

THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

July 11, 2020
Saint Benedict, Abbot

Dear Father Seipp:

May the Peace of Jesus Christ be with you!

It was a great joy for me to ordain you to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ on the Feast of St. Benedict, the Abbot. Though I deeply regret that the coronavirus pandemic prevented me from ordaining you on the Vigil of Pentecost with a large gathering of the People of God. I am pleased to welcome you into the presbyterate, the College of Priests of the Diocese of Belleville. As Head of that College, I assure you of my availability to you during these early days of your ministry and, if you wish, for years to come. Know that I have given much thought and prayer to your first assignment. Therefore, I am now asking you to begin your ministry as the Associate Pastor (Parochial Vicar) at St. Mary the Immaculate Conception Parish in Mt. Vernon and St. Barbara Parish in Scheller. (Please review canons 545-552, 515-544 of The Code of Canon Law.) With this letter I grant you all faculties needed to exercise your presbyteral ministry in the Diocese.

This appointment is effective Thursday, July 16, 2020, the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. However, due to the restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the moving day and the actual date for beginning your new ministry may be determined by you and the Pastor, Father John C. Iffert, V.F.

I am confident that Father Iffert will welcome you and offer you the support and guidance that you will need as a newly ordained priest. The Christian Faithful of both parishes will also be of great assistance to you by their example of Christian lives and their encouragement. Your many gifts and talents will surely be a benefit to the Pastor and the People of God.

Be sure to look to experienced, prudent, and faithful priests of the Diocese for support and counsel during your early years in ministry. I strongly urge you to join a priests' support group as well. Do not allow the business of your first months to distract you from daily prayer in the presence of the Lord, sound spiritual direction, your annual retreat, the gatherings of the "Wisdom Community," and the companionship of true friends.

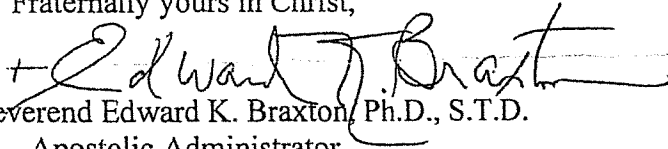
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The first year in the priesthood is filled with many joyful and fulfilling experiences that will shape your life forever. However, there are also challenges and disappointments. Do not be discouraged if this happens. Instead, you should ponder these words from the ordination rite: "Understand, therefore, what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Cross of Christ."

After you have been at the parish for about six months (perhaps in early January), I recommend that you arrange to meet with the Bishop so that you can reflect on how your new ministry is unfolding.

May God bless and continue to strengthen you, dear Joel, as you begin your pastoral service to His Holy People. *Oremus pro invicem.*

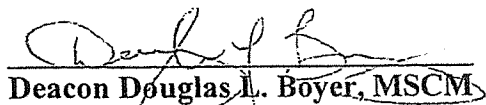
Fraternally yours in Christ,



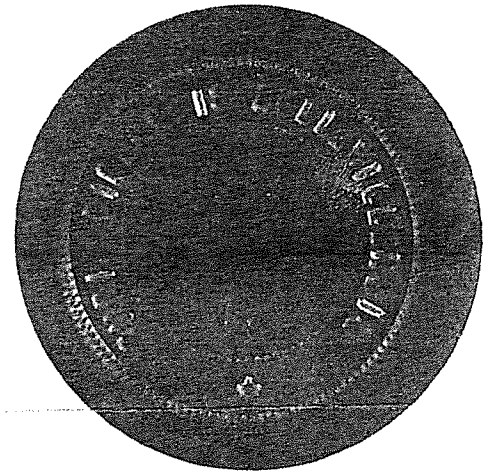
The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Ph.D., S.T.D.
Apostolic Administrator
Bishop of Belleville

Copies: The Reverend Monsignor John W. McEvelly, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia
The Very Reverend John C. Iffert, V.F., Pastor, St. Mary the Immaculate Conception Parish

The Reverend Joel L. Seipp
108 Anne Avenue
O'Fallon, Illinois 62269



Deacon Douglas L. Boyer, MSCM
Chancellor



P.S. This letter is to be read the weekend of July 18-19, 2020 at all the Masses at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Mt. Vernon and St. Barbara Parish in Scheller. The letter should also be copied and inserted in the bulletin, placed on the parish website, and communicated to the Christian faithful by every means possible.