



THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

October 24, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Bernard and St. Damian Parishes,

I am sharing this weekend some difficult news about your parish priest, Father Anthony Onyango. I have removed Father Anthony from ministry following receipt this week of an allegation of inappropriate conduct involving a minor. I have instructed Father Anthony to live away from the parish, in accordance with certain restrictions, while the matter is being investigated.

Allegations are claims that have not been proven as true or false; therefore, guilt or innocence should not be assumed. In keeping with our Child Protection Policy, the allegation was reported to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the local civil authorities. Our Victim Assistance Ministry is offering services to the person making the allegation, along with the family. The Diocese of Belleville has begun its investigation of the matter which will be presented to our Fitness Review Board.

Monsignor John McEvelly will begin providing pastoral care at your parishes effective October 31. He comes to you with extensive pastoral experience and a sincere commitment to serve you. Monsignor McEvelly will be available to help with any questions you may have and provide you with support during this challenging time.

It is crucial that you know nothing is more important than the welfare of the youth entrusted to our care. The Diocese of Belleville takes all allegations of inappropriate or sexual misconduct seriously and encourages anyone who feels they have been harmed by a priest, deacon, religious or lay employee, to come forward. More information about reporting misconduct can be found on the Diocese of Belleville website at www.diobelle.org.

We will do our best to keep you informed of developments as they occur. Please know that you are in my prayers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael McGovern
Bishop of Belleville

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