

Father Ryan Moravitz , Pastor
Saint Joseph, Holy Family, Saint Lawrence

September 21, 2018

Dear Parishioners of Saint Joseph, Holy Family, and Saint Lawrence,

Last week the people of Saint Joseph Church received the news of the closure of their church and that the final Mass will be celebrated on June 30, 2019. After years of celebrating some of the most significant moments in the journey of life, their beloved and beautiful church is to close. This news causes a deep sadness and hurt.

In their sadness of heart we all want to show them support and welcome. All of us now will face new realities and new opportunities as a faith community. I believe in the faith and love present in all of your hearts. Your faith and love is now called to a journey together in the Paschal Mystery. We will experience, like Christ, various moments of suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. It will bring us new graces and allow us to remember how we have all been brought to this point in the journey. Each parish's personal story is not over, but it is turning to a new chapter.

As St. Joseph's closes, we will all make sacrifices in love as a Catholic community. Your life has already been full of sacrifice, for our parish communities were 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. This is why you personally are so important to the future generation, to bring your witness of community and love forward.

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 of lay faithful practicing the faith. It is a sad time in our personal history and one we must face in love as a community. At the core we can focus on doing this in a beautiful way for the sake of a new generation coming up.

Each of our three parishes will feel the changes and challenges merging parishes experience when working through a process such as this. However, these changes will also bring opportunities to join together in works of service, acts of prayer and a renewed commitment to develop a closer relationship with not only Jesus, but with our fellow parishioners.

While St. Joseph's closes and members grieve, St. Lawrence and Holy Family will also experience changes. It will be important to welcome your fellow Catholics into your pews and allow time and talents to be shared within the walls of our parishes. Together, we can build on existing fellowship and community across our parishes and strive to be stewards and ambassadors of God's love and example. This may not be easy and it will be an adjustment for

many but I have faith that our parish cluster will be a vibrant, welcoming, and nurturing community.

I have been working in consultation with all three councils in the cluster and we have 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 step 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, even though difficult.

I am inviting members of all three parishes to join us for Mass and coffee on Sunday, October 7 at Saint Joseph Church. Mass is at 9:30 am, 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 from their listening they will work to put plans and action steps together for us. 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. More opportunities such as this will be planned in the near future. We want to walk together in this process.

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. 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. Pray for each other, that we can grow through this new page in our history, keeping Christ and one another at the center of our actions and words.

May God bless you and may Jesus Christ be praised.

In the Heart of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Fr. Ryan Moravitz".

Fr. Ryan Moravitz