

**Bishop Ronald A. Hicks' Decisions Concerning the Restructuring of Parishes within  
DuPage, Grundy and Southern Will Counties**

**“Phase 3 of Targeted Restructuring within the Diocese of Joliet-in-Illinois”**

**February 13, 2025**

The Diocese of Joliet, similar to many other Catholic dioceses around the United States, has been engaged in a three-year, Targeted Restructuring process. This three-year process has been deliberate, proactive and forward-looking based on current facts. A Targeted Restructuring Committee (“TRC”) of the Diocese of Joliet has been engaged in this process continuously since June of 2022. The clergy and lay members of the TRC are listed on our Diocese of Joliet website under “Targeted Restructuring of Parishes and Schools.” Each parish and school within the Diocese’s large geographical region of seven counties has been subject to this intentional evaluation process.

Based on a careful review and analysis, and with significant input received in organized parish listening sessions and leadership meetings, I announced my restructuring decisions for the parishes and schools in Phase 1 in March of 2023 and Phase 2 in January of 2024. Remaining parishes and schools to be reviewed and analyzed comprised Phase 3 of Targeted Restructuring, which is the final phase of our restructuring process. Today I am sharing the 11-month endeavor and announcing the decisions of the Phase 3 process.

The TRC initiated Phase 3 of the Targeted Restructuring process in March 2024. After an extensive review and analysis of parish and school data, along with financial and demographic information, 17 parishes, one chapel and one mission, or 19 sites, were identified for further analyses within the Phase III process. The identified parishes were located within DuPage, Grundy and South Will counties. Three additional parishes were included in the review process due to their geographical proximity and potential to support parishes under review. No Catholic schools were found in need of further review within the Phase 3 process.

In April and May of 2024, the former Director of Implementation for the TRC met with pastors of the Phase 3 initiative to explain the targeted restructuring process and timeline. In addition, the Diocese engaged Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI), a third-party consultant, to assist parishes and their leadership through the targeted restructuring process. CLI also led the TRC through their review, analysis and recommendations during the Phase 3 restructuring process.

On May 28, 2024, the Phase 3 pastors and parochial vicars were provided with Pastoral Accompaniment Skills Training to support the added leadership and decision-making expectations within their parish communities. After that meeting, pastors designated 3-6 Key Parish Leaders (“KPLs”) from their parishes to fully engage in the restructuring discussions and communications.

The KPLs met in four lengthy sessions between August 20, 2024, through November 13, 2024. KPLs were provided with pastoral accompaniment training and given insights into the information and presentations to be shared at parish listening sessions. The KPL meetings included spiritual reflections, important facts concerning the availability and status of priests and seminarians, parish finances, the state of parish facilities, parish sacramental statistics, recent mass count numbers, specific or unique parish data points, area demographics, and explanations of possible parish restructuring scenarios. During and after each of the four KPL meetings, KPLs provided feedback and suggestions to CLI and to TRC members. Potential “groupings” of parishes – as suggested by the TRC -were discussed and presented to KPLs, based on geography and opportunities for regrowth.

Individualized parish listening sessions were announced in advance and held with parishioners at each of the parishes in Phase 3 between September 28, 2024, and November 9, 2024.

Approximately 3,000 parishioners attended these listening sessions. Each parish listening session was facilitated by CLI. These presentations focused on relevant, significant, historical and up-to-date data about the parish. Parishioners asked perceptive questions, debated possible restructuring alternatives, and expressed their concerns and hopes for their parish community.

KPLs provided written feedback from their respective parishes to the TRC by November 20, 2024. The feedback received from the KPLs was informative and insightful, including input from pastors, parish staff and parishioners, and offered solutions and alternatives for the potential restructuring of their parish. During November of 2024, Diocesan leadership, as well as TRC members also met with “support parishes” and their pastors and leadership to explore their involvement in supporting restructured parishes and/or expanding their own parish community.

The TRC met on November 26, 2024, and December 10, 2024, to carefully review all the information and input from the parish listening sessions, the KPL meetings, pastors, Diocesan leadership, CLI, community demographics and parish historical data on significant factors such as finances, sacraments, facility assessments, and mass attendance. The TRC also factored into its discussions the current and future availability of priests, the best use of parish facilities, and the viability of shared parish staff and resources.

As a result of its deliberations, the TRC made Phase 3 restructuring recommendations to me on December 20, 2024. After two weeks of prayer and discernment, on January 8, 2025, I accepted the recommendations of the TRC, without any exceptions or changes. On February 13, 2025, I consulted with our Presbyteral Council, in accord with Canon Law. The Presbyteral Council unanimously approved my acceptance of the restructuring recommendations for Phase 3. I also discussed the accepted recommendations with the College of Consultors on February 13, 2025.

