifteen years? How would the ministry, administration, and social life of the parishes need to be restructured if, at some future date, there was no Parish Life Coordinator at St. Paul and no outside priest available for Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist?

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You should also be considering ways to increase opportunities for the parishioners to join together for spiritual and recreational events to get to know each other better. You should examine your Parish Pastoral Council's meeting schedule. I urge you to begin having occasional joint Parish Pastoral Council meetings. In this way, the two communities will become more knowledgeable of members of neighboring parishes. If the day comes that there is no Parish Life Coordinator at St. Paul Parish, a joint Parish Pastoral Council meeting will be essential. Please work diligently to develop common sources of communication for the **PARTNERSHIP**, such as joint parish bulletins, directories, and websites.

I appreciate the efforts you have made in supporting Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic School. By doing so, you provide assurance of the continuation of a Regional Catholic Elementary School for your partnership and beyond. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Herrin / Holy Spirit, Carterville

Reverend Monsignor Kenneth J. Schaefer / Sister Carol Karnitsky, S.S.C.M., Parish Life Coordinator

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish and Holy Spirit Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** with a mandate from me to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL NOW** of two parishes served by one priest. It is important for you to review your proposed **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** with this in mind. You are fortunate that, in recent years, I have been able to assign a priest to serve at the Cardinal Newman Catholic Student Center who has also served as a Sacramental Minister at Holy Spirit Parish. However, this arrangement could change at any time. Your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** should reflect an appreciation of this.

Your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**, like one or two others, has a special, seemingly insurmountable challenge. The limited capacity of your churches does not allow you to change from four to three Sunday Masses. Therefore, you propose maintaining your four Mass schedule for the present. Depending on the priest, this could be a difficult schedule for one priest. Other dioceses have faced this challenge, especially in mission territories where one priest sometimes serves 90,000 Catholics with one church and thirty mission stations and the help of lay ecclesial ministers. Looking to the future, you may find the need to think outside of the box in order to explore solutions to this problem. For example, could a dignified setting for the Sunday Eucharist be created in a gymnasium or other setting that would allow for increased capacity at a principal Mass of the week? I would be the first to agree that it is far better to worship in a "sacred space" so designated. But the day may come when you or those who come after you will have no other choice. You must bring an unselfish and sacrificial attitude to the task of envisioning the best way to reorganize your communities of

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faith in a way that is best for the Catholic Church to flourish. Even if you maintain four Masses, there is still a need to develop workable schedules for Christmas and Holy Week, which I do not see.

Both parishes seem to be thriving communities of faith. Indeed, Our Lady of Mount Carmel has embarked on a new school building project. I am pleased with the regional support provided for Our Lady of Mount Carmel School by St. Joseph in Marion and St. Paul V in Johnston City. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish should not lose sight of the goal of reducing your school subsidy to no more than 40% of the parish income.

Your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** seems to have a generous and involved lay participation. This lay ecclesial ministry bodes well for the future. I note especially the number of coordinated faith formation and outreach programs. However, I do not see any indication of dialogue about shared parish governance. There may be wisdom in having joint parish Pastoral Council meetings several times a year. I urge you to do so. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Paul, Vienna / St. Francis de Sales, Stonefort

Reverend Thomas M. Barrett / Reverend Thomas M. Barrett

St. Paul Parish and St. Francis de Sales Parish are two small communities of faith that have long been joined together in a kind of **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** served by one priest, who also devotes a portion of his time to the important work of prison ministry. Your new church at the Parish of St. Paul has given a vital anchor to these faith families. I am pleased to note that you coordinate the liturgical ministers training in the partnership; have combined Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, Parish School of Religion and sacramental preparation. The quarterly community building events for the parishes are a very positive endeavor to create fellowship.

Do not think that simply because you have long been two parishes served by one priest that your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** has been realized. This is not the case. Indeed, the fact that you have been in this arrangement for some time may have led to a sense that there is no need to move to closer forms of collaboration. Revisit your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**, giving close attention to my mandate to establish even greater collaboration. The very small size of St. Francis de Sales Parish community may suggest that in the future, barring future growth, it may be united with St. Paul Parish.

