

# Merger Questions Asked and Answered

## St. Mary & St. Joseph parishes

With any merger, members of each community feel a sense of loss. In our case, the loss is connected to a loss of those practicing the faith. As with any loss of a good thing, it is right to grieve. At the same time, God is still with us, promising to act powerfully for our good, and inviting us to be faithful to him and the mission he has given us. God is bringing us together into one new parish. Our goal is to hold onto all the cherished traditions of each parish that have deepened our faith, while looking to the Holy Spirit to lead us forth in new ways of making disciples. With God's help, a visitor coming in a few years to our parish—to either site of our parish—will see that the best of each community remains in our parish while also experiencing the ever-newness of the living God. We present to you these questions and answers.

### General Merger Questions

**Q:** We have been hearing about the merger between St. Joseph and St. Mary parishes for a few years now. What exactly does this mean?

**A:** It means that beginning July 1, 2017 there will be one parish that will include all current parish properties. The parish will include St. Joseph church (9450 Duffield Rd.), St. Joseph Hall (12145 Ray Rd.), St. Joseph Cemetery (Baldwin Rd.), and St. Mary church, rectory and education building (700 E. Columbia Rd.).

Generically, merger is a canonical term that refers to a combining of two or more parishes into one parish.

**Q:** What will the merged parish be named?

**A:** The naming of a parish is always the decision of the bishop. On January 17, 2017 our combined parish council met and discussed this question. There was unanimous agreement that we should petition Bishop Boyea to have the new parish be named St. Mary and St. Joseph Parish. It was also unanimously agreed that this option was so far superior than the other ones (a totally new name, or just St. Mary), that spending time with parish wide surveys was a needless waste of time and energy. Fr. Jon agreed with their decision and vote.

Some of the main reasons for this decision were: (1) the desire to keep both parish names in the merged parish. (2) A strong sense that having a new parish name, totally different from St. Mary and St. Joseph, would confuse those in the greater community. (3) Having St. Mary and St. Joseph in the name signals the importance of both parishes and their history in the new parish. (4) A concern that having the merged parish be St. Mary only would cause unnecessary pain for many.

Fr. Jon spoke to Bishop Boyea after this meeting and he agreed that this would be fine. He is waiting for us to send in a signed copy of the minutes of this meeting with a request for this new parish name, along with a request from me and the parish council for the merger to take place. He will then issue a decree, which he will send to our parish, probably in early June, and we will make it public through the bulletin and gathering spaces.

**Q:** I have heard the title One Holy Family used in various settings. What is this referring to? Will this be considered as the name of our new parish? What happens to this name going forward?

**A:** This name was chosen as the title of our recent Capital Campaign. We have continued to use this title in other settings, for example the bulletin. It has yet to be determined how we might use it going forward.

**Q:** In our merger, what does the bishop decide and what is left up to us to decide?

**A:** The bishop decides that we will merge. Bishop Boyea indicated that St. Mary and St. Joseph should be merged in connection to the Diocesan Wide initiative called *Planning Tomorrow's Churches*. This was back in 2008 and was for the purpose of having parishioners make their needs and desires known. Bishop Mengeling started this process. The result of this initiative recommended that St. Mary and St. Joseph be merged, and Bishop Boyea approved this recommendation. In 2012, Fr. Jeff Poll asked the bishop to delay any merger until the building loan at St. Joseph's could be properly addressed. At the successful conclusion of our Capital Campaign and with further assistance from the diocese, it was determined by Fr. Jonathan, through consultation with the finance counsels and the parish council and the greater parish community, that it would be possible to merge the parishes without unjust burdens being placed on either parish. In fact, because of all the hard work already done to bring our parishes together, there are many reasons that a merger would be beneficial and delaying any longer would cause greater stress, making it more difficult to move forward with our Christ-given mission. Bishop Boyea sought the counsel of the Presbyteral Council in November of 2016 and the College of Consultors in December of 2016. Both groups recommended merging the parishes.

The bishop also designates which is the primary or principal parochial church. Bishop Boyea has designated St. Mary church building as the primary or principal parochial church site.

The Bishop designates the location for the pastoral administrative offices. This is where all sacramental records, including the current St. Joseph sacramental records, must be kept. This will be St. Mary office. St. Mary's will be the primary administrative office where all records will be held.

**Q:** How will each site function on a daily basis?

**A:** Refer to "What does our merger look like" document. Anything that would change in the coming year for liturgy, meetings, times and places should be listed on this reader-friendly sheet.

**Q:** What does it mean that St. Mary is the primary or principal church?

**A:** Being the primary or principal church means that the sacramental records will be kept at this site. The principal church is to be the center of divine worship as well as the center of the spiritual, liturgical, teaching and social mission of the entire parish community.