Today I render my decisions. Effective July 1, 2025, the following parish restructurings will take place:

- St. Boniface in Monee and St. Mary in Park Forest will amalgamate into St. Liborius in Steger. St. Mary’s church and buildings will close. At this time, the St. Boniface church and buildings will remain open, to be used at the discretion of the pastor of St. Liborius. St. Liborius will be asked to evaluate quickly the use and status of its former convent and former school building, given the available facilities at Mother Teresa Catholic Academy.
- St. Paul the Apostle in Peotone will remain open as an independent parish.
- St. Patrick of Wilton Center in Manhattan will amalgamate into St. Joseph, Manhattan. St. Patrick’s church will close.
- Immaculate Conception in Braidwood will amalgamate into St. Rose of Lima in Wilmington. Immaculate Conception church in Braidwood will remain open as a worship site.
- Sacred Heart in Kinsman will amalgamate into Assumption in Coal City. Sacred Heart church in Kinsman will remain open as a worship site.
- St. Mary in Reddick will be amalgamated into and remain affiliated with St. Lawrence Parish in South Wilmington.
- The St. Mary site will serve as a worship site.
- St. Lawrence O’Toole Chapel in Essex will close.
- St. Luke in Carol Stream will amalgamate into Corpus Christi in Carol Stream. The church and buildings of St. Luke in Carol Stream will close.

- St. Mark in Wheaton will amalgamate into St. Michael in Wheaton. St. Mark church will remain open as a worship site.
- Christ the Servant in Woodridge will remain open as an independent parish.
- St. John the Apostle in Villa Park will amalgamate into St. Alexander in Villa Park. St. John the Apostle will close its church and buildings.
- Ascension of our Lord in Oakbrook Terrace will merge with Christ the King in Lombard. Christ the King will become the designated parish. Ascension of our Lord will remain open as a worship site. Temporarily the name of the merged parish will be “Christ the King and Ascension of Our Lord Parish” and, after July 1, 2025, the parishioners and pastor of the newly merged parish will decide on a new name for the parish.

Please be advised that the meanings and impact of the canonical terms used in these decisions can be found in our “Frequently Asked Questions” document posted on the Diocesan website under “Targeted Restructuring of Parishes and Schools.” These include the Church’s definitions of the terms “amalgamate,” “merge,” “designated parish,” “territorial parish,” and “worship site.”

As a result of consolidations, the following eight amalgamated parishes will exist as of July 1, 2025:

- St. Liborius in Steger
- St. Rose of Lima in Wilmington
- Assumption in Coal City
- St. Lawrence in South Wilmington
- St. Alexander in Villa Park
- Corpus Christi in Carol Stream
- St. Michael in Wheaton
- St. Joseph in Manhattan

Two parishes will continue to exist as independent parishes:

- St. Paul the Apostle in Peotone
- Christ the Servant in Woodridge

One parish will exist as a result of the merger of two parishes, and will be temporarily named as:

- “Christ the King and Ascension of our Lord”

Six former parishes will now become worship sites as of July 1, 2025:

- St. Boniface in Monee
- Immaculate Conception in Braidwood
- Sacred Heart in Kinsman
- St. Mary in Reddick
- St. Mark in Wheaton
- Ascension of our Lord in Oakbrook Terrace

Finally, these four parish churches and one chapel will close effective July 1, 2025:

- St. Mary in Park Forest
- St. Patrick (Wilton Center) in Manhattan
- St. Luke in Carol Stream
- St. John the Apostle in Villa Park
- St. Lawrence O'Toole Chapel in Essex

Ultimately, the Phase 3 Targeted Restructuring process affected 22 sites, which included 20 parishes and two additional worship sites. As of July 1, 2025, those 22 sites are being consolidated into 11 parishes and 6 worship sites.

Significant changes, as the ones I am announcing today, will also necessitate some reassignments of priests within our Diocese. Those decisions have not yet been made. Priest assignments require additional discernment, discussion and decisions by our priests, the priest personnel board, and me. Changes in assignments and responsibilities will be announced by June 1, 2025.

Allow me to share more about our path forward. This third phase of restructuring for our diocese is our final phase for now. However, that does not mean we remain static or complacent. My obligation as your bishop is to remain attentive to our pastoral needs and to the shifting needs of our faithful and surrounding demographics. We will continue to monitor the health and viability of our parishes, schools and ministries to make sure we are a vibrant, thriving Catholic Church that is dedicated to passing on our faith to the next generations.

Please let me share a few personal remarks about our diocesan restructuring process. I want you to know I have listened to you. I have heard and read your concerns and reservations. I have humbly witnessed your faith devotion, your personal sacrifices and your parish commitment. Be assured the TRC and I considered with respect your input, insights and suggestions.

And while I am confident these decisions are the right ones for the future of the Church, I understand these results are very difficult when they directly affect you and your family. Change is hard. The changes may affect where you worship, how far you need to drive to attend mass or participate in parish events, and what you consider to be your intimate faith community. I appreciate these decisions may cause you to be sad and lead to a time of grieving. With all my compassion, know that my prayers are with you on this new journey.

Finally, if you are one of our faithful that is affected in any way by these changes, I encourage you to invite the Holy Spirit into your heart during the transitions. Please be open to engaging in a new faith community and new faith experiences. And if you are a parishioner at a parish that is supporting a change in a nearby parish, please open your door and your heart to welcome your new parishioners and friends.

I ask you to refer to the many other documents addressing our Targeted Restructuring process and decisions on our diocesan website at [www.diojoliet.org](http://www.diojoliet.org) under the tab of "Targeted Restructuring for Parishes and Schools." Your parish will also be providing additional information in the coming weeks.

Thank you for your love of Jesus Christ and your commitment to His Church. With great faith and hope, let us ask the Holy Spirit to bless, lead, and guide us in these next steps within the Diocese of Joliet.