

**In the Heartland
A Blessed Birthday**

**By Bishop Richard Pates
Bishop of Des Moines**

At age 75, Bishops are required to submit their resignations form office according to Canon law. On Feb. 12, I reached that magic number. I have submitted my resignation to Pope Francis in order that it might be on his desk close to that date.

Typically, thereafter, a search is conducted to identify the Bishop's successor after which the transition in bishops occurs. Oftentimes, this requires four months or considerably more time. Nonetheless, I believe it is appropriate to begin prayer for the yet unidentified individual who will become the tenth bishop of Des Moines. Prayer is essential in carrying forward the mission of the church.

As I prepare to take leave, my heart is full of joy and gratitude. The past 10 years in the Des Moines diocese have flown by. I am particularly grateful to Bishop Emeritus Joseph Charron, the priests, deacons, religious and seminarians who have shared with positive spirit this span of our faith journey. Great appreciation is also owed to the members of the diocesan staff who in their very talented way have rendered exceptional service to our diocesan family. Such is also applicable to our school personnel and all others who have been so very generous in exercising the personal gifts God has blessed them with.

As the Diocese of Des Moines, we are "one body." We witness the presence of Jesus in our lives. This community is fortunate to have so many integrally

involved in the life of the Church at every level. We are the people of God seeking to fulfill the mission entrusted to us: “To make Jesus Christ known and loved in our times by choosing to live out the gospel at every moment.”

A question which people confront me with is: “What are you going to do after you retire?” Fair question indeed.

After much soul searching, I have decided to return to the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in retirement. Archbishop Bernard Hebda has assured me of his welcome along with opportunities to assist him in the pastoral service of some 825,000 Catholics in the archdiocese.

St. Thomas Academy, a diocesan boys’ high school is providing me the opportunity to reside in its John R. Roach Faculty Residence on campus. Frequently, I stayed in this facility during my visits to the Twin Cities. Right next door to St. Thomas, is Visitation Academy, the girls’ counterpart to St. Thomas. It is anticipated that I would be able to provide ministry to these schools as well as other large institutions in the archdiocese.

Another opportunity that is in the offing is to serve as a liaison between Bishops in Africa and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The American bishops have established a development fund for African dioceses which needs administering.

I do intend to visit my Iowa home frequently. In communication with our priests, I have assured them I would be happy to replace them in the parishes enabling them to take much needed time off. I also look forward to participation in Des Moines

diocesan events. After all, the path from the Twin Cities to southwest Iowa is all downhill.

God has been particularly benevolent to me in my nearly 50 years of service as his priest. For this, my heart beats with gratitude. As I prepare to enter into the next phase of ministry, I know God's mercies are far from spent. Thus I do so with excitement and confidence in God's providence. I welcome your prayers at this time.