I would like you to give special attention to fostering a stronger presence of lay ecclesial ministries in your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. I am thinking particularly about the ministry of evangelization stressed by our Holy Father, Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii*

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Gaudium. Do you have any pastoral outreach in this area? It could be very fruitful. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Mary, Eldorado / St. Mary, Harrisburg / St. Joseph, Elizabethtown

Reverend Abraham Adejoh / Reverend Abraham Adejoh / Reverend Abraham Adejoh

St. Mary Parish, St. Mary Parish, and St. Joseph Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** with a mandate that is challenging and difficult to fulfill. You are to have a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** which allows you to be served by one priest. At the same time, you are to move in the direction of reducing the number of parishes from three to two. Father Adejoh has regularly shared with me, in writing, the many steps you have taken together to become one coordinated ministry. These include his wise decision to change his residence; a workable restructured Mass schedule, including Christmas and Holy Week; the establishment of one Parish Pastoral Council; one tri-parish bulletin; and a coordination of the work of the trustees, Finance Council and other pastoral, administrative and formation structures. He has developed a detailed listing of the reasons why you must move toward the goal of greater unity and responded to the various objections that have been raised. It has taken a great deal of patience and Christian openness for you to come as far as you have.

At the same time, challenging realities remain: the unique histories and personalities of each parish community, the relative distance between the churches, the condition of the parish buildings and the cost of maintaining them, the size of the parish populations and the pain associated with parish closures. As some of you have written, your current parish priest is young, vigorous and in good health. However, this may well not be the case for the next priest assigned to serve you. Further, the next priest may also have additional pastoral duties. Therefore, I must insist that you continue to pursue a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** of reducing the number of parishes even though we do not know when or exactly how this goal will be realized. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Kateri Tekakwitha: Lily of the Mohawks, Ridgway

Reverend Steven L. Beatty

In a very real sense, this **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** still consists of four communities. Even though I have suppressed St. Joseph Parish, Ridgway; St. Mary Parish, Shawneetown; St. Joseph Parish, Equality; and St. Patrick Parish, Pond Settlement and established a new parish in Ridgway on the site of the church destroyed by a tornado, the three remaining church buildings continue to function as chapels of the new parish during this time of constructing the new church. After the church of St. Kateri Tekakwitha: Lily of the Mohawks is completed, these temporary chapels will continue in occasional use, though not for regular Sunday or daily Masses. Your mandate from me is not only to build a church but also to bring the Christian Faithful from four very different communities together

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in a single worshipping family of faith served by one priest. As I have discussed with your leadership on more than one occasion, this can be a slow and, at times, painstaking process. But the goal of one unified expression of the Body of Christ in Gallatin County is worthy of the effort.

I am keenly aware of the practical, personal, and spiritual challenges you have been facing and which you will continue to face on the long road ahead. I appreciate the diligence of Father Beatty who has worked each day to deal with the complex and sometimes frustrating details of such an undertaking. Now that I have signed the Resolution (and its attached conditions) approving this project, you will soon see your new house of worship rising up before you as a sign of unity, renewal, and hope.

The fact that your time and energy have been consumed by this important effort is, no doubt, the reason why the Vicar General did not receive the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** information requested on September 15, 2013 and December 31, 2013. However, now that the construction is underway, I request that you, like all **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** submit a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** by November 10, 2014. In it you should provide an account of how the members of the now suppressed parishes are adjusting to their new parish identity. What are the current sentiments concerning the chapels? Have old wounds begun to heal? Do you sense a new energy and optimism? I would like you to give me a sense of where things stand. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Rose of Lima, Metropolis / St. Patrick, Cairo

Reverend Christopher Mujule / Reverend Christopher Mujule

St. Rose of Lima Parish, St. Patrick Parish (and the now suppressed parishes of St. Mary, Mound City and St. Catherine of Alexandria, Grand Chain) constitute a single **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** served by one priest with a mandate to petition me for the suppression of the two smallest parishes. With the spiritual guidance of Reverend Christopher M. Mujule, a *fidei donum* missionary from the Diocese of Hoima, Uganda, you have implemented a challenging and, at times, painful **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL**.

