



ONE CHURCH
ENCOUNTERING JESUS
EQUIPPING DISCIPLES
LIVING MERCY

November 2022

Dear friends in Christ,

I write to you at an important moment in our Journey of Faith process. Teams have been working for months in families of parishes across the archdiocese. They have been imagining how to shape a vibrant future for our parishes while respecting the blessings of the past and recognizing current realities.

For decades we have experienced significant shifts in where people choose to live. Within parishes large and small, family members and neighbors are choosing not to participate in parish life in growing numbers. Also, the segment of Nebraskans who claim no religious affiliation is growing. The number of priests available to serve in parishes has been shrinking and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Understandably, we want to maintain what we are used to in our parishes, no matter their size. That will simply not be possible, nor is it a prudent response to the command of Jesus to share the gospel in every time and place.

As we receive the plans from families of parishes, I plan to review them carefully. I will consider the schedule and administrative changes necessary to meet our planning parameters. I know that this has involved difficult choices for rural parishes particularly. It is likely that Sunday Mass will no longer be offered in several churches in the future, although it will be available nearby. I know that this means a painful loss for faithful parishioners, but I do not see another way to meet our goal of establishing stable pastoral structures for the next ten years.

Beyond structural and administrative changes, I will be anxious to see how families of parishes imagine a way forward in Christ. Our parishes must become missional communities or face continued diminishment. The task for us now is to deepen our relationship with Jesus and learn how to evangelize our neighbors so that they, too, can have life in Jesus. As our parishes begin to work together, rooted in prayer, we will find that the gifts of the Holy Spirit needed for this task are abundant and powerful.

I ask for the support of your prayers as I review the plans and offer any needed revisions. Pray, too, that as the plans are communicated to parishioners in the coming weeks, there will be an openness to receive them thoughtfully so that implementation can begin in mid-2023.

Jesus has promised to be with us in the church until the end of time. He is with us now. He has plans for abundant life for us and for those who do not yet hear his voice. May all of our trust and all of our hope be in him.

With my prayers for a blessed Advent, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend George J. Lucas
Archbishop of Omaha