



Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls
Office of the Bishop

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October 17, 2022

Memorial of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr

Dear Friends in Christ,

Earlier this fall, I invited you to become familiar with ***Set Ablaze***, a consultative planning process for our diocese, and to examine the Current Reality Report, a resource which creates the context from which our planning process must begin. Thank you for taking this important time to review and consider this information. The Current Reality reveals our need to envision active missionary discipleship among all parishioners in our parishes and to assist our clergy in finding additional ways more administrative duties can be delegated to others. The Current Reality Report also reveals very unhealthy trends: declining participation in the sacramental life of the Church, less frequent reception of the sacraments, ordinations to the priesthood at a rate that is less than the expected retirements of priests from assigned ministry. These realities are in the context of an intense culture that seeks to intentionally minimize or altogether disregard the presence of God in our lives.

Set Ablaze, relying on intense study of the Current Reality Report and key factors that have contributed to the unhealthy trends, has proposed a model for restructuring our parishes. This restructuring, both of parishes and the assignment of priests, aims to foster stability so that we as Catholics, priests, deacons, religious, and laity, might re-order parish ministries with the hope we might become more effective in forming missionary disciples. These structures, known as pastorates, intend to promote collaboration and cooperation among parishes. Acknowledging the reality that all persons are given particular and finite gifts, the pastorates also seek to re-focus many of our priests on the ministry that they as formed and ordained men can uniquely provide (preaching the Gospel, teaching the Catholic faith, administering the sacraments, and offering pastoral care to those experiencing difficulty in their lives). Experiences in other dioceses suggest that the pastorate model will be successful if the pastor is able to delegate to others many of the administrative tasks and responsibilities to others who are capable. This form of empowerment can be a key mark of missionary discipleship as we see the gifts God has given all of the baptized, and we affirm the role that all Catholics have in the mission of the Church. Recognizing their role as spiritual father, all administrative work carried out in the pastorate will remain under the direction of the pastor.

Thus, I am humbly writing to ask for your assistance. Knowing which parishes of our diocese will work best when collaborating to create new or different ministries meant to form missionary disciples, and when cooperating in mission with one another, is an important element to establishing this pastorate as a new structure. Therefore, before making a final determination on the design of pastorates, I seek your input on their design. Please take time to review the resources on the ***Set Ablaze*** website and provide your input, your feedback, and, most especially, your suggestions for improving the design using the survey that is found on the ***Set Ablaze*** website. Feedback will be gathered through November 21, 2022. A final decision for the design of pastorates will be announced in January 2023. They will take effect in July 2023.

Thank you for investing your time to become familiar with the resources found on our dedicated webpage and for offering your input. Thank you, too, for joining me in praying the *Set Ablaze* prayer I have authored as we call upon the Holy Spirit that He might place within our hearts, minds, and wills the fire of His divine love.

In the Love of God,



Most Reverend Donald E. DeGrood
Bishop of Sioux Falls