Long before the promulgation of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**, I was engaged in a variety of discussions with Father Mujule and the People of God of St. Patrick Parish, St. Mary Parish, and St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish about their future. While there was a general agreement that the parishes had, over time, become smaller and that there was no demographic evidence to suggest future growth, there was still no consensus concerning the integration of the two smaller parishes within the boundaries of the larger one, St. Patrick. Each parish has its own history, traditions, and memories. I commend Father Mujule and the Christian

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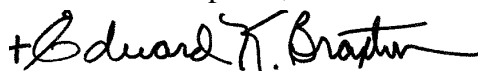
Faithful for their generous participation in these conversations which were necessarily frank, sometimes painful, resulting in hurt feelings. When the final decision was made and St. Mary Parish, and St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish became a part of St. Patrick Parish, there was sadness, frustration, and relief.

Because you have completed the central instruction of my mandate (three parishes becoming one), it may seem that the work of this **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**, has been completed. In one sense, this may be true. However, in a larger sense, the work of the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** must continue. Your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** has ongoing implications. While the Catholic people of Mound City, Grand Chain, and Cairo are busily working to become one family of faith under Father Mujule's leadership, everyone knows that after such a challenging and imperfect process, healing takes time. Not only must care be given to decisions about the buildings once used by the former parishes, but also care must be used as Christians, who disagreed with their brother or sister in faith, let go of that pain and let God lead them forward as one.

The doors of church buildings have been closed. But the doors of St. Patrick Parish are wide open for all to receive the sacraments, to worship the Lord as members of a larger community, to care for those in need through Christian Service, and to grow in your relationship with the Jesus Christ into whose Body we have all been baptized.

At the same time the parishioners of St. Rose of Lima have made great strides in building up the community of faith, reconfiguring their sanctuary, restoring their buildings after terrible flood damage, and raising up lay leadership to assist in ministry. We are all mindful that Father Mujule is only on loan to us by his Bishop. He is not ours. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

Be at peace,



BISHOP

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THE LETTER TO THE EAST VICARIATE

Dear Father Stec,

Dear Priests, Deacons, Religious, and the Christian Faithful of the East Vicariate:

Peace be with you!

I will now turn from these general observations in order to speak to the situation of each parish in the Vicariate and to provide directions concerning the **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS** submitted by **PARISH PARTNERSHIPS** for my consideration.

St. Edward, Fairfield / St. Stephen, Flora

Reverend Michael C. Mbonu / Reverend Martin Ohajunwa

St. Edward Parish and St. Stephen Parish have been served for the past several years by Father Mbonu, and Father Ohajunwa, *fidei donum* missionary priests from the Archdiocese of Owerri, Nigeria. In July, Father Mbonu's service will come to an end. We happily thank him for sharing his many gifts with our Local Church. If we are unable to send a priest to you to succeed Father Mbonu, Father Ohajunwa will serve both parishes. He must keep before his eyes your mandate. You must continue to organize parish life in a manner that makes it possible for one priest to serve you effectively. I note in your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** already has some degree of collaboration.

I am aware of the distance of 28 miles that separate these two parish communities. This presents a special challenge for you. Is it feasible for you to employ a qualified lay Pastoral Associate to assist the priest in your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**? The temptation is to try to maintain two completely distinct parish programs. You may even feel that it is impractical to try to do more. However, over time, it may become difficult for one priest to do this. Therefore, it is imperative that you examine the pastoral life of your parishes, especially your weekend Mass schedule. Can the worshipping community gather together for one Sunday Mass, instead of a Saturday and Sunday Mass in each church? Do the capacities of the churches allow for this possibility? It can become very taxing for your parish priest, if it is necessary for him to spend more than two hours driving each weekend.

