

A FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE OF THE BETTENDORF CATHOLIC COMMUNITY | March 10, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For many years, the Catholic community in Bettendorf has been faithfully striving forward towards a vision of one catholic school, within one vibrant parish, worshipping together in one church. A place where faith, learning, and families grow together for generations. We are now faced with multiple competing realities that require decisive action. These include a growing shortage of priests, rising operating and facility costs, and aging parish buildings. Their combined impact can no longer be addressed through incremental adjustments.

This strategic plan represents a deliberate response. Parish leadership believes it is more responsible to act while leadership capacity, financial resources, and community engagement remain strong rather than waiting for circumstances to force decisions under crisis conditions.

A Strong Community Facing Hard Decisions

As of February 2026, Our Lady of Lourdes includes approximately 870 families and St. John Vianney approximately 2,065 families. Together, they represent a vibrant Catholic presence serving nearly 3,000 households across the Bettendorf and greater Quad Cities area.

St. Joan of Arc Catholic School stands as one of the most significant accomplishments in our community's history. Through extraordinary generosity, more than \$17 million was raised, and the school was completed 10 percent under budget. More importantly, the school is not simply a building project. It is the primary ministry of our parishes and the most important investment in the future of the Catholic faith in Bettendorf. The decision to build the school was always part of a larger vision for a unified parish centered on a shared church and school campus. Completing that vision requires both financial stability and the eventual construction of a church on the school campus.

Pursuing that vision required a \$22.5 million mortgage that now shapes every major decision facing the parishes. Annual debt service of approximately \$1.8 million consumes nearly three quarters of combined parish operating income. If paid on its original schedule through May 2054, the parish would pay roughly \$21 million in interest in addition to the principal. This financial reality makes it unsustainable to continue operating two full campuses while also servicing debt and deferred maintenance.

Even before considering staffing or ministry expenses, maintaining the Our Lady of Lourdes facility alone costs the parish approximately \$200,000 per year. These ongoing costs directly affect long-term sustainability and limit the parish's ability to reduce debt and complete the vision for a unified Catholic campus.

A Necessary Transition

As a result, this plan calls for the canonical combination of St. John Vianney and Our Lady of Lourdes into one parish and the eventual closure of Our Lady of Lourdes as a worship site once a suitable buyer is secured, which could occur as early as spring 2027. Upon completion of the merger, the unified parish will take the name St. Joan of Arc Parish, reflecting the shared future of the Catholic community in Bettendorf.

This recommendation is not made lightly. Our Lady of Lourdes has been a sacred home of prayer, sacrament, and community for generations. Its history, memories, and spiritual legacy are deeply cherished. The decision to close a worship site represents real loss and grief, and this plan acknowledges that weight honestly.

The Financial Strategy That Supports This Decision

The central financial strategy of this plan is aggressive mortgage reduction. Timing matters. Applying large payments early can save millions of dollars in interest and significantly shorten the mortgage timeline. Every year of delay carries a real cost that diverts resources away from ministry, staffing, and formation.

This strategy includes consolidating parish operations, applying proceeds from the sale of the Our Lady of Lourdes property directly to mortgage principal, shared stewardship across the parish community, and defined contributions tied specifically to debt reduction and not intended to be permanent. Together, these actions are designed to eliminate the school mortgage by approximately 2030.

Once the mortgage is retired, the parish can then responsibly plan for the construction of a new unified church on the school campus, positioned to serve future generations without the burden of unsustainable debt. This approach is intentionally benchmark-driven rather than date-driven, allowing financial readiness and pastoral considerations to guide the pace of implementation.

Pastoral Care, Implementation, and the Long View

This plan recognizes that decisions of this magnitude require intentional pastoral care. The transition away from a worship site will be accompanied by clear communication, opportunities for prayer and remembrance, and accompaniment for those most affected by change. Implementation begins immediately. At the same time, parish leadership recognizes that ongoing strategic oversight will remain in place to monitor progress and adapt as circumstances evolve.

A Path Forward

This strategic plan asks for trust, patience, and shared commitment. By making difficult decisions now with clarity and courage, the Catholic community in Bettendorf can secure a sustainable future that directs resources toward mission and ministry rather than interest payments and deferred maintenance. It is a path rooted in unity and confidence in what this community has already shown it can accomplish.

This strategic plan reflects the recommendations of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee, formed to study long-term sustainability and present options for the future. Final decisions regarding parish structure, property use, and implementation will be made by the pastor, the parish trustees, and the Bishop in accordance with diocesan governance and canon law.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

The Catholic community in Bettendorf has been shaped by generations of faith, sacrifice, and shared commitment. Families have worshiped, educated their children, celebrated the sacraments, and built lasting relationships within the parish communities of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. John Vianney. That legacy continues today in a vibrant Catholic presence serving nearly 3,000 households.

