



August 18, 2021

Dear Brothers in Christ,

Nearly 200 years ago, the Church recognized the growing Catholic presence in the greater St. Louis area and erected the Archdiocese of St. Louis as a local Church to support the faithful who had immigrated from near and far to this area. Throughout the years, faithful priests, deacons, religious and laity have read the signs of the times and reshaped the structures of the Archdiocese to continue the essential mission of the Church to evangelize. Today, we are great beneficiaries of the evangelical efforts of those men and women who have come before us and still we are entrusted with the very same mission by Jesus Christ – to spread the Gospel message to all souls within our geographic boundaries.

Since arriving in St. Louis nearly one year ago, I am inspired by the faith that each of you possesses and the hopes you have for those you serve through your ministry. I have heard from you and the faithful of the Archdiocese that we are doing good ministry, but there are opportunities to do even better. The signs of the times tell us that Catholicism is still very relevant and needed within our Archdiocesan footprint, but the structures that exist do not allow us to grow the Catholic presence in the way that a 21st century people need.

Encouraged by the Apostles of the early Church and the pioneers of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, I have begun a strategic planning process that will touch every aspect of our Archdiocesan life to enable us to be missionary disciples amidst an ever-growing secular culture that longs for the voice and healing presence of Jesus Christ. This strategic planning process will take two years and will involve a significant amount of listening and feedback from you and all the faithful before any decisions about structures will be made. While there are no preconceived notions or decisions that have been made, I know that this process will most likely result in the most dramatic recalibration of our Archdiocese in decades. Any changes that are made will be made in light of our ultimate goal – to enable missionary discipleship across our Archdiocese.

To ensure our success, I ask that this strategic planning process include every Archdiocesan parish, school and agency and I anticipate that they will all be directly impacted in some way.

In light of this, at the beginning of this process, I am asking for your honest and direct feedback about where our Archdiocese is and where it can be. Additionally, I am announcing a 2-year moratorium on priest assignments/transfers and capital improvements at all parishes which will better facilitate the strategic planning process.

Regarding initial priest and deacon input

In preparation for our in-person meeting on October 8th for priests or October 30th for deacons, I would ask each of you to complete a survey conducted by an objective, third-party, Catholic Leadership Institute, whom we have partnered with for this planning process. You will receive an email with a survey link shortly and I ask that you complete this survey by September 15th. This survey will enable us to discern where the Lord is calling us collectively and individually over the next several years.

Regarding priest assignments

The implementation of the strategic plan will significantly alter the type and number of parishes in the Archdiocese. To avoid the notion that there are “winners and losers” and that one pastor/church is absorbing another, it is quite possible that by 2026 many parishes will have a new pastor assigned to them. Secondly, the hope is that with the alteration of the number and type of parishes we will need fewer pastors, have more opportunities for communal living, and allow recently ordained to gain more experience before becoming pastors themselves. Individual feedback and interviews with each of you will aid in the discernment process of what sort of ministry and living situation you might find yourself in by the end of this process. Of course, exceptions will be made in the next two years in order to address situations such as retirement, illness, or other individual extenuating circumstances. You may reach out to your priest personnel representative to discuss such situations.

Regarding capital improvements

It is important that we continue to be responsible stewards of the infrastructure that we currently own, while not asking our parishioners to make investments in expansions or modifications of buildings until we have a clearer view of our strategy for the Archdiocese going forward. We want to avoid asking the people of God to pay for an addition onto a church, school, or rectory, only to have it repurposed, redesigned, etc. a few years later. The Office of Building and Real Estate will help guide pastors in addressing infrastructure needs in the most prudent way possible as they arise, and please reach out to them as you have questions on specific capital projects. As a guideline, and until further notice, only projects that are required to repair or maintain current infrastructure in good working (and safe) order will be approved, and we ask that any projects related to expansions and capital improvements, as well as any other projects not directly related to safety issues, be deferred at this time. This includes projects for which funds have already been designated or raised. Any safety/repair projects that have already been approved via my or Vicar General Monsignor Stehly's signature prior to receiving this notice should proceed as planned. Going forward, any repairs over 3% of annual parish income, or \$25,000, whichever amount is less, will still need approval from me via the Office of Building and Real Estate as stated in the current Construction Process Guidelines. A communication from the Office of Building and Real Estate giving further detail will be sent in the next week.

I am grateful for your participation in this important strategic planning process that will shape our Archdiocese for the next century. I am hopeful for where the Lord will lead us both personally and as a local Church through this planning process. I am honored to serve you as Archbishop during this pivotal moment in the history of our great Archdiocese.

Know of my continued prayers for you and your ministry. I ask for the intercession of St. Louis, the King of France, to pray for all of us through this endeavor as we seek to make all things new for the greater glory of God.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Mitchell T. Rozanski

Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski
Archbishop of St. Louis