

Message from our Pastor
(given at the 10:30 AM SJTW Mass on Sunday September 20, 2020)

As we know, for many years a lot of churches have been challenged financially. COVID-19 has only made it much more dire for many, many parishes. We know restaurants, some have closed. We see what's happening with the airline industries. I even think that American Airlines is about to lay off a lot of employees because flights are being eliminated and so forth.

So over the last certainly 6 months at least, if not, well I'd say actually about 9 months, the finance councils have been very aware of our two parishes. I've put a lot of information in the bulletin, going back to even the last weekend of May, so I encourage people to please go on line to see our bulletins to see where we are financially, to see where we are even with our below normal staffing that we have now, because even the current staffing all had to be cut back in hours.

That being said we have had consultation going on with the parish finance councils, we've had Collaborative council meetings, as well as parish-wide zoom meetings on mergers on June 1st, June 18th, and we had another one on September 3rd, and receiving various inputs from the councils. The Finance councils saying that we should merge. Still looking for input from parishioners about merging.

But I find that at this point in time it is in the best of both parishes to seek the process toward a formal merger of our two parishes. If we do nothing, if we do nothing, neither parish is going to make it, and I don't mean 5 years from now . . . 4 years. The financials are showing that within the next most likely 6 months we will be out of money to operate both parishes. That being said I don't want people to be afraid or scared. I know that I am absolutely grateful to everyone that is contributing to both parishes whether it be by coming here physically for the Masses, whether it is by sending in donations, whether it is by the online giving: all the methods with which to contribute to the ongoing viability of both of our parishes. Even our Grand annual, we will try to have an attempt at that. But I also understand that a lot of persons are still unemployed, so we do what we can.

I do treat a merger such as a marriage, the two becoming one. It will be, if it is approved, become a singular parish. I am committed to keeping both churches open, and how that will reveal itself as time goes on is really in God's hands and in everyone's prayers and support.

I know when I arrived to Halifax a little over 6 years ago, the outside sign had blown down. It rotted away and had blown down about two weeks before I arrived. A lot of people saw that as an omen that Our Lady of the Lake should be closed and I was being sent by the Cardinal to close Our Lady of the Lake. I vividly remember my first weekends saying that I was not there to close the parish. Everyone thought it was going to have to close, even the archdiocese thought it was going to have to close. It is still here over six years later and if COVID hadn't hit it would certainly be a different story.

I am not a prophet of doom and gloom. But I am committed to doing everything possible to keep both churches as a Catholic presence in our surrounding areas because we cover quite a lot of area. Hanson-Pembroke for Saint Joseph the Worker. Our Lady's covers parts of Hanson, Pembroke, obviously Halifax, parts of East Bridgewater as well as Plympton. It takes almost 45 minutes to drive from one end of our collaborative to the other, literally. But I am committed to doing everything we can to keep a Catholic presence going. Again, it's in all of our prayers, all of our hands, working together and allowing God's ways, which certainly are far different than our ways.

But that process takes a number of weeks. It has to be approved by our local Vicar Forane, who at the moment is Father Bob Deehan from Holy Family [in Duxbury]; he covers one of the four south region vicariates. I used to be a Vicar Forane twice, once in the north shore and once in the south shore, so I know the process. Then it would have to be approved by the Episcopal Vicar for the south region. It had been Bishop Dooher. But now it is currently Father Bob Connors; he'll be doing the Confirmation here October 4th. [Then it would be presented before the Presbyteral Council, and ultimately for the Cardinal to decide.]

So I just encourage persons if you have any input in any way at all because to do nothing to do nothing we should not be surprised of the inevitable outcome. This is where we are doing something.

I am placing my trust in God Almighty as I had with Our Lady of the Lake and they are still here. And I am convinced that we can work together toward a singular purpose of our evangelization in giving glory to God. So I, just again, let you know that I will initiate the process this week. I will keep you informed as to how it goes and where it leads, but I do feel very, very firmly that after months and months of discussions that it is in the best interest of both churches that we do merge and become one new parish with two churches that would retain their names of Saint Joseph the Worker and Our Lady of the Lake, as the churches are currently entrusted to the patronage of the Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph the Worker.

That being said, I ask your prayers of the Holy Family, I ask your understanding and to please make sure that you check the bulletins on a regular basis for where we are as a parish. But I know, again, that if we do nothing then the inevitable outcome should not surprise anyone. But I do place my faith, trust and hope in our Lord and Savior and I know that we will be guided accordingly as to what we can do. But I am hopeful, I really am, as I said, the fact that I am looking to add two more Masses for a total of seven Masses shows that persons are coming back, they want to come back, and they are continuing to help support our parishes. I just want to share that with all of you, and any further information will be in the bulletin next week as well.

God Bless,
Fr. Mike Hobson

Questions/Comments on the Merger can be
sent to: ololsjtwmerger@gmail.com