It would seem impossible for one priest to provide two Holy Week schedules. Your Pastor and your parishes would be able to provide a far better celebration of the sacred Triduum if, once a year, your two communities came together as one. This might result in a more effective and meaningful celebration of these most solemn days of the liturgical year. As the General

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Instruction of the Roman Missal tells us, “it is desirable that small communities join together in these churches to carry out the sacred celebrations in a more noble manner.” Though there is an implied permission to separate the components of the Triduum Liturgy to various sites, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal does state: “If the celebration of the Passion of the Lord on the following Friday does not take place in the same church, the Mass is concluded in the usual way and the Blessed Sacrament is placed in the tabernacle.” You may want to re-think your schedule in order for the faithful to experience the Transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament to an altar of repose and the opportunity to continue adoration before the Blessed Sacrament for a suitable length of time on Holy Thursday night.

If you make this change, keep in mind that other prayer and devotional services such as Stations of the Cross and the Liturgy of the Hours can be provided at the other church. These can even be led by one of the faithful. It is important to note that these devotions do not take place at the same time of the Triduum services, nor are they a substitute for them.

St. Joseph, Olney / Holy Cross, Wendelin / St. Joseph, Stringtown

Reverend Ronald Weber / Very Reverend Mark D. Stec, V.F., / Very Reverend Mark D. Stec, V.F.

St. Joseph Parish, Holy Cross Parish and St. Joseph Parish form a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** with several challenges. The first is the size of the parishes and the number of active families in them. The second is the fact that St. Joseph has a relatively large, vital school that needs the time and attention of the Pastor. The third is, of course, the distances between the three parishes. I am pleased that you are not allowing these factors to discourage you from honestly looking at the implications of your **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**. Part of your **PARTNERSHIP** has existed for many years due to the link between the two smaller parishes in Wendelin and Stringtown. With the addition of the larger parish in Olney to your **PARTNERSHIP**, there may be wisdom in engaging a qualified Pastoral Associate whose services could be divided among the three parishes.

It is a blessing that St. Joseph Catholic School is part of your **PARTNERSHIP**. Keep in mind that it is important that you follow Diocesan Policy for the financial support of the school. The **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**'s financial resources should be available to hire support personnel such as facility personnel at St. Joseph-Stringtown and Holy Cross-Wendelin. A qualified Pastoral Associate would be able to assist the parish priest(s) in caring for the needs of the Christian Faithful. It is imperative that you begin implementing your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** as soon as possible in the areas of worship, faith formation, a shared Confirmation, outreach to the needy, and other initiatives. It would be most unwise for you to wait until one of the two priests presently assigned is transferred and not replaced.

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Father Jerome Wirth served St. Joseph Parish for many years and was admired by many of the faithful. The crisis caused by his grave illness and untimely death not only saddened parishioners, but also created a situation in which I was almost forced to implement your mandate of having the service of only one priest prematurely. I now instruct you to revisit the **PASTORAL PLAN** and review your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** and put in place everything that you can to make it possible for one priest to lead and guide you in faith. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Lawrence, Lawrenceville **Reverend Bernardine Nganzi**

Long before the promulgation of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**, I was engaged in a variety of discussions with Father Nganzi and the People of God of St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceville, Immaculate Conception Parish in Bridgeport, and St. Francis Xavier Parish in St. Francisville. While there was a general agreement that the parishes had, over time, become smaller and that there was no demographic evidence to suggest future growth, there was still no consensus concerning the integration of the two smaller parishes within the boundaries of the larger one, St. Lawrence. Each parish has its own history, traditions, and memories. I commend Father Nganzi and the Christian Faithful for their generous participation in these conversations which were necessarily frank and sometimes painful, leading to hurt feelings. When the final decision was made and Immaculate Conception Parish and St. Francis Xavier Parish became a part of St. Lawrence Parish, there was sadness, frustration, and relief.

