

Saint Lawrence Catholic Church and School

524 Walnut St, Lawrenceburg, IN 47025

May 1, 2021

Dear Parishioners of St. Lawrence,

We (Fr. Jonathan Meyer and Fr. Daniel Mahan) write this letter with great humility, excitement, and trust in Divine Providence, because Archbishop Thompson is assigning us to be your pastors beginning July 7th, 2021. God is inviting the Roman Catholics in Dearborn County to a new way of ministry. As we begin this letter and eventually this new form of ministry, we ask first and foremost your prayers for the two of us. We are nothing without God and His grace. There are three very important messages in this letter.

We are COMMITTED ~ We want you to know that we are committed to you and to your salvation. A good friend of Fr. Meyer's with eight children once said: "A father's love does not separate, it just increases." We will love you, and in fact, our hearts are stirring with love for you already. We have committed our lives to many things as priests, and we will remain united in a clear vision of ministry. We promise that we will be fervent in our prayers, clear in our communication, articulate in our preaching, transparent in parish finances, joyful in our lifestyle, and fully available with our time. We also come with an open mind and heart. We are not coming with a set plan, just open hearts. But let us be clear; we are coming with a desire to see Catholic life, worship, devotion, catechesis, ministry and outreach, thrive and increase.

Much of what you know as a Roman Catholic will not be affected by this transition. Your parish will still baptize infants and adults, confirm and form teenagers, prepare young ones for first communion, have times for confession, celebrate the sacrament of Holy Matrimony for those in love, visit the sick, care for the imprisoned, minister to school children, bury the dead, feed the hungry, teach and preach the gospel through catechesis, communicate through the weekly bulletin and social media platforms, care for buildings, gather to honor and glorify the Lord through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and so much more! The priest who does these things and the times they are offered may be adjusted, but we guarantee that they will continue to take place! In fact, it is our hope and dream that they will occur with greater zeal, impact and effect.

This is NEW ~ A recent Church document, *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelizing Mission of the Church*, published in June 2020, is the background and impetus for this new approach. This is a NEW form of ministry. This has not been tried before in our Archdiocese. We do not have many pastors experienced with this form of ministry to call upon for advice. We are a pilot program, yet we both feel confident this can and will be a transformative and hopeful model of ministry. All of us; priests and people, will need to be patient, open and willing to work. So, what is new?

- There will be two priests united as pastor; this is called Priests *in solidum*. Fr. Meyer will be the pastor and moderator, and Fr. Mahan will equally be the pastor. The Latin term *in solidum* can best be translated as *in solidarity*.
- We will be ministering at seven sites: four parishes, two schools (with one school to merge into another in the fall of 2022) and about 2,500 households. The four parishes are All Saints, St. Lawrence, St. Mary, and St. Teresa.
- We will be implementing best practices across the board to increase impact and consolidate time and resources.
- We have the opportunity to unite Catholics in a particular way in the largest pastoral assignment in the Archdiocese.

Gratitude and Receptivity ~ We are very thankful for Fr. Ben. Right now, he is your pastor and will continue to be so until July 7th, 2021. Please do all that you can to honor him and thank him for his ministry. We are also thankful for the countless volunteers and dedicated parishioners who make your parish work every day! Lastly, we are thankful for the experiences Fr. Meyer has gained from All Saints in implementing collaborative ministry, and we are blessed with their openness to this new arrangement. Please know that we

will need your help and dedication more than ever. We need receptivity to best practices and an authentic vision of the Church. We are tremendously excited to work, collaborate, dream, and envision what God has in store for all of us!

More specific questions:

Why is this happening? Our diocese is interested in implementing a new Vatican document: "*The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the Church*" – published by the Congregation for the Clergy, July 20, 2020. This document will be the blueprint and guide. Practically, if we look at the family numbers and engagement at St. Lawrence, St. Mary's and St. Teresa, we see a similarity to All Saints' 1,000+ families. At a certain point, in discussions this past year on the Archdiocesan level, there was a plan to have one priest shepherd St. Lawrence, St. Mary's and St. Teresa, with All Saints remaining separate. However, this arrangement, priests *in solidum*, will allow us (Fr. Meyer and Fr. Mahan) to use our gifts all across the county. It will also create and allow for a dynamic vision, greater sense of unity, and a new brand of Catholicism. It will be challenging, but it is possible.

Will we become one parish and lose our identity? We do not come with a decree from the bishop or the diocese to merge parishes. We come as priests willing to serve, and we value the unique identity of each of the three parishes. Only God knows our future--our mission is to thrive in the present!

Will we be absorbed into All Saints Parish? No, we are four different parishes. There is no mandate for the merging of parishes.

Will our Saturday/Sunday Mass times be adjusted? Yes, it is not possible for us to continue the current Mass schedule. We will be assessing data and putting forth a temporary first draft Mass schedule soon; please look for further communications. Thank you in advance for your patience and flexibility.

Where will we see the biggest adjustments? To be totally transparent, there will be adjustments to the Mass Schedule, confession schedule, and priest's residence; with a promise that the intentionality of ministry will be increased. Please remember that there are so many things that will not be changed: baptisms, marriages, confirmations, outreach to the poor, school ministry, etc. Together we can do this. Will it be different? Yes, however together, we can make this happen.

Will there be four separate parish councils? Yes, at least in the beginning. Our Archbishop has asked, across the Archdiocese, that priests who administer at multiple parishes bring their parish councils together for collaboration. We will begin by meeting with the councils separately, but would like to see an eventual merger for better ministry.

Will there be four separate finance councils? Yes, the finance councils will and must always be separate, this is part of the universal law of the Church.

