



**Most Reverend Louis Tylka**  
Diocese of Peoria  
Office of the Bishop

**ST. JAMES IN WILLIAMSFIELD**

May 18, 2024

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

As we celebrate the great Solemnity of Pentecost, we recall the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the birth of the Church. This gift of the Holy Spirit continues to be poured out upon the Church and upon us. I chose Pentecost intentionally as the day when we reach an important milestone in our two-year Growing Disciples planning process with the announcement about our parishes and churches. Thank you for your participation, your feedback, and your advice which have helped me make the decisions that are announced today.

I spent time in further prayer, study and discernment over the recommendations that were made to me by the extensive process of consultation which occurred. I have reached the following decision regarding Immaculate Heart of Mary, Corpus Christi, St. Patrick, St. James, and St. Aloysius.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Corpus Christi, and St. Patrick in Galesburg, St. James in Williamsfield, and St. Aloysius in Wataga will be merged to become one parish, with a primary worship site at Immaculate Heart of Mary. St. Patrick in Galesburg, St. James in Williamsfield, and St. Aloysius in Wataga will not be in use. Masses may continue during the process of implementing this change which is expected to be completed over the next 36 months.

In the meantime, Fr. Deus-Dedit Byabato will remain pastor of St. Aloysius in Wataga. I have decided to assign Fr. Lee Brokaw as chaplain of St. John's Newman Center at the University of Illinois in Champaign, effective July 1. I have also decided to assign Fr. Nathan Hopper as parochial vicar of St. Matthew in Champaign and St. Boniface in Seymour, effective July 1. Furthermore, I have decided to assign Fr. John Verrier as parochial vicar at St. Malachy in Rantoul, St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Thomasboro, St. Lawrence in Penfield, and St. Charles Borromeo in Homer, effective July 1. I invite the parishioners in Galesburg and Williamsfield to express your gratitude to Fr. Brokaw, Fr. Hopper, and Fr. Verrier for their dedicated service to your parish communities.

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I have decided to appoint Fr. Jeffrey Stirniman as pastor and Fr. Christopher Magesa as parochial vicar of Immaculate Heart of Mary, Corpus Christi, and St. Patrick in Galesburg. I have also decided to appoint Fr. Deogratias Mpewo as administrator of St. James in Williamsfield. Please welcome them warmly.

The implementation phase will begin in all parishes on July 1, 2024. I ask Fr. Stirniman to lead the implementation effort in cooperation with Fr. Deus-Dedit and Fr. Deogratias. In order to adapt to this merger of parishes, it will be necessary to determine the new Mass schedule. I ask you to work with your priests to arrange a schedule of four weekend Masses between the two churches of the parish.

I am asking every parish to engage in a process of renewal. Every parish is asked to evaluate its schedule of Masses, its programs of pastoral care and evangelization. I challenge every parish to be more intense in cultivating disciples. More information about this call to become a more vibrant parish will be released in the coming months.

I ask for your continued prayers and continued cooperation as we work together to strengthen and renew our Diocese in this new apostolic age. Know that I pray for you daily. May the Holy Spirit bless all our efforts to Grow Disciples.

Venerable Archbishop Sheen - pray for us!

Peace and Prayers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louis Tylka". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "L".

✦ Most Reverend Louis Tylka  
Bishop of Peoria