

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

17 North Walnut Street, Du Quoin, IL 62832

April 4, 2013

Dear Parishioners,

As you know, Bishop Edward K. Braxton has initiated The Pastoral Plan for Parish Renewal and Restructuring, which a special Committee has been working on for more than a year. I am writing this letter to share with you some of the key points in the Bishop's document, which is a comprehensive reorganization of the Diocese of Belleville.

From the outset, the Bishop stressed the spiritual nature of the Pastoral Plan. "Jesus Christ is the reason why the Catholic Church exists and He is the reason why we are working to renew our Local Church. Our primary goal is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus and to do so more effectively. In order to achieve that goal, we must help our people and each other to continue to learn our faith, love our faith, and live our faith. We will do this if each of our parishes, each of our communities, is nurturing vital, engaged Christians. 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."

The Bishop has announced an important new Diocesan Structure which will help our parishes face the challenges of the future. He writes, "The heart of The Pastoral Plan is the establishment of Parish Partnerships. Parish Partnerships consist of joining parishes together, usually a larger parish with a smaller one (in a few cases, more than one). The central responsibility of these Parish Partnerships is to begin work immediately on a Strategic Pastoral Model which will provide a practical arrangement for the parishes in question for the day when they will be served by only one priest." Our Parish Partnership joins us to **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH IN TAMAROA.**

The Bishop also explains the reorganization of the Diocesan Structure, the reorganization of the Department Directors, the Reorganization of the Deaneries into Vicariates, and requirements for the viability of our Catholic Elementary Schools. This Response contains a number of changes and pastoral initiatives that are being made for the good of our Diocese. It does not contain a dramatic, disturbing announcement of the names of specific parishes and schools and the dates on which they will be closed. Instead, the Bishop is providing us with a more organic, gradual, and dynamic process which continues to place great responsibilities in our hands as the People of God. However, he urges us not to be misled by this. The Pastoral Plan will have real consequences that will require real sacrifices on the part of all as it is implemented. The result will eventually be a reduction in the number of parishes and schools in the Diocese.

I will follow this letter up with additional information in the weeks ahead.

Faithfully yours in Christ



P.S. The entire document, The Pastoral Plan for Parish Renewal and Restructuring: Formal Response can be found on the Diocesan websites at www.diobelle.org and www.bellevillemessenger.org.