



As we celebrate the great Solemnity of Pentecost, we recall the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the birth of the Church.

Yet, as we are well aware, the world we live in today presents many challenges for us to propose the Gospel in a compelling and impactful way. We cannot ignore the realities we face. However, we are full of hope as we trust the prompting of the Holy Spirit to engage in a new apostolic age of missionary discipleship.

It is in this hope that Bishop Lou Tylka announces the decisions that have been discerned regarding the structure of the parishes in the Diocese of Peoria for the future. We certainly call upon the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts to these necessary changes to create a more vibrant, mission driven and sustainable Church for growing disciples.

Two years ago, the Diocese of Peoria initiated a process in our diocese which we call “Growing Disciples.” The process was not centered upon the reality of decline; rather it has been a process of renewal seeking opportunities for growth. Originating from listening sessions of his first two years serving as Coadjutor Bishop, the Bishop articulated five foundations on which to create a better, more vibrant Church: Evangelization, Discipleship, The Eucharist, Vocations and the legacy of Archbishop Fulton Sheen. He enlisted the help of the Catholic Leadership Institute to guide our process of assessing our current structure and discerning a more mission-driven sustainable structure for the future.

The process was quite thorough, working with every parish and ministry in the diocese. They gathered hard data, including Baptisms and funeral trends, Mass attendance counts, the number of active priests, upcoming priest retirements, trends in candidates for the seminary, maintenance costs for the churches, parish budgets, projected costs for repairs, geography and population trends among other factors. The Growing Disciples Core Team, Consultants, Priests, Curia Offices, Diocesan Planning Commission, and Key Parish Leaders provided opportunities for conversations, prayer and discerning. The Diocese gathered feedback from thousands of parishioners and community members as we went through several rounds of parish modeling.

The details of the new parish configurations, as well as the assignments of priests can be found on the Growing Disciples website: growingdisciplescdop.org beginning Saturday evening, May 18, 2024.

These difficult and yet necessary changes will create greater freedom to engage in this new apostolic age. The first disciples, including the Blessed Mother Mary, were filled with the Holy Spirit and commissioned by Jesus to go make disciples. May we encounter the same gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us today - setting our hearts ablaze for Christ, so that we too may bear fruit for God's kingdom in our local Church.

Venerable Archbishop Sheen - pray for us!