



# Bishop John Iffert



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## DIOCESE OF COVINGTON

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September 30, 2022

My Brothers and Sisters,

It is with great joy that I share with you today the beginning of a key pastoral initiative in the Diocese of Covington — With One Heart. The goal of this initiative is to embolden and equip the faithful — priests and the entire Body of Christ — to engage the mission of Jesus with united and determined energy.

Let me be clear, this IS NOT a process of retrenchment! Our intention is to turn to the Holy Spirit of God for guidance and to make the best possible use of the gifts God has given to this local Church. We are setting out to develop a vision we can share, establish goals for promoting holiness in our communities, develop leaders and marshal people and resources to pursue this sacred work diligently.

We will be assisted on this journey by the Catholic Leadership Institute. CLI is built on the belief that everything we have been given is a gift from God to be used in service, praise, and blessing of God's name and God's people. Their services are available to the Diocese of Covington through the generosity of a small number of benefactors who are leaders in business, education, military service, and more. The desire of these Catholic philanthropists is to develop the leadership potential that is already so obvious and valuable in our priests, deacons, consecrated religious, and dedicated lay leaders; to magnify the gifts that are at the service of the Gospel. I thank God for their initiative.

This process is already underway. Twenty-one skilled leaders from across the diocese have accepted invitations to core and planning committees that will work hand-in-hand with me and CLI. Firstly, we will continue our work of listening that began in the Process for a Synodal Church. We will use the input we received to help us listen, in a systematic way, for what is feeding your spirit in our parishes and agencies, as well as the hungers of the heart that are going unfulfilled. We will focus on how we assist one another toward a fuller life of discipleship.

We will use the data from this grassroots process to develop a strategic pastoral plan for the Diocese of Covington:

- We will help priests listen to their own passion for ministry and the needs of our people and provide coaching and formation with the goal of maximizing their leadership capacity.
- We will accompany parishes in developing their own pastoral plans and strategies for implementation.
- We will enlist the assistance of faithful Catholics across the diocese who have benefited from leadership and skill development in their own professional lives and invite them to contribute their time and abilities to the living mission of Jesus.
- We will connect these most valuable resources with the priests and parish leaders who can benefit from their experience. We will do all this and more for love of God and love of neighbor.
- Very often I am asked about my vision for our local Church. My vision includes:
- That together we search for the most prudent and charitable way to do what is right and holy for the People of God.
- That we acknowledge God's gifts and use them boldly for love of God and neighbor.
- That we pour out our lives not for a special interest, but for the common good and the growth of MANY in the way of discipleship to Jesus.
- That we embrace the gifts God has poured out with a generous hand and accept his call to be Christian witnesses in the world.
- That those of us who exercise authority in the Church do so with humility, recognizing that we are not the only ones God has called to mission.
- That we wash one another's feet, not because we are weak, but precisely because Jesus is strong in us and strengthening each one of us.
- That we respond to St. Paul's (patron of our Diocese) challenge to be bold for Christ.
- That we are blessed enough to live with one heart — the heart of Jesus Christ opened for love of the world.

Please keep this effort and your diocesan Church in your daily prayers. Join me in praying that the Lord make us strong in faith and poor in spirit, disciples after His own heart. Participate. Believe that growth and strengthening of the Church can happen. Be generous with your time and giftedness.

With a heart filled with love for you, I remain...

Yours in Christ,  
+Bishop John Iffert  
Diocese of Covington