

*Holy Cross-Immaculata Parish*

*The Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord*



My Dear Friends in Christ,

The Christmas bulletin included the introductory information disseminated by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati regarding the “Beacons of Light” long-term planning program. We were hoping that the latest information regarding the next stage in the new planning process would be disseminated this month, but, the consulting firm contracted by the archdiocese has requested more time to gather data before presenting their recommendations for the first round of proposals to be considered. However, there is some information that I want to share with you that will affect our parish.

Beacons of Light is different from past programs in three ways. First, this is the first time that all parishes will be included. In the past, parishes staffed by religious orders were not included in diocesan planning. But now, since most religious communities are in the process of determining how they will prioritize their ministries as their numbers continue to decline, we know that some parishes staffed by religious orders may revert to diocesan leadership. This happened this year at St. Monica-St. George Parish in Clifton. It is possible that in the future, some religious orders like the Jesuits and the Marianists, whose ministerial focus has always been education, may choose to give up parish ministry so that they will be able to maintain a prominent presence in their high schools and colleges.

Secondly, in this new planning process, the decisions for restructuring will no longer be determined by the boundaries of the deaneries or pastoral regions. Instead, a wider variety of factors considered will produce more creative scenarios. For example, in the past, shared ministries or shared administrative functions between Holy Cross-Immaculata and either St. Francis de Sales or St. Rose were never considered because our parish is in the Cathedral Deanery and the others are in St. Francis de Sales Deanery. Another new scenario for possible collaboration between parishes might be, that in order to keep some poor inner-city parishes open, a large, more affluent suburban parish may choose to twin with a smaller parish in the same way many large parishes in the United States twin with parishes in Appalachia or poor countries in Central America or Africa.

And finally, since Archbishop Schnurr has set forth the primary goal of “one pastor for one parish”, a new administrative structure might be set up in which one larger parish might have one or more smaller “missions”. This new structure has already been implemented in the Cathedral Deanery. Annunciation Parish in Clifton now has St. Bernard Mission in Winton Place and Mother of Christ Mission in Winton Terrace, and St. Leo Parish in North Fairmount has St. Boniface Mission in Northside. The pastor of the parish is responsible to make certain that the sacramental needs of the missions are met.

Each mission is expected to be financially independent from the parish unless the members of the larger parish choose to fund the missions as part of their charitable outreach. Each mission may have its own pastoral administrator and business manager, or it may share staff with another mission or with the parish, much like our parish shares Charlie DeZarn, our accountant, with several other parishes.

The information that I want to share with you at this time that will affect HCI Parish immediately has to do with my plans for retirement. When I accepted the position as pastor in 2016, it was for a six-year term ending June 30, 2022, when I would turn 70, the approved retirement age for priests in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. During the Covid shut-down this spring, a number of issues surfaced that made me reconsider the length of my term. I wrote a letter to Archbishop Schnurr, asking for his permission retire in July, 2021, a year early. He has granted permission for me to retire earlier than July 2022, but he has asked me to be flexible with the exact date.

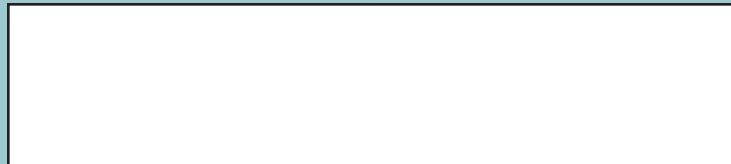
The Archbishop has asked several religious orders to consider staffing HCI parish, much like the Passionist Fathers did for many years, but he has not received any responses yet. Therefore, he has decided to include HCI Parish in the Open Listings that will go out to all diocesan priests and religious orders in the next few weeks. He is hoping that some nominations will be made that will allow the archdiocese to begin considering several alternatives. It could be that a priest who serves in an administrative position for the archdiocese may offer to be a part-time pastor, like Fr. Bacon was. Another possibility might be that a pastor of another parish might collaborate with his Pastoral Council and consider accepting HCI as a mission of their parish. And finally, the open listings may create new interest from a religious community. I believe that the Beacons of Light planning program allows much more flexibility and will generate more creative scenarios for the future of this parish.

I will continue to be in dialogue with Fr. David Endres, the Director of Priest Personnel. I will encourage him to make certain that our Parish Advisory Council is included in the planning and selection process. If any other parishioners would like to be involved in the Beacons of Light long-term planning program for our parish, please contact me.

*Fr. Len Fecko*

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