



Diocese of Belleville
Offices of the Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia
and the
Chief Financial Officer

May 28, 2020

Dear Pastors, Administrators, Diocesan Personnel, Principals, Teachers, Hospital Leaders, Agency Directors, and Catholic Parishioners:

As you know, the coronavirus pandemic and COVID-19 disease have forced us to make major changes in the diocesan schedule beginning with Holy Week. The social distancing caused by the virus has forced the Diocese to delay the celebration of important milestones in the life and ministry of Bishop Edward K. Braxton: the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the Priesthood, the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the Episcopacy, and the 15th anniversary of his Installation as our Bishop. We had hoped to reschedule the Bishop's Golden and Silver Jubilee celebrations in late June. However, we now realize that even late June dates will not be possible because of the continuing health crisis.

Since we do not want these milestones to go unrecognized, we have decided to delay the celebrations for Bishop Braxton until next May 14, 15, 16, 2021, when we hope and pray that the worst of the pandemic will be over. We will simply celebrate FIFTY YEARS PLUS ONE!

We are all grateful for the Bishop's tireless efforts to build up the Catholic community in southern Illinois, helping us to learn our faith, love our faith, and live our faith. Many people have inquired about an appropriate gift for the Bishop's anniversaries and as a sign of appreciation for his fifteen years of dedicated service as Spiritual Leader of our Community of Faith. The Bishop has indicated that he would prefer not to receive any physical objects such as books or art works. He would prefer spiritual gifts, perhaps in the form of spiritual bouquets. If parishes, schools, or other groups or individuals would like to offer him a certain number of prayers such as the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory be to the Father, Litany Prayers, Rosaries, Hours of Adoration, Holy Hours or, most importantly, celebrations of the Eucharist for his intention, he would be deeply grateful. These Spiritual bouquets can be placed in a card and sent to the Bishop in care of his Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Judy Hoffmann, at the Chancery. These prayer gifts may be sent at any time during the weeks ahead, or even at a later date.

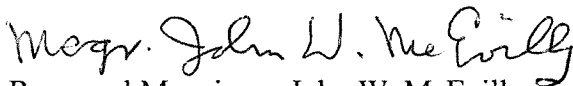
Bishop Braxton will become Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese on July 22, 2020. Following the norms of Canon Law and the directives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Diocese of Belleville will provide the Bishop with housing, income, and other forms of support. The Bishop will reside in a house owned by the Diocese. There is a need for furnishing as well as the many practical items required in setting up a new household. We would like to invite you to make a gift to the Diocese in the Bishop's name to help with these expenses. The items purchased for this residence with your contributions will belong to the Diocese.

We invite you to arrange for special collections at your parishes, in whatever way possible in the weeks and months ahead. We know that it is not possible simply to have a second collection in the present circumstances. But, we are sure many of your parishioners will want to show their appreciation to the Bishop, even if it is at a later date. Please invite them to send their gifts to the rectory in the weeks and months ahead. You may wish to make a contribution in the name of your parishioners from parish funds and make a personal contribution. A school faculty or hospital staff may wish to contribute gifts individually or combine their gifts into one.

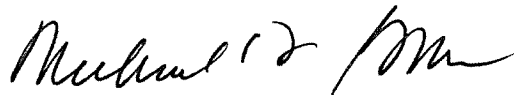
If you, your parish, or institution would like to honor Bishop Braxton by assisting us in providing the many items needed for the house of the Bishop Emeritus, we invite you to send your gifts in the form of a check, payable to the Diocese of Belleville, with the designation, "Gift in honor of Bishop Braxton." Mail it directly to Mr. Michael D. Gibbons, Chief Financial Officer, at the Belleville Chancery.

Please remember that your gifts are to be completely voluntary. A financial contribution in honor of the Bishop is not required. It is to be a freewill offering. At the same time, we invite you to be generous. The most important gift we can give to Bishop Braxton as a sign of our gratitude for his faithful, generous years of ministry in our midst as our Chief Shepherd and Pastor is the support of our ongoing prayers now and for years to come. Anyone wishing to write a personal letter of gratitude to Bishop Braxton may send it to his Office at the Chancery of the Diocese of Belleville.

Yours sincerely,



The Reverend Monsignor John W. McEvilly
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia



Mr. Michael D. Gibbons
Chief Financial Officer
Diocese of Belleville

Please share the contents of this letter, in whatever ways that are possible, with your parishioners, the teachers in your schools, and other communities. You may post it on your website, insert it in your bulletin, or read appropriate portions from the pulpit when you resume daily and Sunday Masses.