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OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS



ST. PAUL'S



AUGUST 2025

Watch
for your next
bi-monthly
newsletter at the
beginning
of October

All-things-new edition



As you very well know by now, Bishop Neary has asked for a new pastoral planning process, which he has called “All Things New,” and the focus

is on “Honoring the

Past, Inspiring the Future.”

This process is a ground-up approach in which each Area Catholic Community in the diocese is to submit a plan or two that align with the Bishop’s vision. He is asking for each ACC to submit a plan(s) to him by Dec. 31. These plans will go to a diocesan review board, and Bishop Neary will have the final say, approving a plan that he finds suitable. He has asked for a committee to be formed made up of parishioners from each parish for equal representation when formulating the plans.

We have been cooperating with Bishop Neary’s request and currently have a subcommittee from each parish that has been meeting for months. In an effort to be transparent, this newsletter will give an explanation of why Bishop Neary calls for the renewal, the parameters the committee must follow in developing a plan, some parish-level numbers we are working off of and the action steps that will take place in the future.

Each subcommittee is led by a chairperson who reports to a liaison from my Pastoral Leadership Team, along with one parishioner representative. This structure has helped streamline communication. On Wednesday, July 30, plans that were created by each parish subcommittee were presented to me and the team.

In an effort to simplify the planning process, I have now asked for two members from each parish to come together to form an updated committee (as you can imagine, 48 people on a committee just is not ideal). This smaller committee will eliminate the liaisons as we get closer to the upcoming December deadline.

A huge thank you goes out to all those who have helped us get to this point in the planning process. Unfortunately, this process will inevitably end with us going through more changes, but we must remember the building we worship in is not more important than who or why we worship. We are all sheep of Bishop Neary, who is our shepherd, and we must follow his voice.

Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will send forth his promises of being a true advocate, comforter and guide as we move forward.

Blessings to you all,
Fr. Kevin

Bishop Patrick Neary, in the following portion of his letter, provides a helpful reflection on our present circumstances and the path ahead



“It became clear to me early on in my tenure as bishop that our beloved diocese, like many other dioceses in the United States, would need to initiate a pastoral planning process.

Over the past year, data was collected and developed into a current reality report identifying the significant challenges our diocese is facing.

To name a few, since 2010, Mass attendance has declined by 33%, weddings have declined by 45%, baptisms by 45% and confirmations by 35%. The average occupancy of our churches for Sunday Mass is at 39%. Four out of five parishes in our diocese are unable to meet ministry and operations budgets through Sunday offerings alone.

Our priests are shepherding, on average, 2.4 parishes, which is more than double the national average per priest in the United States. I worry greatly about the growing fatigue being experienced by our priests.

As you’ve heard, the theme for our pastoral planning process, “All Things New: Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future,” is centered on the virtue of hope as we begin a process that will undoubtedly not be an easy one. As a diocese, we will pass through moments of grieving together, and grief often involves intense sadness, feelings of shock and numbness, as well as feelings of denial and anger.

What I would like to place before us is a broader sense of what it means to be the Church. When St. Teresa of Calcutta was asked how she would define the Church, she said, “But who is the Church? You and I ... The Church are those who follow him.” The Church is not primarily a church building but people who are disciples of Jesus Christ.

I’m reminded of a time when Cardinal Francis George talked about the early Christians and how they had neither church buildings, school buildings nor hospital buildings, yet they managed to convert half of the Roman Empire to the Christian faith before Christianity was at last made legal in 313 A.D.

What I hope for is a vision that enables us to feel that, no matter how many church buildings we have, we are welcome in all of them. I want us to see that we are blessed with just over 100,000 Catholics in our diocese and that we are all one family in faith. We all know that, in our families, there are times when we disagree, times we hurt each other’s feelings and times where we have to lay down our own wants for the good of those we love.

Our church family is no different. As a family of faith, we will all have to make some changes, some sacrifices, to build healthy communities, healthy priests and pastoral teams, healthy budgets, and healthy liturgies. We may have to drive a little farther or get up a little earlier to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist and in our neighbors gathered there.

