

Philly close
15 June

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On this Trinity Sunday, we reflect on the hope that God writes in our hearts. We just heard St. Paul tell the Romans: “We boast in hope of the glory of God.” It is the hope of those who love. St. Paul tells the Romans, and us, that hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” He says elsewhere, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” This is the source of Christian hope, of the Christian’s basic positive life-stance. Though we walk in darkness sometimes these days and we can get pretty discouraged, we are assured that God is for us and with us always.

I know that on ^{this} ~~the~~ day on which, after much study and consultation, we close this sacred structure as a parish church, it’s difficult to be hope-filled. For just a moment, let us reflect on the hope lived by some who called St. Joseph’s home.

Fr. Paul Hagan, native son, founding missionary of our Peruvian Apostolate: St. Martin de Porres in Mollendo, Peru. Even though he died so young and tragically, he was a beacon of hope to the faithful he served, particularly in South America. Or take the parishioner who literally moved this church structure to this present location with one horse back in 1914 so that it’s foundation wouldn’t be compromised by sitting in low, wet ground.

What about the parishioners who held parties in their homes to help reduce the parish's debt? Then there's Sr. Aquinas Hagan, Sister of St. Joseph whose love of the Word of God, deep love for her Catholic Church and brave endurance during her long illness speak loudly of hope in the promises of God. Then, there are the many fine pastors that led the faithful here for generations. I was so impressed too of learning of the very active altar/rosary society, supporting this parish in so many ways. Oh, perhaps, small in number, but all indicators, expressions of a lively faith and hope, people who accept change through the years, but never losing their faith and hope in God's ever presence. That's you, the faithful of St. Joseph's Church here in Philadelphia.

In our own families, as the years go by, we adapt to changes, the kids move out, jobs are found out of the North Country. Our needs change, so we adapt for the sake of the family. Sometimes, we move out of the homes that we grew up in. They're too big now, but the family remains intact, even growing. Understandably, we are greatly saddened when we move out of our home where so many cherished memories reside. But we move forward because it's the right decision for today. We look through the windshield of possibilities ahead at the future's horizon.

It's important to remember that the Church isn't going anywhere.

Your pastor, Msgr. Aucoin, Deacon Pat Donahue and staff will continue to minister to your pastoral needs. Masses will continue to be celebrated at St. Mary's in Evans Mills and the Sacraments administered.

Let us continue to pray for vocations to the consecrated religious life and ordained ministry. We must continue to create a culture of vocations, strengthen faith formation in family life, and build vibrant parishes. Again, it's so important to remember that the pastoral care of all the parishioners here continues. Again, the Catholic Church has not moved away. This building will be closed, yes, but not the Church which is the Body of Christ.

This afternoon, we thank the Lord for the gift of St. Joseph's Catholic Church and for all who, through the years, have made this a truly sacred home. With St. Paul, we "boast in hope of the glory of God." *So may God, the source of hope, fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that through the power of the Holy Spirit, you may have hope in abundance.*"

I give thanks to Almighty God for your faithfulness and support. As we move into the future, Christ-fed, Christ-led, and Hope-filled, let us pray for each other and support one another in our common journey to the Father. May God be praised...forever may God be praised!