One of the clearest expressions of this shared commitment is St. Joan of Arc Catholic School. Built through extraordinary generosity and careful stewardship, the school represents far more than a successful building project. It reflects a collective decision to invest in the future of the Catholic faith in Bettendorf. From the beginning, the school was envisioned as part of a unified Catholic campus where worship, formation, and community life are integrated across every stage of life.

At the same time, several long-term realities are converging in ways that require responsible action. The number of priests serving the Church continues to decline, requiring parish structures capable of sustaining sacramental life and pastoral care with fewer clergy. Operating costs continue to rise. Aging buildings require significant reinvestment. Most significantly, the mortgage associated with the new school now shapes every major financial decision. These realities are not temporary challenges; they are structural conditions that will influence parish life for decades to come.

This plan is grounded in a simple conviction: it is more responsible to act while the community remains strong than to delay until circumstances force decisions under crisis conditions. The goal is not merely to respond to present pressures, but to secure a stable and vibrant long term future for Catholic worship, formation, and ministry in Bettendorf.

How We Arrived at This Moment

The decision to build St. Joan of Arc Catholic School reflected a shared understanding that Catholic education is central to the mission of the Church. Addressing the school first was a matter of urgency and sequencing. Existing facilities could no longer adequately support the educational mission, and investing in Catholic education was understood as investing in the future of the faith community. The generosity demonstrated by parishioners confirmed that shared commitment.

Completing the school required a significant financial commitment. The resulting mortgage now shapes the financial landscape of both parishes. Debt service, combined with rising operating costs and the expense of maintaining multiple facilities, limits the parish's ability to invest fully in ministry, staffing, and formation. Continuing to operate multiple aging campuses while carrying substantial debt would prevent the parish from completing the long-planned campus vision and weaken long-term sustainability.

This moment, therefore, is not a departure from past decisions but a continuation of them. The question before the parish is how to take the next responsible step.

What Must Be Decided Now

The immediate decisions before the parish focus on sustainability, stewardship, and the long-term viability of parish life. These decisions include:

- The canonical and corporate combination of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. John Vianney into one parish community
- The formation of St. Joan of Arc Parish as the unified parish structure
- The eventual closure of Our Lady of Lourdes as a worship site once a suitable buyer is secured
- Consolidation of parish operations to reduce duplication and improve stewardship
- The application of property sale proceeds toward mortgage principal reduction

These actions are difficult, particularly because they involve the closure of a worship site that has been a sacred home for generations. Our Lady of Lourdes has been a place of prayer, sacrament, and community life for decades. Its history and spiritual legacy are deeply cherished, and the grief associated with such change is real. This plan acknowledges that loss with honesty and respect while also recognizing the responsibility to steward resources wisely for future generations.

Acting now allows the parish to reduce debt more quickly, limit long-term interest costs, and redirect resources toward ministry rather than maintenance.

Why These Decisions Cannot Be Made in Isolation

The decisions before the parish cannot be evaluated properly without understanding the larger vision they support. This plan is not simply about reducing expenses or consolidating facilities. It is about completing a mission that began with the construction of the school for the creation of a unified Catholic center where worship, formation, and community life are integrated.

Maintaining multiple aging facilities while carrying significant debt would divert resources away from ministry and delay progress toward that vision. Delaying action would increase interest costs and reduce the parish's capacity to invest in pastoral leadership, faith formation, and outreach. Acting now aligns resources with mission and creates a foundation for long-term stability.

The sequencing is intentional. The immediate decisions address sustainability. Debt reduction restores financial strength. Financial strength makes the future mission possible.

The Vision Beyond the Immediate Decisions

Once the parish is unified and the mortgage is retired, the community will be positioned to complete the long-planned vision of a unified church and school campus. Locating the church on the school campus ensures that students, families, and parishioners encounter the sacramental life of the Church daily. This vision reflects a commitment not only to present needs but to the faith lives of children, families, and parishioners for decades to come.

Planning for Pastoral Care and Parish Life

Decisions of this magnitude require intentional pastoral care. The transition away from a worship site will include opportunities for prayer and remembrance, respectful preservation and relocation of sacred items, and accompaniment for those most affected by change. Parishioners remain members of the parish community throughout the transition, and traditions and devotions from both parishes will continue to shape the spiritual life of St. Joan of Arc Parish.

Unifying as one parish also positions the community to sustain sacramental life and pastoral care in a future where fewer priests will serve larger communities. Shared ministry, collaborative leadership, and unified resources strengthen the parish's ability to meet spiritual needs now and in the years ahead.

A Future Rooted in Stewardship and Hope

The decisions before us are not the end of a story, but the next step in a long-term vision. By uniting as St. Joan of Arc Parish, reducing debt, and completing the campus vision, the community secures a strong and sustainable future for Catholic worship, formation, and ministry. By making careful decisions now, the Catholic community in Bettendorf can move forward with clarity, unity, and hope