

THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

Renew Faith • Build Communion • Inspire Hope

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

LETTER TO THE FAITHFUL OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA PARISH, PORTAGE

May 25/26, 2019
Sixth Sunday of Easter

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

As we are all well aware, the past year has been a very difficult one, and the parishioners of St. Catherine's have certainly experienced a period of controversies, difficulties, and sufferings.

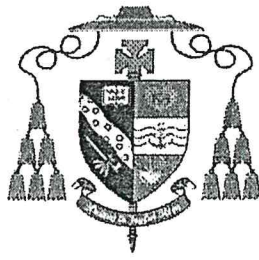
In spite of my ardent desire not to have to make changes in pastors and priests, we are faced with the reality that transfers and reassignments are unavoidable. I am especially sensitive to the recent history at St. Catherine's. While all of our priests are ordained for service to the Diocese and not to a particular parish, community, or apostolate, it does not make it any easier to embrace changes, even if they are inevitable.

It has been my experience through the years that often in the midst of difficulty other paths are opened and new opportunities present themselves in terms of pastoral care and priestly assignments in a Diocese. The trials of the past year have revealed a need to address certain deficiencies in the assistance and care that our priests and deacons receive at various times in their lives, but most especially at times of personal crisis, disability, or deteriorating health. To this end, and after much prayer and consideration, it has become clear to me that we must do better at the Diocesan level to devote the appropriate personnel and resources to helping our clergy in need, and to make the sacrifices necessary to achieve success in doing so.

While it has only been three years out of six, I have asked your pastor, Fr. Ken Schmidt, to take on a new, full-time position within the Diocese as Advocate for Priestly Ministry and Support, along with continuing his work in trauma recovery and in our Marriage Tribunal. His experience and expertise highly commend him to this important work, and I am grateful for his willingness to consider my request and to assume this important responsibility within the local Church.

I also know that Fr. Basker Lopez, MSFS, has become very dear to you, and has been very devoted in his priestly ministry, as one of the most recently arrived Fransalian Missionaries from India. He is a fine priest, and I know that we are all very grateful for his good work here in Portage. For these same reasons, Fr. Basker will also be receiving a new assignment to the Collaborative in Branch County, and our dear brothers and sisters in Coldwater, Bronson, and Union City.

At the same time, however, I am very pleased to appoint Fr. Mark Vyverman as the new pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish. He comes to you with many years of experience and after distinguishing himself as pastor of St. Charles in Coldwater, St. Mary's Assumption in Bronson, and Our Lady of Fatima in Union City, as well as Dean of the Eastern Deanery. He will be assisted by Fr. Benjamin Huynh, who will be completing his assignment at SS. John and Bernard Parish in Benton



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Harbor, and who spent some time with you as an assistant shortly after his Ordination. You will also be blessed with a newly-ordained priest. Fr. Jeffrey Hanley will be assigned to St. Catherine's as assistant pastor, as Chaplain to Hackett Catholic Prep, and as an official in our Tribunal, after returning from graduate studies in Rome. It is my hope and prayer that these new priests, along with our dear brothers, Fr. Albert Kemboi and Fr. Bill Jacobs, will provide you with excellent priestly ministry and service as we begin a new chapter in the history of the Parish.

As always, please be assured of my continued prayers for each one of you and your families, and I ask that you support your new priests with your prayers and with the warm hospitality and goodness for which you are so well known.

Asking for your prayers for me and for our Diocese as we continue to *wait in joyful hope* for all the ways our Risen Lord makes Himself known to us, I remain,

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul J. Bradley".

Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo