

Visitation Catholic Parish

3314 South 58th Street

Tacoma

WA 98409

November 21st 2020

Dear Parish Members of Visitation Church,

You have just heard your Archbishop address you in the letter presented to you. I expect that the contents of that letter will be made available in written form and on our web site over the coming week or two.

The Archbishop is telling you about major changes here with the Tacoma area parishes. Change is part of being church and even Canon Law undergoes change while still being an anchor to our way of life.

For some time now and for years before my arrival in Tacoma the organization of the parishes here in Tacoma has been discussed at the Deanery level. It is for this reason I have been trying to play catch up with the discussion this far.

In any discussion of church there are many factors to be considered, population growth or decline, future trends of civic government, distribution of priests and deacons, financial health, parish programs, school viability, availability of extern priests and more.

It is reasonable that some realignment and redistribution of resources would be considered. Strategic planning is the method being used to find the way forward and carry out the mission of the church.

As with the growth of any city, Tacoma has gone through its own transformation with the population shifting from the inner city to the suburbs. This movement has left many parishes with fewer parishioners and less resources to meet basic needs. The same is true of any inner city school.

After reflection and investigation, the Archdiocese leadership has decided to move forward with the deanery recommendation towards an amalgamation of five fragile parishes into one new vibrant parish. The 5 parishes are St. Rita of Cascia, Holy Rosary, Visitation, St. John of the Woods and St. Ann.

The site chosen for this new merged parish is the present St. Ann parish on South 72nd Street. It is also expected that the present Visitation School would move to the St. Ann parish site.

The intent is to have one strong parish with greater resources that requires only two priests.

At some point there is a consideration of whether St. John of the Woods would also join the newly merged parish.

This is a major restructuring of the church in the South Tacoma area and most people involved will need time to adjust to this new arrangement.

Inevitably, there will be disappointment and sadness as people prepare to leave the churches where so many have been baptized and received the sacraments. Sunday mass will seem different and unfamiliar.

It will demand a leap of faith by all concerned and with prayer, the new circumstance will become familiar and once again feel like home.

As this process unfolds I expect to make every effort to support you in dealing with this change.

To further the conversation on all of this there will be several parish-wide zoom meetings taking place in the coming 3 weeks. Visitation parishioners are invited to participate on Thursday December 17th from 6 to 7.30 pm. More information about how to join the zoom meeting will be forthcoming.

I ask you to listen to and absorb the intent of the Archdiocese leadership in regard to this Strategic Plan.

For myself I will join my prayers with yours, that this is the Will of God for the church in South Tacoma.

Sincerely

Fr. Martin Bourke.