

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

You will have noticed from the prayers during Mass and the banner displayed in the back of the church that this year the Diocese of Joliet is celebrating the 75th anniversary of its founding as a separate diocese in the state of Illinois. The Diocese of Joliet was carved out of the existing territories of the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Diocese of Rockford, and the Diocese of Peoria. Each existing diocese was required to give up one or more of the counties that made up its territory as the counties in Illinois were reshuffled among the Catholic dioceses. Legend has it that the Archdiocese of Chicago was informed that it had to give up either Lake County or DuPage County, but it could not keep both. Since the Archdiocese had recently (this was the mid 1940's) spent a great deal of money building Mundelein Seminary in Lake County they chose to keep Lake County and give up DuPage County. I was present at the installation of Bishop Sartain as the bishop of Joliet by the archbishop of Chicago, Francis Cardinal George, during which the Cardinal stated that before the installation was made official there should be a discussion about returning DuPage County to Chicago. It was just a joke. I think.

I write all of this to remind you that we here at St. Anne Parish in Oswego belong to a larger Catholic family than just our parish. We are part of the Diocese of Joliet that spans multiple towns throughout northeastern Illinois from Gibson City and Paxton in the south to Itasca and Roselle in the north; from Steger (where the sun shines first on the Diocese of Joliet) in the east to Plano in the west. It is a vast area with widely different landscapes. The diocese includes not just the western and southern suburbs of Chicago, but also a considerable number of rural farming communities. As you might guess, there are some considerable differences between how people in Ashkum (it's a town south of Kankakee) see the world compared to the people in Addison. And that's just the geographic differences. Next throw in all the various ethnicities such as Koreans, Hispanics, Poles, Vietnamese, and several others that exist in our diocese. All these wildly different people share one thing in common: their Catholic faith. Our faith unites us across the span of the Diocese of Joliet and makes us part of a single whole rather than just a hundred or so separate parishes that may or may not cooperate with each other from time to time. As a diocese, Catholics from across a wide range of backgrounds and places can come together and achieve things that would not be possible for an individual parish.

That's why I think it is a good thing that we are praying each week during Mass for a different parish in our diocese. It is good for us to remember in our prayers the people of the other parishes in the Diocese of Joliet, even the weird parishes like Our Lady of Mercy up the road in Aurora. It is also good for us to recall that when our time comes in the prayer list all the people of the Diocese of Joliet will be praying for the people of St. Anne Parish in Oswego.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff
Pastor