We may have to say goodbye to a building or place we have grown to love. But we will do this together. We will do this in love. We will do this with each other’s support, and we will do this because we are asked by God to build his Church wherever we are gathered. In this Jubilee Year 2025, we are invited to be pilgrims of hope, no matter the challenges that may lie before us.

Some may say it is my gift of positivity that makes me always on the lookout for ways to make sure our glass is half full, but I’d say it is my hope in the Lord to make sure that our cup more than runneth over.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Patrick M. Neary, C.S.C.



A further breakdown of the state of our diocese

History of Active Priests in the St. Cloud Diocese

1999 – 92 active priests serving parishes in the diocese

2025 – 57 active priests serving parishes in the diocese

Projection of active priests five years from now:

- Best case scenario is approximately 48, including active priests of retirement age

Projected ordinations to the priesthood:

- Best case scenario is 14 ordinations in the next 10 years
 - Five of these men are in major seminary, of which 90% are typically ordained
 - Nine of these men are in minor seminary, of which 75% typically discern out of the seminary

Projected priests of retirement age over the next 10 years – 17

History of Parishes in the St. Cloud Diocese

1999 – 139 parishes

Currently – 131 parishes

To summarize, the number of active priests has decreased by almost 40% since 1999 while the number of parishes has decreased by only 6% in that same time period



The following design parameters are outlined in the guidebook provided by the diocese for the "All Things New" Planning Committees. Each ACC is being asked to follow these guidelines when creating their plan. Visit this QR code to view the full guidebook with explanations of each parameter.



Accessibility to Sunday Mass (includes Saturday evening vigil)

- 80 % of the faithful must have access to a Sunday Mass within a 20-minute drive.
- No rotation of Mass schedules between churches.

Budgeted Ministries

- **One administrative office per ACC if under 3000 households.**
 - **ACC Business Administrator (Paid).**
- Liturgical Ministries.
- Formation Ministries: Children, Youth, Adult.
 - Catholic schools included.
- **Hispanic ministries with 10% of the total census population.**
- Pastoral Care.
- Social Outreach.

This parameter has been met. One central ACC office and a satellite in Belgrade which has been approved by the Diocese.

This parameter has been met - we have a paid business administrator.

This parameter has been met - we have a hispanic ministry program.

Pastors/Priests

- Limit of three Sunday Masses per weekend/priest not including weddings/funerals.
 - Mass schedule must be able to be accommodated by assigned priests to ACC.
- Pastors will spend at least 50% of their time in pastoral ministry.
- Desire to live in community within ACC will be considered.

This parameter is being met - we have an overall mass attendance over 50% in our ACC as a whole.

Buildings

- **Overall facility usage must average 50% occupancy or higher for all weekend liturgies in the ACC.**
- **Buildings must be physically accessible, hospitable and safe.**
 - **Restrooms in church building.**
 - **Church building is either one level or has access to an existing elevator.**
- ACC plan must specify how empty buildings will be repurposed or relegated for secular but not unbecoming use ideally within five years.

All of our church buildings meet these requirements.

Governance

- Reduce the number of parish corporations.
- Potential Worship Sites – Primary Church, Partner Church.

Finances

- Each finance council will approve an attainable and reasonable annual balanced budget.
- **Parish investment in Catholic school may not exceed 40% of plate/envelope within five years.**
- Routine building operations may not exceed 25% of plate/envelope.

Our ACC currently gives 37% of plate/envelope to Holy Family School.

See page 6 for a financial overview of each parish

Inspiring the Future: Phases and next steps

Action Steps

Phase 1: Assessment and Planning

(March – December 2025)

• June – August 2025:

- Analyze data and identify parishes with low attendance and sustainability challenges.
- Define initial consolidation scenarios and options for optimizing Mass schedules.

