



The Catholic Churches of Oakmont, Plum & Verona

444 Saint John Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15239
(412) 793-4511
www.opvcatholic.org

June 11, 2020

Dear Oakmont, Plum & Verona parishioners, school families and friends,

I received the sad news this week that our two grade schools at St. John and St. Joseph will merge to the St. John school site for the 2020-2021 school year. It was my hope that we could continue to operate both schools independently for next year. However, challenged by the current pandemic, declining enrollment at St. Joseph and only modest growth at St. John, the Diocese of Pittsburgh and the new Pittsburgh East Regional Catholic Elementary School's board chose to advance a decision now. I can accept the greater vision for a leaner school system in our Diocese, but know the emotional impact this will have on our parishioners, alumni, school families and friends.

Many of you have spent great efforts and personal sacrifices to keep both schools independent for many years. And they have both been excellent educational centers with wonderful faculty and family community for the respective parishes. Please know that all those efforts were not only a blessing for the students over the past many years, but will continue to have a great impact on their lives for years to come. Thank you for all that you have done for our school communities.

The specifics of this merger will be unfolding in the coming days. A few things are certain at this time. The St. Irenaeus Preschool and St. John Preschool and School sites will continue to be used, along with the gym at St. Joseph as well. Due to the pandemic, we may need to use all three buildings for classrooms in some way for preventative safety measures. Principal Beau Quattrone and the PERCES administration will be determining the faculty to fill the needs of the merged school, but that will follow a union contract, which tends to favor experienced teachers, as I understand, and all union and non-union faculty will be considered fairly. My expectation is that the new merged school will truly be a merger and will have families, students and faculty from all three school communities come together with past traditions and the ability to create new traditions together.

One blessing is that this school merge occurs after the announcement about the five-parish merge. The name of the new school will become the name of the new parish. As the newly appointed pastor of our new parish, I am committing the full complement of prayer and resources of Holy Family Parish to support Holy Family Catholic School. To help grade school families through the transition process, the Parish will contribute 10% of each family's tuition rate for the next academic year to attend the new school. My hope is that within a year, we will all begin to see the good fruit that can come from a single larger school community, with the ability to learn and grow together, to pray, socialize and fundraise together for our school to create a new family community within Holy Family Parish.

I ask all our parishioners to pray for the current school faculty and families in this transition. May the Holy Family, who helped in the formation of their son, our Lord, be our patron and model as we come together in faith.

In Christ's love,

Father Kevin

Rev. Kevin G. Poecking