



**Our Lady of the Lake Parish**

580 Monponsett Street  
Halifax, MA 02338  
ourladyofthelakehalifax.org  
(781) 293-7971

**Saint Joseph the Worker Parish**

1 Maquan Street  
Hanson, MA 02341  
stjosephtheworker.org  
(781) 293-3581

October 21, 2020

His Eminence Séan Patrick Cardinal O'Malley  
Archbishop of Boston  
66 Brooks Drive  
Braintree, MA 02184

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the parishioners of Our Lady of the Lake and Saint Joseph the Worker parishes, I am writing to formally request that these parishes merge, combining both parish boundaries, and become a new single and larger parish. I have been with these parishes for six and half to seven years, having been initially assigned Administrator of SJTW in November 2013, and Administrator of OLOL in June 2014, and more recently as Pastor of the Collaborative of both parishes in June 2017. As a collaborative during the past three and a half years, these parishes have deepened their faith in our Lord and one another. I submit to you the following history and reasons for merging these parishes for your consideration:

**1. History of Our Lady of the Lake and Saint Joseph the Worker parishes:**

- a. Our parishes have a long history of being connected. Our Lady of the Lake began as a mission church in 1922, stemming from Our Lady (Saint Mary) of the Sacred Heart Parish in Hanover, and became a parish 75 years ago in 1945. As the surrounding area became more built up, Saint Joseph the Worker church became a mission church of Our Lady of the Lake in 1938 and served the towns of Hanson and Pembroke, eventually becoming its own parish in 1956.
- b. More recently, with the challenges placed on parishes such as lower Mass attendance, reduced income, and the shortage of priests, the Archdiocese of Boston began *Disciples in Mission* in 2013. OLOL and SJTW, along with St. Thecla Parish in Pembroke (also originally a mission of Saint Mary of the Sacred Heart in Pembroke), began to discuss working together as a collaborative in 2012. Planning had begun for the tri-parish collaborative to

enter into Phase 3, however with the unexpected passing of Fr. John Mark Hannon in October 2013, this was delayed. When Saint Thecla parish was assigned to a different collaborative in 2016, the remaining parishes of OLOL and SJTW formally became a collaborative in June 2017 and entered Phase 5 of *Disciples in Mission*.

- c. At present, both parish communities have definitely found strength in working more closely together. The following are ways in which both parishes collaborate:
- i. Sharing resources between parishes, such as staff, facilities, and components of the Faith Formation program, especially with combined Confirmations.
  - ii. Mass schedules were adjusted for both parishes, and the same missalette was chosen for use at both churches.
  - iii. In light of COVID-19, many volunteer ushers have stepped forward, including nine nurses, to ensure the faithful have a safe opportunity to gather for the Eucharist at any of the three indoor and two outdoor Masses between the two parishes, in addition to daily Mass throughout the week.
  - iv. Faith Formation classes are held at both parishes allowing families a wider variety of class options to attend, however as we are not having in-person classes during COVID-19, a special Faith Formation Mass followed by catechesis will be offered weekly for families.
  - v. RCIA is active with bringing people into the Catholic Faith each year.
  - vi. Vacation Bible School has been active at SJTW each summer for 21 years (until COVID-19).
  - vii. Joint social activities for both parishes include an annual Summer BBQ/Oktoberfest, St. Patrick's Dinner, and an annual Nativity Play performed by the children along with joint Youth & Adult choir concerts.
  - viii. The reactivation of Knights of Columbus Council #11390 in the past year with over thirty men from both parishes is actively involved, meeting monthly and greatly assisting with landscaping at each church.
  - ix. The women's Sodality of Our Lady also meets monthly and holds an annual Thanksgiving Craft Fair for the local area.
  - x. The Family Healing & Recovery Ministry meets regularly for a monthly Mass, Rosary and speakers, providing support and active outreach to those suffering from Substance Use Disorder (opioid addiction) and their families, and has been doing so for over three years.
  - xi. During the past two years both parishes websites have been revised, use social media outreach to parishioners and others through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. In addition, WeShare (Liturgical Publications) online giving was established, with a growing number of parishioners using it during COVID-19.
  - xii. "Throughout the many years, the parishes of Our Lady of the Lake and St. Joseph the Worker have been joined not only geographically, but spiritually as well. Just as our Blessed Mother and her husband St. Joseph were devoted to Jesus, so have the parishes dedicated to their names devoted themselves to sharing the Gospel message with a strong Catholic identity. These parishes have shared priests and parishioners, hope and heartache, good times and bad times. As these two parishes are joined together again through collaboration in the Disciples in Mission program of the Archdiocese of Boston, we pray that God continues to bless these parishes with fruitful ministry" (from **The Collaborative Parishes of**

**Our Lady of the Lake, Halifax and St. Joseph the Worker, Hanson/Pembroke  
Pastoral Plan 2019-2022 approved August 2019).**

**2. Reasons to merge:**

- a. In light of COVID-19 and ongoing financial challenges present to both OLOL and SJTW, significant staff reduction occurred in July and the ability to maintain the upkeep of buildings as well as the parishes' sustainability are in question because of significant financial concerns.
- b. Extensive outreach to parishioners of both parishes has been done since May 2020. A webinar with Fr. Paul Soper was held on June 1<sup>st</sup>, with two Collaborative Pastoral Council meetings open to all. Information has been provided in the Collaborative bulletin, both parish websites, and Facebook pages. A special merger email was set up comments and questions.
- c. **The Joint Pastoral Finance Council provided a statement of unanimous consensus in August 2020 that a merger of both parishes is needed. In October 2020, the Collaborative Pastoral Council has also provided a statement of unanimous consensus.** Both statements have been placed in the Collaborative bulletin.
- d. It is abundantly clear that all parishioners desire a Catholic church presence to remain in each of the towns of Halifax and Hanson. As there is no Catholic church presence in the town of Plympton, should the Halifax church(OLOL) close, there would be two adjacent towns without a Catholic Church. Should the Hanson church (SJTW) close, it would not be received well since the church was built only 18 years ago and can accommodate a seating capacity of 600 people.
- e. A merger would greatly benefit the spiritual well-being of both parishes. The larger church building (SJTW) could easily accommodate weekend Mass needs for both parishes with a single priest, perhaps needing only two or three Masses, as well as for larger sacramental events such as First Holy Communions and Confirmations. The smaller church building (OLOL) would be best suited for daily Masses, and the parish hall at that parish is far better equipped (much bigger hall with a stage and has multiple classrooms) for Faith Formation classes and social gatherings, as well as hosting the main collaborative offices for staff and clergy.
- f. Merging the two parishes will bring a greater sense of Catholic identity, strengthen discipleship through larger community worship while sharing collectively our time, talent and resources for the greater good of the new parish, streamline duplication of effort, and enhance collective information flow.

In summary, and at this point in time with the reasons stated above, I can definitely say the atmosphere of collaboration has grown to the point where there has been essentially little to no augments against merging and becoming a new parish together. It has been a joy and a blessing to see the tremendous growth and love for our Lord within both parishes. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your decision. If you are in need of any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely in our Lord,



Reverend Michael A. Hobson  
Pastor