

## **Shaping Our Future Together**

Bishop McKnight has launched an initiative to foster collaboration and cooperation between parishes as a means for enhancing the vitality and viability of all the parishes of our diocese and improving the quality of parish life for all our members. The initiative, which is entitled Shaping Our Future Together, or SOFT for short, is intended to reinforce and deepen our practice of the Better Together concept that was introduced earlier by Bishop McKnight. Our Southeast Deanery has developed a plan for implementing the initiative over the next few months. The main elements of the deanery plan, recently approved by Bishop McKnight, appear below along with timelines for completion. Our plan revolves strongly around the creation of small groups of parishes, which are referred to as coalitions, working together to discern the needs and concerns of their collective parishioners and identifying practical ways for responding to those needs and concerns more effectively through collaboration. We as members of St. Patrick Parish in Rolla, Immaculate Conception Parish in St. James, and St. Anthony Parish in Rosati form one of the six local coalitions in our deanery.

Over the next three months, we will be inviting parish leaders and all interested participants to join us in the discernment process from which we hope to develop a first-order action plan for our local coalition. Tentative dates for evening working sessions are March 30, April 27, and May 25 at 6:15-8:00PM, so mark your calendars now. Bishop McKnight's "Seven Essential Values" listed below will be our guide for the discernment and planning process.

1. Clergy well-being
2. Faith formation
3. Sacraments are accessible and celebrated well
4. Hospitality
5. Human and financial resources
6. Canon Law and current Church teaching - solutions must be canonical
7. Fulfillment of the Mission
  - Stewardship
  - Co-responsibility
  - Centers of mercy & charity
  - Women's ministry

We will do our best to keep you informed of our progress as well as provide you with the opportunity to share your thoughts on how our three parishes can best work together to enrich the spiritual lives of our members and increase the vitality of our parishes.

### **Shaping Our Future Together (S.O.F.T.)**

#### **Addendum A - Our Discernment Abbreviated Process**

1. Form coalitions that embrace Shaping Our Future Together and encourage broad participation of parishioners in the discernment process.
2. Each coalition will form a working team to include a facilitator/lead, scribe, and members from parishes that represent the diversity of parish life (February 2023).
3. Develop a communication plan that insures through a spirit of discernment and prayer that the S.O.F.T. objectives and values are widely conveyed, (February 24 – March 10, 2023).
4. Each coalition will host town hall meetings to communicate S.O.F.T. objectives and discern how well the pastoral needs of their parishioners are being met and identify where strengths and weaknesses exist, (March 10 – April 19, 2023).
5. Coalition teams will develop actionable plans regarding collaboration among parishes utilizing the values and areas of focus of S.O.F.T. (April 11 – May 9, 2023).
6. The deanery coalitions will reconvene in a unified meeting to finalize coalition plans that are aimed at spiritually enriching the lives of our parishioners, families, parishes, and diocese by working together, (June 2023).
7. The deanery working team will provide coalition plans to Bishop McKnight and the DPC for review and approval, (June 30, 2023).