

Into the Deep Update from Fr. Bart

I want to give an update on the Into the Deep planning process we are doing with our Beloit/Clinton Pastorate #12. On March 13, myself and the other priests, Fr. Jim and Fr. Lawrence made a visit to Beloit and Clinton where we met with the staffs of the parishes and then enjoyed a tour of all the churches, rectories, offices, school buildings, church halls, and childcare center. This was a great experience and a wonderful way for the staffs and priests to meet. I am grateful for Fr. Mike, Fr. Bala, and Fr. Prabhakar for helping us with the introductions and giving us a wonderful tour. I immediately fell in love with our pastorate and have been praying for all of you ever since! I am very excited and honored to continue all the good work that has already been done and guide our pastorate through this merger process. I realize that it will not be easy and there are many tasks for us to do in the coming months, but with God's help we will be able to accomplish this and more!



I want to let you know the housing arrangements. Fr. Jim Murphy will live at the OLA house. Fr. Lawrence Oparaji and myself will live together at St. Jude's Rectory. One of the goals of Into the Deep is to allow for the mentoring of newly ordained priests by more experienced priests. In my experience, the best way for this to occur is if the priests are living together. This will also help with communication and keep us close to where the majority of our activities and people are. Even though there will not be a resident priest living in Clinton, all parishioners of the pastorate will have the same pastoral care and attention given to them and the communities that make up our pastorate. Fr. Lawrence and I will have our offices at Our Lady of the Assumption. Fr. Jim will have his office at St. Thomas.

A Pre-Transition Team has been assembled and we have had two meetings, one in April and one in May. Our next meeting is scheduled for June 7th at St. Stephen's. During our meetings we have had delicate and profound discussions about the Mass Schedule, Religious Education, where the priests will be living, the role of the Transition Team, goals of Into the Deep, challenges to our unity, etc. These meetings have helped me understand better where people from the different parishes are coming from on different topics regarding Into the Deep. I am grateful for the honest sharing and feedback that has been given and it is helping me as decisions are being made.

On June 1, 2023 I will be allowed to share with you our new Pastorate Mass Schedule and Confession Schedule that I have been working on with the other priests and Bishop Hying and that will take effect on the weekend of July 1 and 2. There are currently 10 weekend Masses in the pastorate and the new Mass Schedule will have 8 weekend Masses. Bishop Hying has given us two principles for designing new Mass Schedules going forward: (1) A priest should not regularly offer more than 3 Masses for Sunday, and (2) At least half of the Masses in the pastorate should be 50% filled. According to the current statistics from last year's October Count, the only Mass in the Pastorate that is over 50% filled is the 11:00 a.m. Spanish Mass at St. Jude's. One way to build up better Mass attendance in the Pastorate is to offer all 8 Masses at different times so there is a great variety of Masses and locations to choose from, without competing Masses at the same time. Another goal was to allow for two priests to cover all 8 Masses when a third priest is away for the weekend. The proposed Mass Schedule has been discussed at the Pre-Transition Team Meetings, with the Bishop, and with the Staffs. The 8 weekend Masses will be covered on a rotation by the three priests. However, I will need to preside at the Spanish Mass every Sunday because I am the only one who can celebrate Mass in Spanish. The Bishop also asked us to have at least one daily Mass per week at each church.

Again, please know of my prayers for all of you and my great enthusiasm to have the honor of being your parochial administrator as we continue to move forward placing a greater emphasis on our mission and positioning ourselves for the future to evangelize and make disciples!