THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

OFFICE OF ARCHBISHOP SHAWN MCKNIGHT, S.Th.D.

30 July 2026
Memorial of St. Peter Chrysologos

Reverend Edward Ahn, Pastor
Immaculate Conception Parish
208 W Bertrand Ave
St. Marys, Kansas 66536

Dear Father Ahn,

Thank you for your letter, dated 11 June 2026, in which you sought my counsel and permission for certain innovations at Immaculate Conception Parish in light of the local schismatic community in your area. I am grateful for the evident pastoral concern that motivated it.

After an initial consideration of your letter, I asked your local Dean, the Very Reverend Matthew Nagle, to convoke a meeting with you, your parish leadership, and officials from my chancery to explore the pastoral dimensions of how your parish could welcome new parishioners from the schismatic community and maintain fidelity to the bonds of communion with the Catholic Church local and universal.

Following the meeting that took place on 2 July 2026, I reviewed the observations and recommendations of your parish pastoral council. Their reflections were thoughtful, practical, and deeply pastoral. They reinforce my conviction that the principal challenge before Immaculate Conception Parish is not first a liturgical one, but one of evangelization and accompaniment.

In view of this wider pastoral consideration, I asked my Chancellor, the Reverend Anthony Saiki, to convoke a meeting with your Dean and the priests serving in your area to explore a common approach by all parishes in the surrounding area. It is important that there be consistency in how people are being treated. As a result of this meeting of the priests on 28 July 2026, I will soon issue instructive norms and guidelines to assist parishes like yours to fulfill my wishes and that of our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, to offer a path of reconciliation for former schismatics that is at once pastoral and faithful to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Because of your location, parishes in your vicinity occupy a unique position within the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas. In the months and years ahead, many individuals

and families may find themselves discerning a return to full communion with the Catholic Church. Some will arrive carrying confusion, grief, fear, or even distrust. Others may simply be searching for certainty and a place to belong.

The hospitality your parish offers should be intentional. I strongly support your desire to develop an organized plan for welcoming those who approach the parish, including opportunities for personal accompaniment, faithful catechesis, and integration into parish life. The sacred liturgy will also play an important role in this effort. As your pastoral council observed, certain elements, such as reverent celebrations, sacred choral music, and the careful preparation of liturgical ministers would assist some of those making this transition. New liturgical elements or adaptations should not be introduced, however, without sound catechesis and genuine pastoral sensitivity. The archdiocese stands ready to assist you in fostering good, reverential, and prayerful liturgies at your parish.

At the same time, this unique pastoral outreach should not disregard those who have faithfully belonged to Immaculate Conception Parish for many years. Any initiative undertaken should preserve the unity of the parish family and proceed with patience, avoid unnecessary polarization, and remain faithful to the teachings and identity of the Catholic Church. Our goal is that the parish becomes ever more fully what Christ desires the whole Church to be.

It is my hope to visit Immaculate Conception Parish soon to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass with you and the faithful, and to have the occasion to give more concrete answers to your requests. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with parishioners and express personally the Church's closeness to all those seeking to walk in full communion with Christ and His Church.

Thank you again for your priestly generosity and faithful service to the people of God. With the assurance of my prayers for you and for all those entrusted to your pastoral care, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Shawn M. McKnight

Most Reverend Shawn McKnight, S.Th.D.
Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas

cc: Very Rev. Michael Hawken, VG
Very Rev. Mark Mertes, VG
Very Rev. Matthew Nagle, VF
Rev. Anthony Saiki, Chancellor