Because you have completed the central instruction of my mandate (three parishes becoming one), it may seem that the work of this **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has been completed. In one sense, this may be true. However, in a larger sense, the work of the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** has just begun. Your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** has ongoing implications. While the Catholic people of Lawrenceville, Bridgeport, and St. Francisville are busily working to become one family of faith under Father Nganzi's leadership, everyone knows that after such a challenging and imperfect process, the healing takes time. Not only must care be given to decisions about the buildings once used by the former parishes, but also care must be used as Christians who disagreed with their brother or sister in faith let go of that pain and let God lead them forward as one.

The doors of church buildings have been closed. But the doors of St. Lawrence are wide open for all to receive the sacraments, to worship the Lord as members of a larger community, to care for those in need through Christian Service, and to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ into whose Body we have all been baptized.

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As you know, Father Nganzi, a *fidei donum* missionary priest from the Diocese of Fort Portal Uganda, has experienced serious health problems, even as he participated in this transition. Please assist him as you move forward. If we were to lose his ministry at the present time, I have no one available to succeed him. Now that he has only one parish, I am asking that Father Nganzi, if his health allows it, to be aware and to assist at Lawrence Correctional Center in which there are 400 Catholic inmates. He should also discuss with the Pastors the possibility of assisting with Masses in the **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** of St. Joseph Parish in Stringtown, St. Joseph Parish in Olney, and Holy Cross Parish in Wendelin. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Mary, Mt. Carmel / St. Sebastian, St. Sebastian **Deacon John Fridley / Reverend Michael Mbonu**

St. Mary Parish and St. Sebastian Parish are well situated for being served by the same priest in a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP**, as you were in the past. It is my intention to appoint one priest to serve both parishes with the June assignments. In July, Father Mbonu's service in our Diocese will be concluded. We thank him for his generous pastoral presence. The relatively short distance between these two parishes and the relatively small size of your congregations are an advantage. You should be able to fulfill my mandate and refine your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** so as to share resources with relative ease. Carefully review your Mass schedule.

It is impossible for one priest to provide two Holy Week schedules. Your Pastor and your parishes would be able to provide a far better celebration of the Sacred Triduum if, once a year, your two communities came together as one. This might result in a more effective and meaningful celebration of these most solemn days of the Liturgical year. As the General Instruction of the Roman Missal tells us, "it is desirable that small communities join together in these churches to carry out the sacred celebrations in a more noble manner." Though there is an implied permission to separate the components of the Triduum Liturgy to various sites, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal does state: "If the celebration of the Passion of the Lord on the following Friday does not take place in the same church, the Mass is concluded in the usual way and the Blessed Sacrament is placed in the tabernacle." You may want to re-think your schedule in order for the faithful to experience the Transfer of the Most Blessed Sacrament to an altar of repose and the opportunity to continue adoration before the Blessed Sacrament for a suitable length of time on Holy Thursday night.

If you make this change, keep in mind that other prayer and devotional services such as Stations of the Cross and the Liturgy of the Hours can be provided at the other church. These can even be led by one of the faithful. It is important to note that these devotions do not take place at the same time of the Triduum services, nor are they a substitute for them.

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Please build upon the many Faith Formation components already shared. I urge you to develop a common bulletin in order to foster inter-parish communication. I advise you to combine the Administrative Assistant duties under one roof. This should be more efficient and more economical. You are fortunate to have a Catholic School at St. Mary. Do all you can to maintain its vitality.

No one is more mindful than I am of the difficulties that St. Mary Parish has experienced in recent years, with transition after transition at the highest level of parish leadership. I assure you of my continued prayers and support. I am grateful for the faith-filled way in which so many of you have responded to regrettable and unfortunate developments. It is my hope to appoint new leadership to your parish soon. Please welcome the priest I send you and give him your unified, unreserved support and cooperation. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

**St. John Nepomucene, Dahlgren / St. Clement of Rome, McLeansboro /
St. John the Baptist, Piopolis**

Reverend Slawomir Ptak / Reverend Slawomir Ptak / Reverend Slawomir Ptak

St. John the Baptist Parish, St. Clement of Rome Parish, and St. John Nepomucene Parish have been living as a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** long before the promulgation of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. With wisdom and foresight, the People of God and the Pastor Emeritus, Monsignor Joseph A. Lawler realized that the only way in which these three small rural parishes could survive was by bringing them together under the leadership of one priest and combining and sharing a variety of ministries. My mandate to you is to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that will build upon and go beyond past collaboration.

