

From the Pastor's Desk

Pentecost, 2024

This weekend is an important one throughout our diocese in light of the announcement of Bishop Tylka's decisions regarding the future of parishes in every area of our diocese.

All of the decisions will be posted as of Saturday evening, May 18, at 5pm at the website: growingdisciplescdop.org. If you have family or friends living in other parishes, you might want to check and see what is happening there. There will also be a FAQ (frequently asked questions) page to help answer your questions.

We priests were only officially made aware of the decisions earlier Saturday afternoon. Believe me when I tell you that my brother priests and I have shared in your anxiety in awaiting the decisions.

I know that there will be some in our diocese who will breathe a sigh of relief, others will be confused, and others hurt or angry. We need to support one another in this time of transition. I'm sure that Bishop Lou did what his heart and head told him to do in making these decisions, none of which were easy to make.

We need to redouble our prayers for our diocese, our fellow parishioners, and our priests. Let us ask the Holy Spirit, the Advocate and Comforter to fill our hearts with faith, hope, and charity as we move forward.

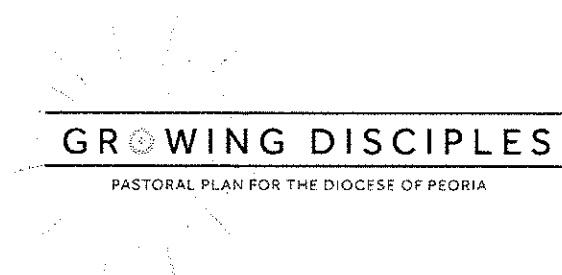
Any priests' assignments in regards to the parishes will be posted on the Catholic Post page on the diocesan website cdop.org next week. As I told you earlier, I will be staying with you, at least for this coming year. After that, I have no idea what the bishop will ask of me.

If you have any questions or concerns, you can email them to growingdisciples@cdop.org. Please be polite, respectful and charitable in your writing.

All pastors will be sent a manual in June to help the parishes through the projected changes. In the meantime, we all have a few weeks to let the reality sink in and work through our thoughts and feelings.

May Mary, Mother of the Church be with us, and with our patrons, St. Joseph and St. Patrick, obtain for us the graces we need to live our faith in these changing times. Be assured of my prayers, and I ask your prayers for me in turn.

God bless!
Fr. Pat



As we celebrate the great Solemnity of Pentecost, we recall the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the birth of the Church.

Yet, as we are well aware, the world we live in today presents many challenges for us to propose the Gospel in a compelling and impactful way. We cannot ignore the realities we face. However, we are full of hope as we trust the prompting of the Holy Spirit to engage in a new apostolic age of missionary discipleship.

It is in this hope that Bishop Lou Tylka announces the decisions that have been discerned regarding the structure of the parishes in the Diocese of Peoria for the future. We certainly call upon the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts to these necessary changes to create a more vibrant, mission driven and sustainable Church for growing disciples.

Two years ago, the Diocese of Peoria initiated a process in our diocese which we call "Growing Disciples." The process was not centered upon the reality of decline; rather it has been a process of renewal seeking opportunities for growth. Originating from listening sessions of his first two years serving as Coadjutor Bishop, the Bishop articulated five foundations on which to create a better, more vibrant Church: Evangelization, Discipleship, The Eucharist, Vocations and the legacy of Archbishop Fulton Sheen. He enlisted the help of the Catholic Leadership Institute to guide our process of assessing our current structure and discerning a more mission-driven sustainable structure for the future.

The process was quite thorough, working with every parish and ministry in the diocese. They gathered hard data, including Baptisms and funeral trends, Mass attendance counts, the number of active priests, upcoming priest retirements, trends in candidates for the seminary, maintenance costs for the churches, parish budgets, projected costs for repairs, geography and population trends among other factors. The Growing Disciples Core Team, Consultants, Priests, Curia Offices, Diocesan Planning Commission, and Key Parish Leaders provided opportunities for conversations, prayer and discerning. The Diocese gathered feedback from thousands of parishioners and community members as we went through several rounds of parish modeling.

The details of the new parish configurations, as well as the assignments of priests can be found on the Growing Disciples website: growingdisciplescdop.org beginning Saturday evening, May 18, 2024.

These difficult and yet necessary changes will create greater freedom to engage in this new apostolic age. The first disciples, including the Blessed Mother Mary, were filled with the Holy Spirit and commissioned by Jesus to go make disciples. May we encounter the same gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us today - setting our hearts ablaze for Christ, so that we too may bear fruit for God's kingdom in our local Church.

Venerable Archbishop Sheen - pray for us!