

Dear Parishioners,

We are entering Phase II the Beacons of Light, Families of Parishes (FoP) planning process. As we move forward, I would like to keep you informed about the plan and the timeline for 2023. Right at the outset let me say that the vision for our parishes, even as we begin the process of becoming one parish, is that each of our communities stay viable. In other words, it is not our plan to close communities and withdraw the Catholic presence from the neighborhoods in which they are located. That would be a big loss. There is no assurance that our parishes will look the same five years from now, and there is no denying that the financial reality and deferred maintenance in a few of our parishes pose serious challenges. However, we must strive to keep the Catholic presence alive in our neighborhoods to the best of our ability. Presently, we hope to maintain the current Mass schedule and continue with community events such as vespers, weddings, baptisms, confessions, fish fry, festivals, and of course, our schools in our parishes. My gratitude to Fr. Len, Fr. Uriel, and the visiting priests for their tireless work in our communities.

### **What has been accomplished?**

#### **July – December 2022 (Phase I)**

In July 2022, we held a gathering of all parish staff to introduce ourselves to each other and introduce our parishes to each other. It was a very fruitful day. In the same month, we had a Beacons of Light townhall gathering for all parishioners to update the parishioners of the Beacons of Light Initiative. On September 10, we also had a retreat to which all parishioners were invited. About 200 people attended this retreat which focused on Pope Francis' call to 'synodality'.

Between July and October, we established Parish Pastoral Councils and Finance Commissions in parishes where they had become defunct for various reasons. Since then, at least two meetings have been held for these parishes with regular meetings for the working councils.

In September 2022, we established a Beacons Pathways Team. This team is engaged in some preliminary work for large planning in Phase II. For example, the Pathway team determined the parameters and policy for sharing the priest's salaries and living expenses. It is also responsible for the NE7 page in the parish bulletins. This team is also developing job descriptions for new hires and for parish staff reorganization.

#### **Where do we go from here? (Phase II)**

##### **Jan – July 2023**

We will be engaged in staff reorganization. Some existing staff are planning to retire at the end of this fiscal year. This will lead to some reorganization of present staff responsibilities. Some of the existing staff will also be appointed coordinators to the six areas of the Beacons of Light plan. Additionally, we hope to hire a Communication Coordinator who will begin to work towards a common website, a single bulletin, social media, and other communication related tasks.

##### **August and September 2023**

On Saturday, August 26, 2023, there will be a retreat for all Parish Staff, Parish Pastoral Council members, Parish Finance Commission members, and School Principals. This Retreat will lay the spiritual and theological foundation for our FoP.

On Saturday, September 9, 2023, there will be a retreat for all the parishioners of our 5 parishes and the Dayton Hispanic Community. This retreat will focus on being a Eucharistic community. It will also be a remote preparation for the Eucharistic Congress in 2024 in Indianapolis. I hope that many of you will attend this retreat and become part of a vision for a Eucharistic community.

We will also form a FoP Parish Pastoral Council representing all the 5 parishes and the Dayton Hispanic Community. The initial configuration of the FoP Parish Pastoral Council will be composed of the Chair and Vice Chair of Parish Councils, the Finance Commission Chair, the Parish Business Managers, the School Principals, and one at large member from every parish to be appointed by the Pastor.

##### **October – December 2023**

**On October 4, 2023**, we will have the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of FoP Parish Pastoral Council. At this meeting discussions will begin for a name, a website, a common bulletin, and becoming familiar with the ground reality of every parish. **On December 6, 2023**, we will have the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the FoP Parish Pastoral Council. In this meeting we will have more detailed discussions about beginning the process of becoming one parish. The hope also that is the key leaders for the 6 areas of the Beacons of Light plan will also emerge from this meeting.

From here on the FoP Parish Pastoral Council will meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every other month and the local Parish Pastoral Councils will eventually dissolve. The rest of the plans for our Family of Parishes will emerge from these meetings. All decisions will be made in a spirit of discussions and consultations.

May I request your most sincere prayer as we begin the new phase of the Beacons of Light initiative. May we all be open to the work of the Holy Spirit among us. And may we be open to each other as we become one parish family.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Fr. Satish Joseph, Pastor  
NE7 Family of Parishes