

Father Ryan Moravitz, Pastor

Saint Joseph, Holy Family, Saint Lawrence

September 17, 2018

Dear Parishioners of Saint Joseph Parish,

The letter from Bishop Sirba announcing the closure of Saint Joseph Parish and the final Mass on Sunday June 30, 2019 is sad news for you to receive. You have built up and supported such a beautiful faith community over a proud history as a parish, and this news can cause pain, anger, grief, and deep sadness. You, as parishioners, have celebrated your life's biggest moments as a community in Saint Joseph's Church. This is difficult news to hear.

Many hoped that this anticipated news would not come our way. Nonetheless, we are here in this time of difficult transition. I pray we can come together as believers and support one another through the grieving and the work ahead of us. The beautiful gift of who you are as a community can continue if you choose to journey together. You are friends and family in faith and I believe you can still walk together. I want to help in any way I can through the years ahead. We can still enjoy and live in the goodness of the community you love so much.

Over the past 12 months, I have come to be so grateful for the strength and love you share with one another, you are truly a family. We have had some good and healthy conversations, though not always easy ones. I, myself, have spoken with the councils of all three parishes, with bishop, parishioners, the parish cluster staff, and our deacons. Deacon Chico, in a very special way, has been such a great support and a voice of wisdom for me. I am so grateful for him and his love for you!

As he and I have discussed some of these conversations, it became apparent that we needed to form a plan to make this journey together. We realized we needed to lead this process and give time for us as a community to be together through a meaningful mourning of the loss of Saint Joseph Church. Our hope is to walk with you to June 30 in a way that can be a lived experience of the Paschal Mystery, for there is suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension ahead of us.

I have been working as well in consultation with all three councils in the cluster and we established a transition team consisting of members from all three parishes. We desire to lead the parish communities in this time of uncertainty in a positive light with the grace of God's loving mercy. Our first action in this process is to come and listen to the Saint Joseph community. We would like to hear your ideas of how we can go through the months ahead in purposeful and meaningful ways. We want to help make this a good experience for you, even though difficult.

The processes of merging parishes include legal and canonical steps which the parish councils will work on together. The larger picture of why this is happening here and around the country is that we are entering a new time in the Catholic Church in America. We have all seen the reality of a decrease in the number lay faithful practicing the faith, and now we enter a new era of

Catholicism. It is a sad time in our personal history and one we must face in love together as a community, we do this for the sake of a new generation coming up. Your lives have been full of sacrifice, for this community was built by you and your love. I pray and believe that this act of love can and will be a beautiful grace for a new generation.

I will be inviting members of all three parishes to join us for Mass and coffee on Sunday, October 7 at Saint Joseph Church. Mass is at 9:30am, and we will gather in the social hall downstairs to share ideas together. The members of the transition team will be there to listen and then help put plans and action steps together. If you have positive ideas on how we can make this work in a way that we can grow through this difficult experience, please come and share.

Included in this mailing is a list of the members of our transition team. They have been getting to know each other through good conversations and the initial planning it took to share this news with you. Please, don't hesitate to reach out to them through their contact information. They want to listen and help in any way possible. They are a great group of people, many of whom you know very well.

I am grateful for all of you. I know this is difficult and sad news. Please, reach out to me, Deacon Chico, or a team member with any questions. We will be communicating with you as we take the next steps together. I hope to see many of you on October 7 to pray together and share positive ideas on how we can make this work in a way that we can grow through this difficult experience together. I am praying for you in a special way as you receive this news. I am sorry it is not the news you hoped to hear.

You are so important to the future generation, to bring your witness of community and love forward. You will leave a legacy for them to follow, of how to journey in difficulty with love. On your part as a parish family, it will be coming together to share the past, mourn the present, and move forward in goodness and growth. We can be a light to others through how we grow together.

I know in my heart that you have the hearts, and minds, and wills to make new connections through a loving and faith filled transition. You have tremendous gifts of faith and love to be shared well in to the future, and to leave a legacy of peace that people will speak of in a great light. We can do this in a beautiful way.

I entrust you to the loving prayers of your patron, Saint Joseph.

May God bless you and may Jesus Christ be praised.

In the Heart of Jesus,



Fr. Ryan Moravitz