



DIOCESE OF GARY

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February 28, 2026

Bishop of Gary

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last year I commissioned a steering committee to work with the clergy and key lay leaders from the ten Catholic churches in the Porter Planning Area to assess the current situation and develop a recommendation for the future. It was clear that each parish and chapel possesses unique strengths and strongly-committed parishioners and clergy.

While acknowledging some isolated signs of growth, an overall analysis of data revealed a multi-year downward trend in key metrics such as Mass attendance and participation in the sacraments, as well as a decrease in ministry. The group considered and evaluated several parish models, leading to a recommendation to unify some of the Catholic communities in this area. The group recognized that a shared vision is necessary to best support the spiritual needs of our faithful and maximize collective talents and resources. This led to a recommendation which spoke of unifying some of the Catholic communities and reducing the number of parishes.

After prayerful reflection and unanimous support of the deans, I am accepting the key leaders' recommendation with some minor adaptations. Therefore, over the next several years, there will be a transition to a five-parish model with two additional worship sites that will provide for the spiritual, sacramental, and pastoral needs of Catholics in the Porter Planning area. The five parishes will be: St. Patrick in Chesterton; Nativity of Our Savior in Portage; St. Paul in Valparaiso; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Valparaiso; Holy Spirit in Winfield with an additional worship site at St. Helen; and St. Teresa of Avila will become an additional worship site as a mission church in Valparaiso. I envision complete implementation of this transition to take place over the next few years, occurring in phases. An outline of this process is attached.

I recognize this announcement will affect people differently. Some will experience feelings of loss and anger. Other people may see this model as a new beginning, creating opportunities for growth and vitality for the Catholic presence in this area. One of the criteria that your key leaders emphasized was that signature ministries would be relocated for their continuance, but your early and intentional engagement will be the key to the success of this process, ensuring that all voices are heard, and the desired results are achieved.

Please know that I am committed to supporting you in this process. We are all seeking the Lord's guidance, wisdom, and strength so that the Catholic Church in Porter County will always be a vibrant, caring, and disciple-driven community. You can be confident of my abiding prayers for all the members of these parishes during this time of transition.

Asking God's blessings upon you, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McClory
Bishop of Gary

Proposed Outline of the Transition Process
Porter Planning Area

Outcome: The transition to a five-parish model with two additional worship sites that will provide for the spiritual, sacramental, and pastoral needs of Catholics in the Porter Planning area. The five parishes will be: St. Patrick in Chesterton; Nativity of Our Savior in Portage; St. Paul in Valparaiso; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Valparaiso; Holy Spirit in Winfield with an additional worship site at St. Helen; and St. Teresa of Avila will become an additional worship site as a mission church in Valparaiso.

2026 and following:

- Bishop McClory announces the transition to a five-parish model with two additional worship sites that will lead to the transition process and collaboration of Catholics in the Porter Planning area for the spiritual, sacramental, and pastoral care of the community, and support the Catholic Schools in this area.
- After completing the canonical processes, St. Mary in Kouts and St. Helen will merge with Holy Spirit and act as additional worship sites. At an appropriate time, and after the required canonical processes, St. Mary will conclude its time as a worship site and the community will be relocated to the other campuses for their spiritual, sacramental, and pastoral care. Factors may include the retirement, reassignment, or health of the pastor, demographic shifts, and financial and/or physical status of the parish itself.
- After completing the canonical processes, St. Ann of the Dunes will merge with St. Patrick and act as an additional worship site. At an appropriate time, and after the required canonical processes, St. Ann will conclude its time as a worship site and the community will be relocated for their spiritual, sacramental, and pastoral care. Factors may include the retirement, reassignment, or health of the pastor, demographic shifts, and financial and/or physical status of the parish itself.
- After completing the canonical processes, Our Lady of Sorrows will merge with Nativity of Our Savior and act as an additional worship site. At an appropriate time, and after the required canonical processes, Our Lady of Sorrows will conclude its time as a worship site and the community will be relocated for their spiritual, sacramental, and pastoral care. Factors may include the retirement, reassignment, or health of the pastor, demographic shifts, and financial and/or physical status of the parish itself.
- St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Student Center will be elevated to a Mission Church and act as an additional worship site in the Valparaiso community. At an appropriate time in the future, it will operate under the leadership and oversight of St. Paul.