



DIOCESE OF GARY

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Bishop of Gary

February 28, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In light of changing circumstances, we need to proactively discern a pastoral plan that will serve the sacramental and pastoral needs of the faithful within the Diocese of Gary. This is particularly true considering fewer resources, older buildings, and the numerous retirements that will be taking place over the next few years. Human and financial resources in Catholic parishes are becoming more limited. Even though we ordained two priests last year, and as we anticipate two more priestly ordinations this upcoming June, current trends predict fewer and fewer priests available to serve as pastors.

While factors impede our ability to sustain our parishes as we have in the past, we are people of hope and still have a responsibility to provide the best sacramental and pastoral care possible to the faithful. Discerning a pastoral plan for the parishes in this area is more important than ever so that future generations will continue to receive the great blessings of our Catholic faith. To that end, I have appointed Fr. Christopher Stanish, Vicar General; Fr. Jeff Burton, Northlake Dean; and Deacon Brad Hendrickson to facilitate a process that will enable us to discern a plan to fulfill two aims:

- Meet the sacramental and pastoral needs of Catholics within the Diocese of Gary.
- Answer the call of the Diocese of Gary Synod to make missionary disciples.

In preparation for this process, I have asked the pastors of each parish in these areas to select three (3) key leaders, who with the pastor, will meet collaboratively for five (5) sessions, during which they will explore the current ministry landscape, review potential future strategies for an effective Catholic presence in this area, and formulate recommendations for my consideration.

To ensure that all parishioners understand the issues at hand and know about the models being proposed for consideration, Fr. Stanish, Fr. Burton, and Dn. Hendrickson will facilitate several open sessions for all the Catholic faithful in these areas. This planning process will begin in August and conclude by submitting recommendations to me in December 2025. Sessions for key leaders will be held in each of the four deaneries. A meeting schedule will be forthcoming.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Fr. Stanish at cstanish@dcgary.org. As we begin this process for the future of the Catholic Church in our diocese, please join me in praying to the Holy Spirit for wisdom, guidance, and clarity.

Asking for the guidance and protection of the Holy Angels, and God's blessings upon you, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McElroy
Bishop of Gary