• September – December 2025:

- Finalize a draft proposal for parish mergers and Mass reductions.
- Communicate findings and recommendations to parishioners.

Phase 2: Implementation preparation

(January 2026 – June 2026)

• January – March 2026:

- Announce decisions regarding parish mergers and Mass schedules.
- Develop transition plans, including financial, legal and pastoral considerations.

• April – June 2026

- Develop a communications plan to ensure smooth transitions. Establish lay ministry training programs to increase engagement in liturgical and parish life.

Phase 3: Implementation and Transition

(July 2026 – December 2026)

• July – September 2026:

- Begin consolidation of Masses according to the approved plan.
- Close or repurpose parish buildings as necessary, ensuring smooth transitions



For more information on the pastoral planning process, visit the St. Cloud Diocese website: stcdio.org



For more frequent updates, continue to view our weekly bulletin or visit our Area Catholic Community website: parishesontheprairie.org





Our Area Catholic Community numbers

The following numbers are the seating capacities calculated for each church based on the diocesan standard of pew length divided by 24 inches. (Not including any gathering space seating – nave only)

St. Donatus	208
St. Alexius	194
St. Francis de Sales	255
Sts. Peter & Paul	279
Our Lady of the Angels	292
St. Paul's	264

The following numbers are the average Mass counts for the month of Oct. 2024 per Mass

St. Donatus	No Mass
St. Alexius 8:15 a.m.	199
St. Francis de Sales 10:30 a.m.	152
Sts. Peter & Paul 8 p.m.	125
Our Lady of the Angels 6 p.m.	147
Our Lady of the Angels 8 a.m.	295
St. Paul's 4 p.m.	248
St. Paul's 10:30 a.m.	364

	St. Donatus	St. Alexius	St. Francis de Sales	Sts. Peter & Paul	Our Lady of the Angels	St. Paul's
Plate/Envelope Collections for fiscal year 2024-2025	73,654.80	129,771.55	125,054.90	127,743.32	415,458.68	853,374.71
Routine Building Operations (facilities expenses) for fiscal year 2024-2025	18,349.54	38,114.25	49,822.04	73,583.31	59,228.34	163,795.81
Percent of routine building operations to plate/envelope	25%	29%	40%	58%	14%	19%

Upcoming EVENTS

First Saturday Devotions:

Saturday, August 2
Our Lady of the Angels
Confession: 7:45 a.m.
Adoration: 8 a.m.
Rosary: 8:30 a.m.
Mass: 9 a.m.

DCCW Pilgrimage

Thursday, Aug. 7
7:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Baptism Class

Monday, Aug. 11
7 p.m.
St. Paul's meeting room

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Holy Day of Obligation

Mass – Aug. 14
5:30 p.m. | St. Paul's
5:30 p.m. | St. Donatus
Mass – Aug. 15
7 a.m. | Our Lady of the Angels
12 p.m. | St. Paul's
5:30 p.m. | Sts. Peter & Paul

ACC Pilgrimage

Saturday, August 23
(Tentative)
7:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.

First Saturday Devotions:

Saturday, Sept. 6
Our Lady of the Angels
Confession: 7:45 a.m.
Adoration: 8 a.m.
Rosary: 8:30 a.m.
Mass: 9 a.m.



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Weekend Mass schedules effective Aug. 2

SATURDAY

5 p.m. | St. Paul's, Sauk Centre
6 p.m. | Sts. Peter & Paul, Elrosa

SUNDAY

8 a.m. | Our Lady of the Angels, Sauk Centre
8:15 a.m. | St. Alexius, West Union
10:30 a.m. | St. Francis de Sales, Belgrade
10:30 a.m. | St. Paul's, Sauk Centre

Starting on Saturday, Aug. 2,
the 7:30 p.m. mass at
Our Lady of the Angels and
the 4 p.m. mass at St. Paul's
will be combined into one.

**The new mass time will be
a 5 p.m. mass at St. Paul's
(with 4-4:45 p.m. confessions).**