

## **Bishop Joseph L. Charron's comments**

My dear people,

I would like to share with you an announcement that was made this morning by Pope Benedict XVI's representative to the United States, the papal nuncio, that the Holy Father has accepted my request to retire due to health issues. Thus, my retirement becomes effective today.

On the one hand I am sad to share this news with you because I have been your bishop for 13 years and have come to know so many of you personally. Over the years, we have celebrated many joyful occasions and faced challenges together.

On the other hand I also share this news with a grateful heart for I am thankful that God has allowed me to serve you. This is a wonderful diocese and I feel privileged to have been your bishop.

Also please know that my decision did not come lightly nor quickly. I have not been feeling well for some time, and was diagnosed with a chronic condition that I am learning to live with. I have prayerfully considered how this diagnosis would affect my ability to serve the people of southwest Iowa. I have looked to the Holy Spirit for guidance, have sought wise counsel, and truly have trusted in your many prayers for me.

In conclusion let me say the church is not the bricks and mortar, not the buildings where we worship. Truly the Church is the people who gather in faith and prayer. It is the people who celebrate, and weather the difficulties in life, together. The strength of this diocese is its people. I have been blessed to walk in the midst of a people of a deep and abiding faith and I am confident you will remain strong in this time of transition.

Thank you and God bless you!