



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP • Diocese of Duluth
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September 17, 2018

Dear Parishioners,

The Lord said to his first disciples: "I am the vine, you are the branches...if you remain in me you will bear much fruit" (John 15:5).

I am grateful to the parishioners of St. Lawrence, Holy Family and St. Joseph's for remaining on the vine and bearing much fruit. In 2012, I addressed a letter to all the faithful of the diocese at the conclusion of our Strategic Planning Process. Over 250 people, including two lay representatives from each of your parishes, along with clergy, religious and lay faithful spent six months formulating a plan for our beloved diocese.

Our Strategic Plan (2012-2017) took into account a fewer number of priests, shifting demographic trends across the diocese, fiscal health and infrastructure of our parishes, as well as the health and well-being of our clergy. After much prayer, thought and discussion, the planning process resulted in the recommendation of a number of possible clusters and mergers of parishes. The process of implementing our plan is now touching your parish families.

Our Strategic Plan calls for St. Joseph Parish to merge into St. Lawrence Parish and St. Joseph Parish to close. St. Lawrence is already clustered with Holy Family. This decision was recommended by the Presbyteral Council, and approved by me, your bishop. The implementation of this part of the plan is to be completed in the year ahead. This decision will allow one priest to administer St. Lawrence and Holy Family Parishes. The final disposition of the parish buildings will be the work of the receiving parish, St. Lawrence.

Father Ryan Moravitz, in consultation with all three councils in the cluster, has established a transition team consisting of members from all three parishes. They desire to lead the parish communities in this time of uncertainty in a positive light with the grace of God's loving mercy.

I acknowledge your feelings of frustration, sadness, and deep grief regarding the merger of St. Joseph Parish into St. Lawrence Parish. I am also confident that the strength of your faith, the hope for new opportunities the Lord is giving us, and the love in your hearts give us a bright future together in becoming missionary disciples. We are on a pilgrimage of faith that even through challenges continues to give us grace to live and grow in our relationship with Christ.

On June 30, 2019 St. Joseph will celebrate its closing Mass. I encourage all parishioners to come together to give thanks to God, to grieve the loss of a beloved parish, share stories and celebrate God's unchanging love for you and a new beginning for us. With ongoing prayers for you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Paul D. Sirba
Bishop of Duluth