

DIOCESE OF JOLIET ANNOUNCES PHASE 3 OF TARGETED RESTRUCTURING

Two years ago, the Diocese of Joliet launched a three-year targeted restructuring process to better organize parishes, schools and other Catholic institutions. This comprehensive process began in July 2022 shortly after the diocese had streamlined its own operations at the Blanchette Catholic Center and implemented a parish-focused approach to advance Bishop Hicks' vision of "Catechesis, Evangelization, and Faith into Action."

The Targeted Restructuring Committee (the "TRC") was created to begin a review of the vibrancy and sustainability of parishes and schools in specific geographic areas of the diocese. The TRC consists of Bishop Hicks, the eight pastors who serve as deans of the diocese's eight deaneries, and senior diocesan staff.

In the fall of 2022, the TRC addressed parish and school situations it deemed urgent. These included St. Dennis and St. Joseph Schools in Lockport, Sacred Heart and St. Pius X Schools in Lombard, and St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bensenville.

The second phase of targeted restructuring began in February of 2023 and included all sixteen parishes in the Joliet Deanery. The Committee considered multiple factors including but not limited to data points on priests, seminarians, parish finances, parish facilities' assessments, sacramental numbers, October mass counts, average number of seats occupied at weekend Masses, demographic data, and trends. Considerations that were prioritized throughout the restructuring process include 1) the number of priests available to serve as pastors as well as the age and health of current pastors; 2) the availability of qualified professionals such as business managers, DRE's, musicians, etc. willing to work for the Church; 3) the highest and best use of existing parish facilities; 4) the minimization of costs to parishes to staff and maintain their facilities; and 5) and factors such as deferred maintenance of buildings and properties.

Over the course of the next eleven months, the TRC engaged in a process that was deliberate, proactive, and anticipatory of the future needs of the Deanery based on current facts. In December of 2023, after a series of listening sessions and input, the TRC provided Bishop Hicks with its recommendations, which he accepted. The number of parishes was reduced from sixteen to seven. Four parishes remained intact, one parish merged with another parish, two brand new parishes were created from the merger of eight existing parishes, and two missions were created. Following a separate but related process, the Catholic Schools Office recommended the closing of St. Jude and St. Paul Schools and the opening of Queen of Apostles School on St. Paul's campus in the fall, which will function as a ministry of the new Queen of Apostles Parish.

The third and final phase of targeted restructuring began in March of 2024. The TRC again considered parishes throughout all the geographic areas of the Diocese, with specific consideration given to DuPage, Southern Will and Grundy Counties. The TRC considered similar data points that were prioritized in the restructuring of the Joliet Deanery. The Committee provided Bishop Hicks with its recommendations, which he has accepted.

Accordingly, the nineteen parishes that will participate in the third and final phase of targeted restructuring are the following:

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Deanery</u>
Ascension of Our Lord	Oakbrook Terrace	East DuPage
Christ the King	Lombard	East DuPage
St. Alexander	Villa Park	East DuPage
St. John the Apostle	Villa Park	East DuPage
Christ the Servant	Woodridge	South DuPage
St. Luke	Carol Stream	West DuPage
St. Mark	Wheaton	West DuPage

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Deanery</u>
Assumption	Coal City	South Will-Grundy
Immaculate Conception	Braidwood	South Will-Grundy
Sacred Heart	Kinsman	South Will-Grundy
St. Boniface	Monee	South Will-Grundy
St. Lawrence	South Wilmington	South Will-Grundy
St. Lawrence O'Toole Chapel	Essex	South Will-Grundy
St. Liborius	Steger	South Will-Grundy
St. Mary	Park Forest	South Will-Grundy
St. Mary Mission	Reddick	South Will-Grundy
St. Patrick (Wilton Center)	Manhattan	South Will-Grundy
St. Paul the Apostle	Peotone	South Will-Grundy
St. Rose	Wilmington	South Will-Grundy

Some of these parishes will be grouped together and others will be considered on an individual basis. In addition, some parishes in geographical proximity to the above-listed parishes will be involved in the restructuring process in a spiritually supportive capacity. More details about these and other aspects of the targeted restructuring process will be communicated in future announcements. Each parish will receive a written timeline of events that will take place in the parish as well as the diocese. These timelines will vary from parish to parish.

The diocese engaged Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI), a third-party consultant, to assist the parishes throughout the Joliet Deanery restructuring process and CLI will assist all the parishes involved in Phase 3 as well. CLI will work directly with pastors and parish leadership teams to create timelines for the process, which include training of parish leadership teams in pastoral accompaniment skills, facilitating parish listening sessions, creating possible scenarios for parishioner feedback, and other related tasks.

Parishioners' connections to their parishes are both spiritual and emotional. However, change is inevitable and necessary to adapt to trends and circumstances that are happening in our diocese, in the United States and in the universal Church. As we approach the third phase in this restructuring process, the hope is that by pruning some of the branches, we as a diocese can continue to thrive and grow.

It's important to re-emphasize that no decisions have been made about any of the parishes that will undergo a restructuring in Phase 3. You will have many questions, and we remain committed to transparency and support throughout this process.

Let us pray for and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we accompany one another on this journey of discernment to new realities in DuPage, Southern Will and Grundy Counties.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Maureen Harton
 Director of Implementation
 Targeted Restructuring Committee
 5/13/2024