As you know, when Monsignor Lawler retired, there was a possibility that we would not be able to send a priest to succeed him. You and the Diocese were fortunate that Father Slawomir Ptak, a *fidei donum* missionary priest from the Diocese of Tarnów, Poland was available, thanks to the generosity of his Bishop. Father Ptak has generously left behind his native land, culture, and language to be of service to you. I know you join me in expressing gratitude to him. While the countryside in your area reminds him of his homeland, there are many differences between the Church in Poland and the Church in the United States. Hopefully you are learning from each other.

Do not think that simply because you have long been three parishes served by one priest that your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** has been realized. This is not the case. Indeed, the fact that you have been in this arrangement for sometime may have led to a sense that there is no need to move to closer forms of collaboration. But in truth, there is an urgent need for you to do

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so. If the Bishop of Tarnów were to call Father Ptak back to Poland, it might be necessary for a priest already serving another parish to provide service to your parishes as well. Please heed my words.

Please begin by studying which activities that now take place separately in each parish can be joined together, including all forms of religious education and sacramental formation. Perhaps a shared **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** bulletin? Experiment with joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils, a shared parish bulletin, shared committee structures. Please review your Mass schedule. Try to allow at least two hours between the starting times of all Vigil and Sunday Masses. Look ahead to next year's Christmas and Holy Week schedule. What if only one priest is available? Can you accommodate one Triduum celebration, alternating Churches during the three days?

I pray that you will continue to support the good efforts of your communities of faith. Together, with confidence in the Holy Spirit, and the cooperation of one another, I am certain we will persevere even in the face of the unknown future. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

St. Patrick, Enfield / St. Polycarp, Carmi

Reverend Vincent Obi / Reverend Vincent Obi

St. Patrick Parish and St. Polycarp Parish have been living as a **PARISH PARTNERSHIP** long before the promulgation of the **PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**. With wisdom and foresight, the People of God and the Pastor Emeritus, Father Stephen A. Rudolphi realized that the only way in which these two small rural parishes could survive was by bringing them together under the leadership of one priest and combining and sharing a variety of ministries. My mandate to you is to develop a **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** that will build upon and go beyond past collaboration.

As you know when Father Rudolphi's health began to fail and he began plans for retirement, there was a possibility that we would not be able to send a priest to succeed him. You and the Diocese were fortunate that Father Vincent Obi a *fidei donum* missionary priest from the Archdiocese of Onitsha, Nigeria became available, thanks to the generosity of his Archbishop. Father Obi has generously left behind his native land, culture, and language to be of service to you. I know you join me in expressing gratitude to him. Obviously, there are many differences between the Church in Nigeria and the Church in the United States. Hopefully you are learning from each other.

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THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

Do not think that simply because you have long been two parishes served by one priest that your **STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODEL** has been realized. This is not the case. Indeed, the fact that you have been in this arrangement for sometime may have led to a sense that there is no need to move to closer forms of collaboration. But in truth, there is an urgent need for you to do so. If the Archbishop of Onitsha were to call Father Obi back to Nigeria, it might be necessary for a priest already serving another parish to provide service to your parishes as well. Please heed my words.

Please begin by studying which activities that now take place separately in each parish can be joined together, including all forms of religious education and sacramental formation. Experiment with joint meetings of your Parish Pastoral Councils and shared committee structures. Please review your Mass schedule. Try to allow at least two hours between the starting times of all Vigil and Sunday Masses. Look ahead to next year's Christmas and Holy Week schedule. What if only one priest is available? Can you accommodate one Triduum celebration, alternating Churches during the three days?

