

**SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER (S.O.F.T.)  
UNAPPROVED DRAFT PLAN  
Bonnots Mill, Folk, Frankenstein, Linn, Loose Creek, Westphalia  
(Coalition of the Southeast Deanery)**

On October 18, 2022, Bishop McKnight of the Jefferson City Diocese announced a diocesan-wide planning initiative called Shaping our Future Together (SOFT). Bishop McKnight asked each deanery to develop its own process for gathering information and input from the parishes of that deanery. Gathered information and input was then used to develop a plan for the viability and thriving of parishes within the deanery for the next 5-10 years. The following is the product of this effort, prepared by parish leaders from the above listed parishes.

## **ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC & APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

**“What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” (Mt 16:26)**

*“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be ‘the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.’ This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach.”*

Pope Francis’ encyclical, The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)

**Seven Essential Values for thriving Catholic parishes  
as outlined by Bishop Sean McKnight:**

- 1. Sacraments are accessible and celebrated well**
- 2. Hospitality**
- 3. Clergy well-being**
- 4. Canon Law and current Church teaching**
- 5. Faith Formation**
- 6. Human and financial resources**
- 7. Fulfillment of the Mission**
  - Mercy/Charity**
  - Stewardship**
  - Co-responsibility**
  - Women’s ministry**

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**SHORT TERM (1-2 years)**

**THEME: REFINE (PROTECT EUCHARIST/SACRAMENT ACCESSIBILITY BY STRENGTHENING CO-RESPONSIBILITY and THE SPIRITUALITY OF STEWARDSHIP)**

1. Priests remain in their assignment for extended time.
2. Form a coalition council. The council will consist of at least one member from each parish pastoral council. Parish Council presidents may appoint 1-3 additional members from the parish, with the approval of the parish pastor.
  - a. The coalition council will continuously assess & address present and future needs of the coalition.
  - b. Designate a coalition coordinator to ensure implementation of coalition plan.
  - c. Communicate with parishioners from all parishes through town halls, surveys, and bulletin notices.
3. The coalition coordinator, coalition council, assigned priests, will identify & implement ways in which the churches within the coalition can better work together to ensure parish efficiency and a thriving environment for the salvation of souls. Examples include:
  - a. Stagger Mass/Confession times/priest days off within the coalition ensuring each church has a Sunday (or Saturday vigil) Mass.
  - b. Identify and limit burden on the priests:
    - i. Utilize Deacons in their ordained roles such as baptismal/wedding preparation.
    - ii. Designate administrative positions (either diocesan or coalition positions) to cover administrative duties of coalitions/parishes/schools.
    - iii. Priests encouraged to discern possible redistribution of non-sacramental commitments.
  - c. Meet with individual ministries to perform an efficiency/quality study. The study results will be addressed so that the excess will be trimmed so that the Mass can be protected. Examples include:
    1. uniformizing materials and practices across the coalition (e.g. bulletins, contribution envelopes, websites, missalettes, Mass preparations . . .).
    2. merging of ministries/roles.
    3. efficient/effective communication.
  - d. To overcome transportation obstacles, coalition coordinated transportation will be provided for faith enrichment opportunities.

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4. Strengthen Catholic education of our parish families with diocesan support through catholic schools, RCIA, catechesis teaching, PSR and the domestic Church.
5. Advocate for religious vocations.
  - a. Specific & Intentional Prayers for priestly vocations.
    - i. Interspersed within routine prayers (e.g. rosaries, stations of the cross, prayer groups).
  - b. Identify ways to promote priestly, diaconate and other religious vocations.
    - i. (e.g. Increase the number of men in roles as acolytes and lectors).
6. Advocate for an increased faith in the Real Presence.
  - a. Specific & Intentional Prayers for faith in the Real Presence.
  - b. Coordinated adoration opportunities across the coalition.
7. Current ministries continue their strong presence in our coalition.
  - a. Women’s ministry continues active role drawing from resources within the coalition and Diocese.
  - b. Men’s ministry continues active role drawing from resources within the coalition and Diocese, including the Knights of Columbus (fraternal brotherhood) which continues to promote a more authentic Catholic atmosphere drawing from resources within the coalition and the fraternal order.
8. Transparency
  - a. Routine sharing of information from diocese/deanery/parish: Q&A, town halls, surveys, etc.
9. Individuals commit to living our lives as an example to draw others TO Christ & the Catholic faith: by our love, clinging to our Catholic values and frequent participation of the Sacraments.
  - a. *“Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardor of the spirit of Christ.”* (DECREE ON THE APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY, POPE PAUL VI, 11/18/1965)
10. Encourage support for the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) to help protect accessibility to all Masses and Sacraments. Addendum A explains how establishing a dedicated, non-geographic TLM parish in the Diocese of Jefferson City would lead to these main benefits:
  - a. Additional priests for the diocese
  - b. Growth in Mass attendance

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**MID-TERM (3-5 years)**

(Inclusive of prior short-term plans)

**THEME: REINVIGORATE (ENHANCE PARISH SYSTEMS AS THRIVING SANCTUARIES OF MERCY)**

1. Ensure wellness of parish environment. Allow for the full movement of the healing grace available in the Real Presence and the Sacraments by bringing to awareness and reconciling wounded areas of our parish community.
2. Identify ways to engage youth ministry/young adults. Examples include:
  - a. Sunday evening Mass.
  - b. Prayer/Worship nights with music
  - c. Effective communication through programs such as a college internship for marketing/communications majors
3. Identify ways to provide support & ministry for the domestic church (young families).
4. Promote charity and works of mercy through Catholic Charities and current social concerns committees by creating Ambassador programs to identify needs within the parish and assist in the delivery of regional resources available.
5. Utilize rectories within the coalition to provide free housing for retired priests. Light support provided by volunteers & school children in parishes. (e.g. driving, meals, house duties, social, etc.) All priests (active/retired) within the coalition will be given the option to live together in community to enhance brotherhood & well-being.

