



Dear Joliet Catholic Community,

June 17, 2023

As many of you may know, the Diocese of Joliet a year ago launched a targeted restructuring process to better organize parishes, schools and other Catholic institutions. This thorough process began in July 2022 shortly after the diocese had streamlined its own operations at the Blanchette Catholic Center by reducing staffing from 99 to 70 employees and implemented a parish-focused approach to advance Bishop Hicks' vision of "Catechesis, Evangelization, and Faith into Action." On July 27, 2022, Bishop Hicks convened the inaugural meeting of the diocesan targeted restructuring committee to begin a review of the vibrancy and sustainability of parishes and schools in specific geographic areas of the diocese – hence the term "targeted restructuring." The team he assembled consists of himself; the eight pastors who serve as deans of the diocese's eight deaneries; and senior diocesan staff. Maureen Harton, director of implementation and retired general counsel of the diocese, directs the targeted restructuring process and oversees the committee meetings.

Over the subsequent weeks and months, members of the committee first reviewed diocesan-wide statistics – such as trends in number of clergy and lay staff, Mass attendance, school enrollment, school and parish financial health, structural maintenance needs, etc. – before asking the eight deans for recommendations of schools and parishes that require further scrutiny. The targeted restructuring committee then categorized the recommendations into three stages: urgent; in the next year; and in two-to-three years. Bishop Hicks wrote of this process in his October 2022 column.

The schools and parishes identified in the urgent category have been addressed. These include St. Dennis and St. Joseph Schools in Lockport, which will reopen as a single school in the fall, Saints Dennis and Joseph Catholic Academy, utilizing both campuses; Sacred Heart School in Lombard closed at the end of this school year; St. Pius X School in Lombard will remain open to provide Catholic education to families in Lombard and its surrounding suburbs; and St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bensenville will be closed after weekend masses on July 1 – 2 this summer. These decisions were made by Bishop Hicks following a careful process that included input from pastors, principals, school parents, parishioners, members of parish lay leadership, as well as much discussion and discernment by the targeted restructuring committee.

The second phase of targeted restructuring will begin July 1, 2023 and will include all sixteen parishes in the Joliet Deanery. The Joliet Deanery was identified as an area to address in the 2023–2024 fiscal year. The sixteen parishes will be grouped into smaller clusters to facilitate the process. The targeted restructuring committee is currently determining these clusters and they will be announced in early July. The four Catholic schools in the deanery will not be involved in this process. Rather, the Catholic Schools Office is engaged in an educational analysis of the Joliet Catholic schools with the goal of developing a plan to ensure there will be quality Catholic educational opportunities in Joliet in the future.

The diocese has engaged Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI), a third-party consultant, to assist parishes throughout the restructuring process. CLI has worked with many dioceses across the country in similar endeavors. CLI will work directly with pastors and parish leadership teams to create timelines for the process, which will include the training of parish leadership teams in pastoral accompaniment skills, facilitating parish listening sessions, creating possible scenarios for parishioner feedback, and other related tasks.

More details about 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 may vary from parish to parish.

We know you are very connected to your parish spiritually and emotionally, but 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. No decisions have been made about the future of the Joliet Deanery except that it will undergo a restructuring. 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 a new Catholic community in the Joliet Deanery.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Maureen Harton
Director of Implementation
Targeted Restructuring Committee