



# FEBRUARY 2019 UPDATES

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## Merger News

There was a beautiful sense of love and support as the Saint Joseph community celebrated their final Christmas Masses this last December. For the many parishioners who have dedicated a lifetime to the community and this beautiful church, these Masses brought a mixture of sadness and celebration as they worshiped together.



Transition Team members were present to help present ornaments and prayer cards in commemoration of Saint Joseph. The goodness of Jesus was tangible in all present. Though sad, it was, nonetheless, a beautiful Christmas together.

This past week the four trustees (two from Saint Joseph and two from Saint Lawrence), Stephanie Jago, and Father Ryan met together to go through the diocesan manual of Minnesota State Law and Church Canonical Law about the steps that need to be processed in the months ahead. This group is working together toward unification, with the goal of a smart and diligent merger.

The Transition Team met in January with a focus on two topics: (1) considering criteria for creating a new Mass schedule; (2) reflecting on an article entitled “Thriving Parishes: Watch Your Community Grow Stronger by Getting Back to Basics and Focusing on Christ” by Emily Stimpson Chapman of *Our Sunday Visitor*.

On the right, you will see the criteria for creating a new Mass schedule, in order of priority. On the back, you will find a review of the aforementioned article and the upcoming work of the Transition Team.

## Mass Times: Criteria for Decision Making

The merger will bring about a new Mass Schedule. This schedule is planned to be announced near the beginning of April and implemented around the end of May, giving everyone time for transition prior to July 1. This planning process is a very impactful dynamic to the merger, and the team currently is in the research and prayer phase of the process.

The following criteria (listed in priority) will be weighed in determining a new Mass schedule:

1. **Evangelization:** Mass times that allow for a good Sunday experience of community, sacraments, learning, and family; times that draw people to an ongoing close relationship with God and each other.
2. **Pastor's Presence:** the Pastor can be present consistently on a weekly basis at each Mass to connect with people and communicate effectively.
3. **Size of Worship Space:** best utilization of the full space available in each church.
4. **Resources:** financial impact of the number of Masses (including cost of substitute priests and music ministers, data on collections, and other expenses/income)
5. **Impact on Membership:** overall impact of parishioners either lost or gained by Mass time changes.

The Transition Team is also researching current Mass times, Mass counts and stats, and the schedules of the 32 Saturday evening and Sunday Masses offered in the Duluth area. Please continue to pray daily the Cluster Prayer for the merger.

## Thriving Parishes Article



*Our Sunday Visitor* published a research article by Emily Stimpson Chapman. With parish mergers happening around the country, there are parishes in the midst of these big changes that are “flourishing as they answer the Gospel call ...These parishes are empowering their flocks to participate fully in the sacramental and spiritual life of the Church.”

The article highlights five parishes with growing numbers, dynamic ministries, and life-giving experiences of Jesus Christ.

The parishes that were researched, whether small or large, in cities or in the country, all shared seven common traits (excerpt below):

**1. Beautiful liturgies:** Some parishes, like Our Lady of Lourdes in Denver, feature more contemporary music. Others, such as the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul in Chattanooga, have opted for traditional chant. But every parish featured strives to offer liturgies that are reverent, solemn and faithful to what the Church asks, with beautiful music and a strong sense of the transcendent.

**2. Open doors:** In *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis lamented the growing trend of Catholic churches locking their doors when Mass isn’t taking place, and he called for parishes to take risks by keeping their doors open. The parishes featured here have all taken that risk and used it as a starting point for creating a culture of hospitality.

**3. Eucharistic adoration:** Whether it’s weekly Holy Hours or perpetual adoration, every parish we talked with stressed how making a space (whether physically or in the parish’s schedule) for adoration has changed and blessed their congregation.

**4. Strong leadership:** Not every priest can be a dynamic evangelist, but at the heart of all these thriving parishes are deeply faithful priests who aren’t afraid to hire capable people and try new things. They also have a strong heart for discipleship and a willingness to go out into their communities and evangelize the neighborhoods in which they reside.

**5. Strong formation:** From pre-evangelization programs such as Alpha to evenings of intense intellectual engagement on theological issues, the parishes featured here all are committed to forming people in the fullness of faith. They meet people at the beginning and walk with them as they journey to Christian maturity, providing opportunities for catechesis, formation and regular Christian fellowship.

**6. Confession:** Thriving parishes take sin and grace seriously. They also understand that Saturday afternoons are one of the worst times for people to confess their sins and receive the grace of forgiveness. So they open their doors for confession multiple times throughout the week, most often before and after Mass.

**7. Beauty:** Beauty is a window through which we encounter God. It’s a powerful tool for evangelization and a means for grace. Recognizing that, the parishes featured here have made it a priority to invest in making their churches as beautiful as possible and using that beauty to draw people into the parish.

To read the full article go to:

<https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/Article/TabId/535/ArtMID/13567/ArticleID/22888/Thriving-Parishes.aspx>

## Upcoming Transition Team Work

There is a great amount of work to do in the months ahead. Here are a few areas of work the team will accomplish in the next two months.

### FEBRUARY

- initiate conversations with music leaders and groups;
- engage in research on handicap pews, parking, and accessibility;
- begin work on a St. Joseph history book for parishioners.

### MARCH

- form a Planning Committee for the final Mass/Celebration at St. Joseph, on June 30;
- organize a joint meeting of the St. Joseph and St. Lawrence Finance/Parish Councils;
- meet with funeral hospitality groups.