



DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND

915 South Clinton Street • Post Office Box 390
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801

July 11, 2025

Dear Friends in Christ,

In 1874, during a trip to Europe, Bishop Joseph Dwenger, the second bishop of Fort Wayne, visited the Sisters of Saint Francis of Perpetual Adoration at their motherhouse in Olpe, Germany. He met with the foundress and superior general of the congregation, (now “Blessed”) Mother Maria Theresia Bonzel, inviting her to send sisters to serve in the missionary field of the Diocese of Fort Wayne, at that time encompassing the northern half of the state of Indiana. Mother Maria Theresia accepted the invitation, and the first six Sisters of Saint Francis of Perpetual Adoration arrived in their new home in America the next year, in December 1875. In the following decades, many more would follow.

The witness, prayer, and apostolic works of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Perpetual Adoration the past 150 years have been a great blessing to the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend and beyond. Their provincial motherhouse in Mishawaka is an oasis of prayer where the sisters pray night and day before our Lord exposed in the Blessed Sacrament. From this source of grace, the sisters in Mishawaka and other convents engage in their educational and health care apostolates. They live and pray together in community, faithful to the charism inherited from their blessed foundress whom we pray will one day be canonized a saint.

The Sisters of Saint Francis are beloved in our diocese and held in esteem by our priests, deacons, and lay faithful. They are an incredible support to me as bishop and to our priests, always eager to welcome us to the motherhouse for prayer and rest. In fact, I reside at the motherhouse when I am on the South Bend side of the diocese. I see firsthand the devotion of the sisters and am uplifted by their joy and kindness, and their love for the Church.

I invite and encourage mature young women discerning consecrated religious life to consider a possible calling to the Sisters of Saint Francis if they desire a community that is both active and contemplative, engaged in the apostolate while being centered in prayer, especially before the Blessed Sacrament. Inspired by the Eucharistic devotion and virtues of Saint Francis of Assisi, committed to living the evangelical counsels and community life, the Sisters of Saint Francis of Perpetual Adoration continue to attract young vocations, but more are needed to continue their holy mission in Fort Wayne-South Bend and other nearby dioceses. May the Lord bless them with vocations and bless all the young women who are in discernment!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Kevin C. Rhoades

Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades
Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend