



NEWS RELEASE

DIOCESE OF ERIE

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3.9.26

Diocese of Erie releases clergy appointment list

The Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, has appointed several clergy throughout the Diocese of Erie to new assignments.

Appointments are traditionally made near July 1. This year, the diocese welcomed two new international priests: The Rev. Festus Okoye and Rev. John Nwankwo from the Diocese of Ekwulobia, Nigeria. This opened the opportunity for some additional changes to priest assignments, always a thoughtful and deliberate process to ensure the pastoral care of our faithful.

The appointments were shared with affected parishioners at Masses during the weekend of March 7-8.

The announcements come at the end of a long process overseen by Bishop Persico and Father Nicholas Rouch, vicar general and acting director of the Office for Clergy Personnel, with consultation by the members of the Clergy Personnel Board. Assignments of pastors are typically six-year terms to promote stability and continuity for both pastors and parishioners. Parochial Vicars are typically a three-year term.

“We give thanks to God as we welcome our two new missionary priests into our diocese with open hearts and deep gratitude. Their presence is a gift to our local Church — a sign of the universality of our faith and the shared mission that unites us across nations and cultures,” said Bishop Persico.

— more —

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Rev. Chijioke (John) Nwankwo has been assigned as Parochial Vicar of St. Joseph Parish, Lucinda, St. Michael Parish, Fryburg, and St. Mary Parish, Crown, with its secondary church of St. Ann Church, Marienville, effective March 12.

Rev. Festus Okoye has been assigned as Parochial Vicar of St. Joseph Parish, Oil City, with its secondary church of St. Venantius, Rouseville, and St. Titus Parish, Titusville, with its secondary churches of Immaculate Conception, Mageetown and St. Walburga, Titusville, also effective March 12.

Missionary priests come to a diocese to not only to serve, but to walk alongside the faithful — bringing the richness of their traditions, their passion for the Gospel and their generous witness of sacrifice.

Additional pastoral assignments were implemented throughout the diocese to support its ongoing mission and ministry

Rev. Johnathan Schmolt has been assigned as pastor of St. Basil Parish, Coalport, and of St. Agnes Parish, Morrisdale, while continuing as pastor of Christ the King, Houtzdale. Rev. Cory Pius was assigned as a parochial vicar for all three parishes. Each assignment begins on March 24.

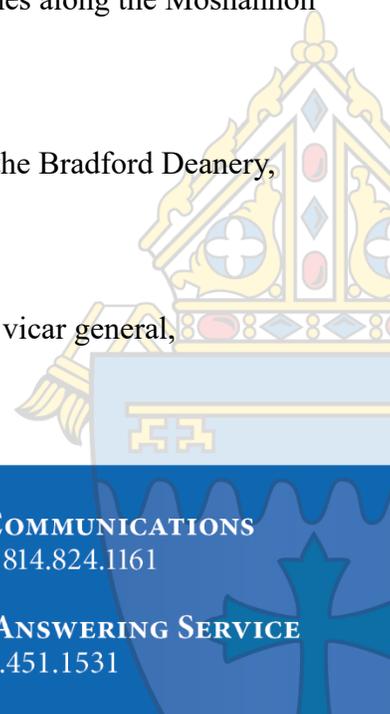
With the passing of Rev. Nicholas Fratus, a chaplain was needed at Christ the King Manor and Penn Highlands Hospital in DuBois. The Rev. Marc Solomon agreed to his new assignment there, beginning March 24. This opens a pastoral need and opportunity to partner the three parishes along the Moshannon Valley, at the southeast end of our diocese.

The Very Reverend Richard J. Allen has been assigned Vicar Forane (Dean) of the Bradford Deanery, effective immediately, and continuing until June 30, 2029.

Father Rouch, who is the pastor of St. Julia Parish in Erie along with his role as vicar general,

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has shared that while a new assignment can unsettle familiar routines, it often reignites a priest's sense of mission and the true demands of a priestly vocation.

“It is in the surrender that grace makes room for what is new,” Father Rouch said. “Our calling is never anchored to a building or a town, but to the people God entrusts to our care. That is the very heart of diocesan priesthood — to belong not to a place, but to a mission, and to serve wherever we are sent.”

The full list of clergy assignments released this week can be found here <https://www.eriecd.org/news/News-releases.html>.

Read more about Father Okoye and Father Nwankwo in February's edition of the Diocese of Erie's publication of *Faith* magazine <https://www.eriecd.org/news/A-New-Beginning-for-Missionary-Ministry.html>.

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