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**LONG-TERM (5-10 years)**

(Inclusive of short-term and mid-term plans)

**THEME: REINVISION (RECOGNIZE PARISHES AS CENTERS OF CHARITY)**

1. Faith Formation/Outreach opportunities, to empower individuals and spread the Gospel/true Catholic message.
  - a. Evangelization, healing, etc.
    - i. Everything else must be subordinated to the goal of helping people get to heaven.
  - b. Domestic church (i.e. young families at home).
  - c. Domestic ministries to the margins within our coalition. For example,
    - i. hands on serving locally (Nursing homes, Good Shepherd Pantry, etc.)
    - ii. Welcoming atmosphere and highest attention to hospitality within the congregation).
  - d. Continue sharing resources/guest speaker opportunities across the coalition.

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Bishop McKnight's SOFT initiative aims to create thriving parishes by combining and making best use of limited resources. The Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) community proposes a plan that directly supports this goal with **additional priests** for the diocese and **increased Mass attendance** from young adults and families.

Support from non-TLM lay leadership for this plan will help further the cause for a dedicated TLM presence and the benefits it brings to *all* Catholics in our diocese. As we complete the planning and discernment process, we ask each coalition, deanery and the bishop for their prayerful consideration of this proposal.

**ADDENDUM A**

**1. Background**

- A. The TLM has been celebrated in the Diocese of Jefferson City since 2008. What began as an intermittently celebrated TLM evolved to once monthly and is now *every* Sunday. In the past three years alone, interest in the TLM from throughout the 38 counties in the diocese has more than doubled.
  - 1) Subscribers to the TLM Newsletter have increased from less than 100 to 224. Factoring in spouses/children, this number represents, conservatively, 500 or more people.
- B. Throughout the country, ever larger numbers of young people and families are being drawn to the TLM, young men to traditional seminaries, and young women to traditional orders. Increasingly, young families in areas without access to the TLM are relocating to dioceses with thriving TLM parishes.
- C. In July 2022, our diocesan TLM delegate, Father Dylan Schrader, was transferred from St. Brendan Parish in Mexico (Central Deanery) to become pastor of both St. Joseph and St. Anthony Parishes in Westphalia and Folk (Southeast Deanery). Currently the TLM is celebrated at St. Joseph's each Sunday with average attendance of 120—most of whom travel to Westphalia from outside of the Southeast Deanery.
- D. Certain challenges exist in this arrangement (as they did previously at St. Brendan's in Mexico): Father Schrader necessarily divides his time and attention between his assigned parishioners and a widely scattered TLM community, and the parishioners have lost a Mass time slot to the TLM.

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- E. Growing numbers of Catholics in our diocese seek greater access to the TLM, and many attend TLM outside of the diocese for that reason. Meanwhile, declining Mass attendance *overall* has contributed to the need for re-evaluating the viability of some parishes. The following proposal would help alleviate these problems.

**2. Proposal for a Dedicated TLM Parish in the Diocese of Jefferson City**

- A. A comprehensive proposal will be presented to Bishop McKnight for his approval of a TLM parish, staffed and administered by a recognized TLM society—e.g., the FSSP or ICKSP. These societies have thriving Apostolates in surrounding dioceses and states.
- B. With the goal of establishing a separate, centrally located and non-geographic TLM parish, the key steps are as follows:
  - 1) Bishop McKnight issues a formal request to the societies for a TLM Apostolate.
  - 2) Local TLM community members pledge financial support for an Apostolate (generally two priests, their housing, and an oratory or chapel building).
  - 3) Temporarily, the Apostolate might rent space in an existing parish property (and celebrate the TLM at times that do not conflict with parish Masses/activities).
    - i. One priest is available daily to celebrate the TLM at the base location.
    - ii. Both priests take the TLM to outlying areas of the diocese on a regular schedule.
  - 4) The Apostolate eventually acquires its own property, operates as a separate parish, and continues its missionary activity of taking the TLM to outlying areas.

**C. The resulting benefits include:**

- 1) Additional priests for the Diocese of Jefferson City**
  - i. Already formed as priests at no expense to our diocese.
  - ii. Without taking from our already limited diocesan seminary pipeline.
- 2) Reduced demand on diocesan resources**
  - i. The Apostolate is not dependent on diocesan priests or personnel.
  - ii. The TLM does not take away a diocesan Mass time slot.
- 3) Increased pastoral care**
  - i. Apostolate priests are available to both TLM and non-TLM Catholics for Sacraments, catechesis and spiritual direction.

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**4) Increased Mass availability and attendance**

- i. TLM provides an additional Mass option in the diocese.
- ii. Demonstrated growth in TLM attendance from young adults/families.
- iii. Return of Catholics who currently drive outside of the diocese for TLM, as well as new growth potential from those who would relocate their families here for the TLM.

**5) Increased vocations**

- i. Demonstrated growth in vocations from TLM Catholics.