



ARCHDIOCESE
OF LOUISVILLE

PRESS STATEMENT

On Tuesday, June 27, 2023, Pope Francis appointed the Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre, Archbishop of Louisville, to serve as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Knoxville. The appointment was made after Pope Francis accepted the resignation of the Most Reverend Richard F. Stika, who was until now Bishop of Knoxville. The resignation of Bishop Stika from the pastoral governance of the Diocese of Knoxville makes him Bishop Emeritus of Knoxville – or *retired bishop*. To ensure the spiritual and administrative needs of the Diocese of Knoxville are met in an efficient and appropriate manner, Archbishop Fabre’s appointment as Apostolic Administrator will last until Pope Francis names a new Bishop of Knoxville and the bishop is installed. During his service to Knoxville, Archbishop Fabre will remain Archbishop of Louisville.

In a message to the people of the Diocese of Knoxville, Archbishop Fabre asked for prayers for Bishop Stika as he assumes his new role as Bishop Emeritus. He also asked the people of the diocese to “pray for an openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit during this time of transition for the Diocese of Knoxville.”

During the vacancy of a diocese due to a bishop’s death, resignation, or transfer to another diocese, the Pope may appoint another bishop as apostolic administrator. The role of the apostolic administrator is to see to the pastoral needs and administration of the diocese that is awaiting the appointment of a new bishop. In addition to the customary pastoral responsibilities of a bishop, the apostolic administrator provides oversight regarding the daily activities of the vacant diocese. While an apostolic administrator is generally subject to the same obligations and possesses the same general authority as a diocesan bishop, some major decisions may be deferred until the new bishop is appointed and installed. When the bishop appointed as the apostolic administrator is also serving as a diocesan bishop in another diocese, as is the case with Archbishop Fabre, a priest from the vacant diocese often assists him. Archbishop Fabre will appoint a priest from among those in the Diocese of Knoxville to assist him.

Archbishop Fabre asks that people not only keep him in their prayers, but also pray for the priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, seminarians and lay faithful in the Diocese of Knoxville during this time of transition for them. He asks that we also pray for the next Bishop of Knoxville.

A native of New Roads, La., Archbishop Shelton Joseph Fabre was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Baton Rouge in 1989. Pope Benedict XVI appointed him as auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New Orleans and he was ordained a bishop in 2007. Pope Francis appointed him to lead the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux in 2013, and subsequently appointed him to lead the Archdiocese of Louisville in 2022.

Established by Pope Saint John Paul II in 1988, the Diocese of Knoxville covers 14,242 miles in 36 counties of East Tennessee. There are 50 parishes and one mission serving approximately 70,000 Catholics.