

energetic life of following Jesus with deeper faith and greater hope. Realizing how gifted we are, we will seek to become practitioners of gratitude and generosity with our time in prayer, our talent for living the mission, and our treasure building the Kingdom.



2. Envisioning a Future of Hope

Beginning in **Advent (November 29) 2026**, smaller groups of parishes within a vicariate will have gathered for a two-hour discussion surrounding the practicalities of how our various regions might better build the Church. Each part of each Vicariate has so many astounding gifts to offer the rest of the diocese – gifts of practical wisdom, piety, faith, and joyful service, which sit alongside our struggles and fears. A future full of hope comes primarily from the presence of the Holy Spirit, teaching us how we might best put ourselves and our gifts at the service of something larger than ourselves, something greater than our families and parishes. What does your grouping of parishes have to offer the rest of the diocese along the lines of the four essential priorities: youth and young adults, family life, faith formation, and growing God’s family? What might others learn from us as we seek to work together for this hope-filled future?

3. The Church’s Fruitful Retreat: Lent



During **Lent of 2027**, beginning February 10, we will enter an intentional time of spiritual retreat diocesan-

wide, even as we go about the regular work of

the Lenten season. As we anticipate the joyful new life made visible in the catechumens and candidates for initiation into the Church, we will, as a Diocese, pray fervently for the outpouring of the Spirit in many different ways.

At the same time, groups of leaders in the diocese working together, in regional groups – priests, deacons, consecrated religious, and lay faithful, youth and seniors, men and women – will begin the significant task of en fleshing the priorities for the next two years for their region. Recognizing our resources – personnel, financial, and all others – how might we best build the Kingdom in our area?

4. Resurrection in Christ

Although there will be no magical solutions to the question of the number of parishes and schools and priests and deacons and religious and lay ministers we have



available, there very well may be a renewed direction for our parishes to work in concert with one another, not competing, so that the Church might flourish, so that disciples might be renewed and increased, so that hope might become the norm in our communities because of our parishes and parishioners.

By the end of the Easter Season, May 16, 2027, each regional grouping will present to the Bishop the positive, practical movement ready to be set in motion regarding all four priorities. The diocesan staff will stand ready to support these efforts as much as possible. The proposals will be shared throughout the diocese.

God bless you all!

Most Rev. Godfrey Mullen, OSB
Bishop of Belleville