

Message to Parishioners Regarding Merger November 21 & 22, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Francis and St. Andrew Parishes,

A little over ten years ago, the Diocese of Norwich began a process of planning for the future. This process included the re-structuring of our parishes to address the decline in priestly vocation. Throughout this time many parishes have experienced changes, including ourselves. In 2010, Father Mark was assigned as our Pastor and our parish families set out on a journey called parish yoking. Under the structure of yoking, two, three, or four parishes began the process of working together to enhance and increase the sustainability of our parishes. Since that time, however, the Diocese has seen a continued decrease in vocations, as well as a decrease in the faithful attending Mass.

Recently, the Diocese has found it necessary to continue planning for the future. This new plan moves from yoking parishes, to the plan merging parishes together. On, November 3, 2020, we were informed that our parish families of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Andrew will be moving in this new direction. The good news in this process is that **NO PARISH BUILDINGS WILL CLOSE!** The merger of our parishes will affect us basically only on an administrative level. As we move forward there are a few things that will change:

- 1) We will form a new parish name that will form the umbrella under which we will exist. What this means is that we will be called the Parish of ???? with 2 worship sites of St. Francis Church & St. Andrew Church. We will need to submit to the Bishop a new name for our Parish by December 31, 2020. Both Fr. Mark and Fr. Richard have come up with a possible name called: The Parish of the Holy Innocents Martyrs. Since both of our parishes are united in Pro-life which is the foundation of who we are as Catholics. The protection of life unites us and so the name of Holy Innocence, Martyrs is very appropriate. We hope you will like this name! We welcome other suggestions. If you wish to offer a name for our new parish, please all the rectory offices and let us know. The cutoff date for receiving possible names will be December 6th.
- 2) Once our new parish name has been accepted, then we will move into the restructuring of our assets. Since both parishes are individual corporations, we will need to dissolve the current corporations, and erect a new one under the new parish name. What does this mean? It means eventually that all our assets will be merged into one: one finance council, one parish council, one checkbook, and one bulletin. This should not affect us too much, but, as we know more, we will inform you.
- 3) In the end, the date chosen to begin our new parish will be July 1, 2021. This will enable us to begin our new parish family with time for the many preparations necessary.

I now that this is hard to hear, but together we can accomplish this. WE are united in faith, hope and love, the virtues of our baptism, but, more importantly, we are united in the Lord

Parish Merger Prayer

O God, Who are perfect unity and true charity, grant to us the parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Andrew Parishes, the grace necessary to be of one heart and one mind, united in the Body of Christ. May all we do in the coming months, unite us in faith, hope, and love, so that we may flourish in charity and be strong in unity.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Composed by Fr. Richard)