



Diocese of Pittsburgh

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Office of the Bishop

December 14, 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers of Saint Bede, Saint Charles Lwanga and Saint James Parishes:

As we journey to Christmas this Advent, we remember that great and glorious miracles await us at the end of challenging roads. For more than a year, you have journeyed together on a road that is intended to unite you on the mission to bring the Good News of Jesus to your neighbors and to strengthen all of you in faith.

On April 12, 2015, I called all the faithful of the Church of Pittsburgh to journey with me in the initiative *On Mission for The Church Alive!* so that we could focus the resources of our parishes on mission and ministry, rather than on maintenance. Since that time, you have considered, prayed and planned about how best to serve God and his people through vibrant parishes and effective ministries.

Recently, after consultation with parishioners regarding a plan for the merger of your parishes, the members of your Pastoral and Finance Councils signed a petition to move forward with that plan. In turn, your grouping administrator, Father Thomas Burke, petitioned me to merge the parishes. On October 21, 2019, the diocesan Priest Council and Vicars General gave unanimous consent to the proposal, and I have decided to enact these recommendations.

Effective January 6, 2020, your current parishes will cease to exist, and the new parish of Saint Mary Magdalene will take their place. No church buildings will close at this time. Your parish leaders and the faithful will take time to consider which buildings will best serve the needs of the faithful and the community, and your pastor will eventually make a recommendation to me. For now, Mass is to be celebrated in each of them, at a minimum on the anniversary of their dedication and on the solemnity of their patron.

Every member of your current parishes is entitled to join Saint Mary Magdalene Parish. Saint Mary Magdalene Parish will also inherit all of the assets, responsibilities and liabilities of the current parishes.

Saint Mary Magdalene Parish will be served by the following clergy team:

- Father Thomas Burke, Pastor
- Father David Taylor, Senior Parochial Vicar

Your priests have worked diligently in service to you and to God throughout this process, and I am deeply thankful for their care and leadership. They are good shepherds who will continue to lead you closer to Jesus as this new parish community grows.

One reason that you are merging now, rather than later, is that your inspiring example of collaboration, courage and compassion has been a model for the entire Diocese of Pittsburgh. As *On Mission for The Church Alive!* continues to unfold, your experience will benefit others as they seek to mobilize their resources for vibrant worship, responsive pastoral care and powerful evangelization.

This has not been a simple task. Jesus never promised that it would be easy to carry his message of love and mercy to others. He was clear that sacrifice would be necessary. However, you are positioning your new parish for more effective ministry by addressing financial needs, sharing resources and allowing your clergy to focus on the spiritual work for which they were ordained.

With your faith in Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit, I invite you to warmly welcome and serve each other as you become one parish family. May you discover the mission that God has planned for you to share.

Grateful for our continued efforts together in being *On Mission for The Church Alive!*, and for our belief that “Nothing is Impossible with God,” I am

Your brother in Christ,

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Most Reverend David A. Zubik
Bishop of Pittsburgh