



Diocese of Pittsburgh
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Office of the Bishop

November 28, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers of Saint Raphael and Sacred Heart Parishes:

On April 12, 2015, when I initiated *On Mission for The Church Alive!*, who of us could have ever imagined the ways in which the COVID-19 virus and crisis would affect every aspect of our daily lives? As we continue to live through many changing realities, please know that I pray for you daily asking our Heavenly Father to shower you with abundant grace, good health and much hope.

Despite present challenges with the pandemic, your parishes successfully completed the merger process by presenting a Virtual Parish Assembly and gathering written and electronic feedback from parishioners. Members of your Pastoral and Finance Councils worked with your administrator to complete all necessary documentation for the merger. In turn, your grouping administrator, Father Joseph Mele, petitioned me to merge the parishes. On October 19, 2020, the diocesan Priest Council and Vicars General gave consent to the proposed merger, and I have decided to enact these recommendations.

Effective January 4, 2021, your current parishes will cease to exist, and the new parish of Saint Jude will take their place. No church buildings will close at this time. Parish leaders and parishioners will need to follow a thorough process to consider which buildings will best serve the needs of the faithful and the community. Regarding the school associated with the parish, the name of Sacred Heart School will not change at this time.

Every member of your current parishes is now a member of the newly formed Saint Jude Parish. Saint Jude Parish will also inherit all of the assets, responsibilities and liabilities of the current parishes.

Saint Jude Parish will be served by the following clergy team:

- Father Joseph Mele, Pastor
- Father John Sweeney, Senior Parochial Vicar
- Father Steven Palsa, Parish Chaplain
- Deacon William Hahn
- Deacon John Vaskov

Your priests and deacons have worked diligently in service to you and to God throughout this process, and I am deeply grateful for their care and leadership.

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.

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,

+ *David A. Zubik*

Most Reverend David A. Zubik
Bishop of Pittsburgh