**Q:** What will we call the St. Joseph church building?

**A:** We will call it St. Joseph church.

**Q:** I heard that St. Joseph will be called a chapel or oratory. Is this correct?

**A:** Canonically (think “legally” in the church), all church buildings that are not the primary or principal church building of a parish are called oratories (sometimes also called chapels). So in official contexts, St. Joseph church building will be called an oratory. St. Joseph, however, is still a church building and can be referred to as such. We intend in all our communication to speak of St. Joseph church building as St. Joseph church, and not St. Joseph oratory or chapel.

**Q:** If I have questions that are not answered here, how can I get them answered?

**A:** We realize that not every question is answered in this document, and we encourage you to ask any additional questions you have by sending them to either parish office. You can email them, snail mail them, drop them off, or phone them in. You will receive a response as soon as possible, and if appropriate this question and answer will be added to this document.

### **Worship Questions**

**Q:** How will the merger affect Mass times?

**A:** We have decided that our Sunday morning Mass times will change starting March 5, 2017. There will be 8:30 AM Mass at St. Joseph church and 11:30 AM Mass at St. Mary church. There will still be a 5 PM Saturday Vigil Mass at St. Mary church. We are in the process of determining if there will be a 5 PM Sunday Mass at St. Mary church.

**Q:** Will there be Christmas and Easter Masses at both sites?

**A:** At this time there will be no change to the Christmas Masses and Easter Sunday morning Masses. After 2017 there will be only one Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil). We will determine exactly what our Triduum schedule will look like before Lent 2018. In 2017, Fr. Paul Erickson will celebrate the Triduum at St. Joseph.

As we have been doing for the past few years, we will alternate Mass times on Holy Days, like All Souls, the Immaculate Conception and Ash Wednesday.

**Q:** Will my gift of being a liturgical minister be utilized at either site/church?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Will the parish have Eucharistic Adoration?

**A:** Both sites now have Eucharistic Adoration, and it will continue at both sites.

**Q:** Will the music at Mass change?

**A:** Current music ministers will stay the same. Music ministry programs will work together to offer Catholic music that is beautiful, vibrant, and faithful to Church teaching and the nature of the Mass.

### **Financial Questions**

**Q:** Will the finances of the two parishes be merged? Will there be one set of books or two?

**A:** The finance will be merged. There will be one set of books. All assets and liabilities will be joined.

**Q:** What will happen to the Finance Councils?

**A:** The two Finance Councils will be merged into one council. This is because we will be going from two parishes to one. Starting in January 2017, the two councils will be meeting together to prepare for the merger and work on what the new Finance Council will look like. The new Finance Council will have the same responsibilities as the old.

**Q:** Can I continue to contribute to just one parish?

**A:** It is important to realize that there will be one parish after the merger. As in the past, though, a person is always free to give an earmarked gift, to be used for a particular purpose or to fund a particular program.

**Q:** How will the St. Joseph building loan be taken care of?

**A:** There is approximately \$225,000 left on the loan. We and our diocese have agreed that we will pay off \$10,000 per year until the loan is paid off. As a part of the upcoming Diocesan-wide Witness to Hope Campaign, we have also agreed to dedicate the parish share (\$44,000) to the loan. Currently we are about \$20,000 ahead of our commitment. The Diocese will not charge any interest from this point forward.

### **Faith Formation Questions**

**Q:** How will we address youth, young adult and adult education and formation? Will faith formation for all age groups continue? Will faith formation continue at our parishes.

**A:** In the Fall of 2017, all Religious Education K-8 will be held at St. Mary due to the proper education facilities. Number of children in each class was also a consideration. Since Sandy Corrion's retirement, Robin Doyle has been the DRE for both St. Joseph and St. Mary. We plan on having one DRE going forward.

Continued formation for all other age groups will be provided at both sites.

**Q:** How will sacramental formation be handled.

**A:** Right now our DRE, Robin Doyle, is responsible for preparation for first confession, first communion and confirmation. Dcn. Wayne Corrion is responsible for RCIA. Fr. Jonathan and Dcn. Wayne are currently running baptism and marriage preparation.

**Q:** What will happen to our catechists?

**A:** We will work to find appropriate ways that all our current catechists can use their gifts. We believe that there is plenty of need ("the harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few"). Because our religious ed program is still under going change, we don't yet know every detail.

### **Clergy and Staffing Questions**

**Q:** Will there be parish office hours at both church sites after the merger?

**A:** Yes. Office hours will be the same for 2017. See merger document.