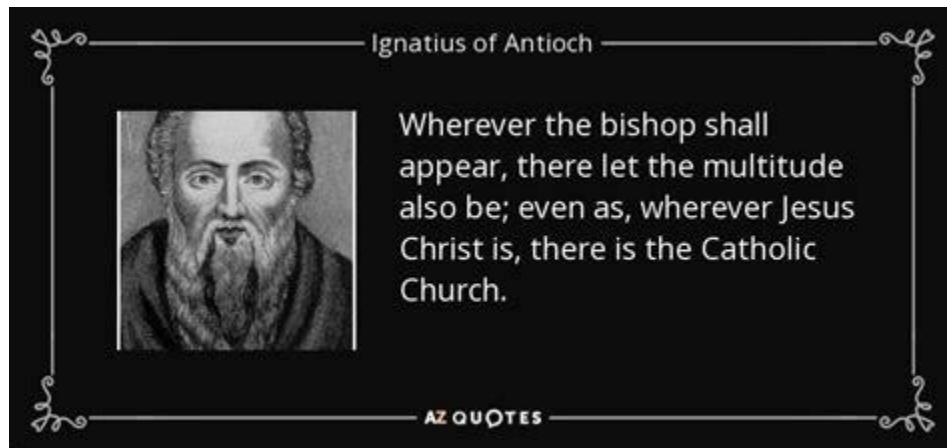


**FROM FATHER JOHN:** *"This saying is trustworthy: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Therefore, a bishop must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, decent, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not aggressive, but gentle, not contentious, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children under control with perfect dignity; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of the church of God? He should not be a recent convert, so that he may not become conceited and thus incur the devil's punishment. He must also have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, the devil's trap." (1 Timothy 3:1 – 7)*



The following is Archbishop-Designate Hicks' article for the month of January. It is entitled *One Last Column, Ever Grateful*. This is his final column written for the People of the Diocese of Joliet. As you are probably aware, Archbishop-Designate Hicks has been appointed the next Archbishop of New York and will be installed as the Archbishop and the Ordinary of the Archdiocese of New York on February 6<sup>th</sup>. In this article, he offers us a reflection on his five years as Bishop of Joliet.

I wish Archbishop-Designate Hicks all the best as he leaves Joliet for New York. Please keep the Diocese of Joliet and all our people in your prayers, asking the Holy Spirit to send us a good and faithful bishop to lead our diocese into the future.

May God bless you and all those who love the Lord.

**FROM BISHOP HICKS:**

"For more than five years, I have been blessed to share my thoughts with you in this monthly column. When I first began writing, it took me a very long time to craft each reflection. I often wondered if anyone was reading them or if they would make any difference at all.

But at parish visits and events, many of you told me that you read these reflections and that they helped you understand my mind and my heart. Some of you offered positive comments

and others offered constructive suggestions. All of that feedback helped me grow in gratitude. I stopped seeing these columns as a task and started seeing them as a privilege. They became one of the ways we shared our faith journey together.

Now I write my final column. It is a bittersweet moment. I am excited for my next steps to New York. At the same time, I am going to miss this ongoing exchange with you.

As we come to the conclusion of this written dialogue, I would like to reflect with you on a few thoughts I shared at my farewell Mass on January 11, 2026.

In my homily, I expressed my sincere gratitude for the faith and love you have shown me throughout my years as your bishop. Together we have shared significant moments. We have celebrated the sacraments. We have strengthened our mission to be a vibrant and evangelizing Church. Through Confirmations, ordinations, graduations, the Chrism Mass, baptisms, funerals, community service, and our care for the most vulnerable, I saw Jesus Christ revealed in you. And each time we gathered for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, you strengthened my faith and drew me closer to God. And I pray that I have done the same for you.

I am deeply grateful to our priests who faithfully serve with pastoral hearts and leadership. To our deacons, wives, and families, thank you for your steadfast ministry of charity and your service. To our religious women and men and consecrated virgins, your prayerful presence and collaborative ministry have been a constant blessing. I am grateful for every sacrifice and every quiet act of love that often goes unseen but never goes unnoticed by God.

I also want to thank our diocesan staff and all employees who work as a vocation to ensure that the Church continues its mission. Our administrators, teachers, catechists, and youth ministers form disciples in classrooms and parish halls. Our musicians, liturgical ministers, and countless volunteers give life and beauty to our worship and mission. And to every parishioner across our seven counties, please know how grateful I am for your generosity and witness to faith in your homes, parishes, and workplaces.

Through baptism, we are all called to continue living the mission of Jesus Christ. I now move forward to serve in New York, trusting that the good work we have begun together will continue to bear fruit here in the Diocese of Joliet.

Many have asked who will become the next bishop. Soon, an administrator will be appointed who will continue to guide and govern the diocese while the apostolic nuncio and the Dicastery of Bishops offer recommendations to our Holy Father, Pope Leo. In due time, he will appoint the seventh Bishop of Joliet. Please join me in prayer for that discernment process.

Even though my ministry will continue in another place, I believe that prayer keeps us close. Every time we pray for one another, we remain closely united in Christ. So let us keep lifting each other up before God. I will carry you with me in my heart and in my daily prayer, and I humbly ask you to remember me in yours.

I also encourage you to be disciples who make disciples. Please continue to embrace my pastoral letter entitled MAKE. Pray with it. Reflect on it. Share it. Put it into practice every day. The Church grows when every one of us answers the call to live the Gospel with conviction and joy.

You remain in my heart and in my prayers with great love and deep gratitude. May God bless you and bless us always with His Spirit of peace and all good things. Paz y bien.”