

**NEWS CONFERENCE
REMARKS**

Diocese of Jefferson City
21 November, 2017

Most Reverend John R. Gaydos
Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Jefferson City and
Apostolic Administrator

Today the Local Church of the Diocese of Jefferson City has been greatly blessed by Almighty God in the appointment by our Holy Father, Pope Francis, of the fourth Bishop of Jefferson City, Bishop-Elect W. Shawn McKnight. Bishop-Elect McKnight comes to us from the Diocese of Wichita, Kansas, and as you will find out very shortly brings with him an abundance of gifts and experiences to continue and augment the ministry of Jesus Christ and his Church in the heartland of Missouri.

Many of you may be surprised by the timing of the appointment of our new Bishop. I am extremely grateful and relieved and I would like to take a moment to assure you that this announcement comes at the end of several months of prayer, reflection and consultation.

Shortly after I came to the Diocese of Jefferson City some twenty years ago I was diagnosed with type-2 diabetes. Due to the dedicated vigilance of my primary care physician, Dr. Tom Robbins, I have been able to live with that condition with a minimum of inconvenience.

As time progressed I found myself dealing with other health challenges that seem to be attributable to aging and genetic traits. Thus I have been dealing with hypertension, and atrial fibrillation. Dr. John Sanfelippo has been overseeing my care in this regard and in the process had been monitoring a leaky aortic valve in my heart.

On a routine visit to Dr. Sanfelippo last March, something about me and my answers to his questions led him to order up an unscheduled echocardiogram for that day and I later found out, significantly on Monday of Holy Week, that I had flunked the echocardiogram. Due to the increased leakage from the valve I was informed that I needed to prepare to have this valve replaced.

There are a couple of other chronic challenges to my health. I have elderly onset rheumatoid arthritis and it is especially challenging in my knees. There are a couple of other minor health issues that nevertheless are also part of my daily routine. With the approaching major surgery, my prayer took on an examination of my current waning strength and stamina and the needs of our diocese. In prayer I brought to God the fact that I was turning 74 this past August and that I simply did not have the strength and stamina of even a few years ago. I also thought that our Diocese would benefit greatly from a new bishop.

With that in mind I wrote to Pope Francis sharing my observations and expressing my willingness to retire. I also assured him that if he thought I should stay on as bishop that I would be most willing to do so.

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, let me know that Pope Francis agreed to accept my retirement and we began the process that has led us to this moment.

I have known Bishop-Elect McKnight for several years and I am extremely pleased that he will be the next Bishop of our beautiful Diocese of Jefferson City. I know that you will give him a warm welcome and I believe you will soon begin to see what a great gift we are receiving in this dedicated priest as he prepares to take up his Episcopal Ministry in our midst. I invite all of you to join me in prayer for Bishop-Elect Shawn McKnight as he prepares for his Sacred Ordination as our Bishop. Until the time of his ordination our Holy Father has appointed me Apostolic Administrator of our Diocese. The Bishop-Elect and I will be working together to assure a smooth transition.

I plan to live out my days here in Jefferson City and with medical counsel I have been assured that I will be able to continue to lead a productive life in your midst.

Welcome, Bishop-Elect McKnight!