Where will you live? Because of the importance of the two pastors praying together, communicating frequently, and living as brothers, and because of our desire to offer hospitality to visiting priests, seminarians, and those discerning the priesthood, the priests will live at St. Teresa in Bright. This parish, St. Teresa, has the largest rectory to meet these needs.

Will St. Mary's School still merge into St. Lawrence's School? Yes, we are following the plans that Fr. Ben set in place prior to our arrival.

Will the three parishes continue having chicken dinners, fundraisers etc.? Yes, we have no plans to stop or hinder the community life of the parishes. In fact, we want it to thrive even more.

How on earth will you do all of this? First, by the help of your prayers. Second, with God all things are possible. Third, with your help, creativity and openness.

What if I don't like this new arrangement? Adjustments can be difficult, and even painful. Please join your new pastors and the members of the other three parishes in praying for the success of this new endeavor

and for the vitality of all four parishes. And please be ready to roll up your sleeves because there is plenty of work to be done in building up the Church.

Is this taking place due to a lack of priests? No and Yes! We are moving in this direction because of a new vision of ministry that we believe can bring vitality, unity and greater mission. However, it is true that in the past five years we have lost 24 priests including Fr. Peter Gallagher. During that same time, we have ordained only nine priests, leaving us with a loss of 13 active priests.

Can you tell us a little more about yourselves? Absolutely, our biographies can be found at the end of this letter.

What are the next steps & how can I be notified of updates between now and July 7? We encourage you to read the Vatican document "The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the Church", of the Congregation for the Clergy, July 20, 2020 which can be found on the Vatican's website or www.allsaintscatholic.net.

Prior to July 7, Fr. Meyer and Fr. Mahan will meet with the staff, parish council and finance council of your parish.

We will do our best to clearly communicate through your home parish bulletin and social media outlets. You are also invited to visit All Saints website and social media platforms for additional details:

Website: <http://www.allsaintscatholic.net>

Find us on Facebook: @AllSaintsParish1

My Parish App: Text "app" to 88202 to download and search All Saints Parish

Parish YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ASPweeklyhomily>

We hope that you share our desire for the strengthening of the Catholic faith throughout all of Dearborn County and beyond. We are both committed to investing time, energy, lives, and our priestly service to building up:

- a county distinguished by seven crosses that soar over the places where our Lord is worshiped and adored in the Blessed Sacrament and celebrated in our authentic worship.
- a county in which the rich treasure of our Catholic faith and morals are taught, learned, and shared with others.
- a county in which joyful Catholics bring to others the presence of the Living Lord through works of compassion and charity.
- a county that is transformed by our Catholic witness to the dignity of the human person from the moment of conception until natural death.
- a county in which vocations to the priesthood and religious life are nurtured and developed through loving families strong in their Catholic faith.

In His Service,

Fr. Jonathan Meyer & Fr. Daniel Mahan

BIOGRAPHIES

Father Jonathan Paul Meyer was ordained a priest in 2003. After his ordination he served as the Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis for five years. He has also served at several parishes including: Our Lady of the Greenwood, St. Luke Catholic Church, the three parish communities of St. Joseph, St. Ann and St. Mary's in Jennings County and currently serves as the pastor of All Saints in Dearborn County.

Father Meyer was educated at the USI in Evansville, IN and the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN. After Graduation he continued his studies at the Pontifical North American College obtaining a S.T.B. and a Masters in Spiritual Theology from the Angelicum in Rome.

His priesthood has been one marked by an intentional involvement in the formation of youth and young adults through speaking, leading retreats and promoting World Youth Day initiatives. His other gift has been the renewal of parish life through creative and innovative ministry. All the while, he maintains a presence on the internet with homilies and other teachings. He has written and published two children's plays and recently wrote a chapter for Dynamic Catholic's book, *Beautiful Hope*.

Father Meyer has also been engaged in coaching Track and Cross Country since 2009; coaching at public schools; at Jennings County High School for 4 years and most recently at East Central High School.

Father Daniel J Mahan has served as a priest of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis for the past thirty-three years. He is a native of Indianapolis and a son of Holy Spirit parish on the east side of that city. He has three brothers and two sisters. His mother lives in Columbus, Ohio and turns 100 this July.

Father Mahan has served in parishes large and small, urban and rural throughout the archdiocese, including St Mary's in Rushville, St Barnabas and St Luke in Indianapolis, St Rose of Lima in Franklin, St Louis in Batesville, St Jude in Spencer, and St John the Apostle in Bloomington.

Father Mahan was educated at St Meinrad College and did his graduate studies at the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

Two important themes in Father Mahan's priestly service are stewardship and catechesis. Father has presented stewardship talks, conferences, retreats, and parish missions in thirty-nine states, four Canadian provinces and seven foreign countries on five continents. He is a past member of the Board of Directors of the International Catholic Stewardship Council.

Father Mahan has also distinguished himself in the field of adult catechesis, teaching from the Catechism of the Catholic Church in his parish assignments, and producing a series of videos about the Catechism entitled *Tour of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. These videos are available on www.airmaria.com and on YouTube. Father is a reviewer of catechetical texts and a consultant for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Subcommittee on the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Father Mahan has deep roots in Dearborn County and many of his ancestors are buried in River View Cemetery. His maternal great-great-grandfather, Ignatius Christmann came to Aurora from Alsace-Lorraine, France in 1847. His maternal great-great-grandfather, Thomas Langon came to Aurora from Ireland at around that same time. Both helped to put the roof on St Mary's in Aurora. Father Mahan was named after a native son of St Mary's, the late Father Daniel Joseph Nolan.