I pray that you will continue to support the good efforts of your communities of faith. Together, with confidence in the Holy Spirit, and the cooperation of one another, I am certain we will persevere even in the face of the unknown future. **Please continue to pray and work with me for Vocations to the Priesthood from your parishes.**

Be at peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Edward T. Braxton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

BISHOP

THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

PRAYERS FOR VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

With THE VICARIATE LETTERS: THE BISHOP’S REFLECTIONS ON THE STRATEGIC PASTORAL MODELS OF THE PARISH PARTNERSHIPS, I, once again, ask ALL PARISHES to pray the prayers that were sent to them in 2006. As I explained in the **THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING**, April, 2, 2013, “I am not in any way discouraging prayers for vocations as religious sisters, brothers, deacons, or the married state and the single life. I have always encouraged these prayers. I am asking, however, that these prayers be distinct from prayers for vocations to the priesthood. The reason for this is both the urgency for additional priests in our Diocese and the uniqueness of the priesthood. ‘There can be no Church without the Eucharist. And there can be no Eucharist without priests.’ Our prayers will have a greater impact if our people pray the same prayer in every parish. In that way, we will be praying with one voice.”

Below are excerpts from the September 13, 2006 letter on Vocations, which includes the two prayers:

“Preaching is an intense form of prayer. It is borne of a prayerful reflection on the Word of God. The Bishop asks that a homily specifically on the priesthood and on vocations to the priesthood should be preached in every parish twice a year, making use of appropriate scripture texts, e.g., The Feast of Christ the King at the end of the Liturgical Year and *Good Shepherd* Sunday (4th Sunday of Easter, designated by the Holy Father as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations).”

Prayer of the Faithful: The Bishop asks that at every weekend liturgy the following petition specifically for vocations to the priesthood should be included:

“We pray that the Holy Spirit will call some of the young men from our parish community of faith to consider serving the Church in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ and that they will respond with generous hearts. We pray to the Lord.”

“The enclosed *Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood* should be copied and distributed to everyone in the community. The Bishop asks that this prayer be prayed frequently. Specifically, he would like it to be prayed on the first weekend of every month at the end of all weekend Masses (after the closing prayer, and before the blessing).”

THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

THE PASTORAL PLAN FOR PARISH RENEWAL AND RESTRUCTURING

A PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS

Leader: God is good.

Response: All the time!

Leader: All the time.

Response: God is good!

Let us pray:

Lord, Our God

we know that You are Goodness itself,

Throughout history you have called forth ministers of Word and Sacrament to lead, guide, and serve your people as priests.

We join with our Bishop in praying

for an increase in vocations to the priesthood in our Diocese.

We ask you, by the power of the Holy Spirit,

to stir up a desire in the hearts of young men in our parishes

to serve your Church in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Help them to hear and respond generously

to your call deep within their hearts.

So they may join with those

who have built up your Church,

through their ministry as priests.

O God of Love and Mercy,

we pray that you will inspire our priests to continue to share

the joy and the happiness of their ministry at your Altar

and in the Christian community.

Prompt parents, grandparents, and teachers to realize

that sometimes you call future priests to your service through the

encouragement of those who see in them the qualities of a good priest.

We pray especially for our seminarians.

We ask you to help them to be

the best human beings,

the best Christians,

and the best priests they can be.

Graciously hear our prayer through the Intercession of Mary,

the Mother of priests

and in the name of Jesus who is Christ the Lord.

AMEN.

Diocese of Belleville, 2006



Veni, Sancte Spiritus

*Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine!*

*Come, Father of the poor!
Come, source of all our store!
Come, within our bosoms shine.*

*You, of comforters the best;
You, the soul's most welcome guest;
Sweet refreshment here below;*

*In our labor, rest most sweet;
Grateful coolness in the heat;
Solace in the midst of woe.*

*O most blessed Light divine,
Shine within these hearts of yours,
And our inmost being fill!*

*Where you are not, we have naught,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from taint of ill.*

*Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away:*

*Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.*

*On the faithful, who adore
And confess you, evermore
In your sevenfold gift descend;*

*Give them virtue's sure reward;
Give them your salvation, Lord;
Give them joys that never end. Amen.*

Alleluia.



GO TELL HOW MUCH THE LORD HAS DONE FOR YOU 