



Archdiocese of Chicago Priest Reverend Michael G. McGovern Appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Belleville, Illinois

Bishop-elect McGovern will succeed Bishop Edward K. Braxton as Ordinary Bishop of Belleville.

Chicago, Ill. (April 3, 2020) – Pope Francis today announced that he has named Father Michael G. McGovern, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, as the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Belleville, Illinois. Pope Francis also announced that he had accepted the resignation of Bishop Edward K. Braxton, who was installed as the Bishop of Belleville in 2005. Bishop-elect McGovern, 55, is expected to begin his ministry in the Diocese of Belleville later this year.

"We congratulate Bishop-elect Michael McGovern on his appointment to the diocese of Belleville," said Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, archbishop of Chicago. "He has served the People of God and the Church with humility and distinction for more than 27 years. We are confident he will be a strong and compassionate leader for the Belleville diocese, and we look forward to working with him."

Bishop-elect McGovern, a native of Evergreen Park, Illinois attended Christ the King Grammar School and St. Ignatius College Prep, both in Chicago. He graduated from Loyola University Chicago in 1986, and from St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Ill., earning an S.T.B in 1993 and a M.Div. in 1994. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 21, 1994 at Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago.

Bishop-elect McGovern has had several parish assignments including as Resident at Immaculate Conception Parish, Highland Park, and at St. Clement Parish and Holy Name Cathedral, both in Chicago. He was Associate Pastor at St. Juliana Parish and Queen of the Universe Parish, both in Chicago and at St. Mary Parish, Lake Forest and Pastor at St. Mary Parish, Lake Forest and St. Raphael the Archangel, Old Mill Creek.

Bishop-elect McGovern has served the archdiocese as Secretary of the Archdiocesan Incardination Committee, Associate and Vice Chancellor, Archbishop's Delegate for Lay Ecclesial Movements, Archbishop's Delegate for Extern and International Priests and as the Co-Chair of the Chicago Priest Convocation. He has been a member of the Archdiocese Presbyteral Council, a Dean in two Vicariate I Deaneries and a Member of the College of Consultors. He served on the Pastor Advisory Committee for the To Teach Who Christ Is Campaign and as member of the Priests' Placement Board. He has served as the Interim Episcopal Vicar for Vicariate I since the 2019 appointment of then-Auxiliary Bishop Alberto Rojas as the Bishop of the Diocese of San Bernardino, California.

Bishop-elect McGovern served as a Member of the Board of Trustees of St. Ignatius College Prep and is a Member Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.



REMARKS OF BISHOP-ELECT MICHAEL MCGOVERN NINTH BISHOP OF BELLEVILLE

Dear Friends,

I am honored and humbled that today our Holy Father Pope Francis has appointed me the ninth Bishop of the Diocese of Belleville. I thank the Holy Father for the confidence he has placed in me and want to express my abiding respect and full support of him, who as the successor of Peter preserves the unity of love in the Church.

Since receiving news of this appointment a week ago, I have been praying each day for Bishop Edward Braxton and I thank him for his fifteen years of dedicated service to the Diocese of Belleville. I have been praying as well each day for the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the diocese. You are very much in prayer as I offer daily Mass.

Last May, when I celebrated my 25th anniversary as a priest with family, friends and classmates, I was filled with gratitude for God's blessings in my life as a priest. Little did I know that as I experienced the renewal of the Lord's call as a priest a year ago, that it was a grace-filled prelude to God's call to serve his people now as a bishop, shepherding the Catholic clergy and faithful of southern Illinois.

As the news of this appointment is shared, some of you may be asking: what is our new bishop like? Who are you? I would answer and describe myself as a pastor, a shepherd. Within my 26 years as a priest, I have been the pastor of two parishes communities in Lake County: St. Mary in Lake Forest and now St. Raphael the Archangel in Old Mill Creek, a rural community close to the Wisconsin border.

While I have served in archdiocesan ministries, I love being a pastor most of all; being a pastor has been the most rewarding and challenging ministry of my priesthood. It has been a great privilege meeting and praying with so many faith-filled people, who have inspired me with their deep commitment to Jesus Christ. Now I look forward to meeting the many faith-filled people of the 28 counties in southern Illinois; hearing your stories of how you have encountered Jesus in your lives and how much the Lord has done for you. May I ask for your prayers as I begin this new way of serving in Christ's name as the shepherd of your diocese.

Permit me to offer a word to the priests who serve in the Belleville Diocese. First and foremost, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for saying yes to our Lord Jesus' call to follow him and serve his people as priests. Today I pledge to you my constant support as I strive to be a father and a brother to you. I have always appreciated that whenever I requested that my archbishop speak with me, that I have received his time, attention and counsel. I am especially grateful to my present Archbishop Cardinal Cupich for his support these past six years. Please know, my brother priests, that I am here for you and look forward to knowing you all better as we set out into a future filled with hope in the years ahead.



I share your disappointment that due to the coronavirus we cannot be in person together today, for I would very much enjoy meeting the clergy, religious women and men, seminarians and the faithful. It is also a bit unsettling that we cannot yet set a date for my ordination and installation because no one really knows precisely when it will be safe for us to gather together for the ordination and installation liturgy. I appreciate your patience and pledge that we will make arrangements as soon as possible. In the meantime, I will be connecting with many priests and people via the phone and the internet. I thank Bishop Edward Braxton for his warm welcome as his successor and for the conversations we have had leading up to today's announcement. I look forward to more opportunities for me to engage soon with the various leaders of the Diocese.

This Sunday is Palm Sunday. We will walk again this year with Jesus Christ through Holy Week and enter into the mysteries of his passion, death and resurrection. My friends, let us walk together in spirit, even if our precautions about the coronavirus inhibit us from participating in the sacred liturgies in person.

On Good Friday as our Lord was dying on the cross, Jesus invited the Apostle John to receive the Virgin Mary as his mother; and so from that hour John received Mary into his home. As we begin this Holy Week, a week when the mysteries of our Catholic faith will be celebrated with our families in the domestic church, may we too receive the Blessed Mother into our homes. May Mary, Mother of the Church, keep us close to her Son.

Please know that you are all in my heart this Holy Week and in the years ahead. God bless you all.

About the Archdiocese of Chicago

The Archdiocese of Chicago, the third largest in the United States, serves more than 2.2 million Catholics in 316 parishes in Cook and Lake Counties, a geographic area of 1,411 square miles. The archdiocese, pastored by Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, has more than 15,000 employees in its systems and ministries, including Catholic Charities, the region's largest nonprofit social service agency. The archdiocese also has one of the country's largest seminaries. The archdiocese's 205 elementary and secondary schools comprise one of the largest U.S. private school systems. It has garnered more U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon Awards than any system of any type. For more information on the Archdiocese of Chicago's Catholic schools, visit schools.archchicago.org.

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