



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Diocese of Youngstown

September 3, 2021

Dear Father Korda and the Beloved Faithful of Christ the Good Shepherd Parish,

Peace be with you! As you know, in June of this year I assigned Father Jim Korda as Administrator of your parish with the special charge to work with the councils to assess the viability of the parish and to recommend one worship site for the future. Since his arrival Father Korda has led this process with the hope of unifying the faith community and making it even stronger.

The process is necessitated by the fact that the parish cannot afford to maintain three campuses. A mounting debt of nearly \$850,000 presents challenges not only to upkeep the buildings but also to provide quality ministry for the future. It is my understanding that these same challenges existed back in 2015 when a recommendation was made by the parish leadership at that time to the Presbyterial Council for Campbell to have only one worship site. In spite of this prudent attempt by the leadership at that time, no action was taken.

It is imperative that this matter be resolved for the good of the Church and that a Catholic community continues to exist in the City of Campbell. As your bishop, I am committed to Christ the Good Shepherd Parish, however, we have to live in reality and accept the fact that there can be only one worship site. On August 15, 2021 it was my privilege to celebrate Holy Mass at the parish. At that time, I publicly conveyed this fact and acknowledged that I was awaiting the recommendation for the site.

On August 29, 2021 I received a letter from Father Jim Korda following a series of meetings with council members, the minutes of which have all been shared with you, recommending the Saint John the Baptist campus as the site. I am grateful to Father Korda and all the members of the councils for the recommendation and their painstaking efforts.

After much prayer and following consultation with the Presbyterial Council and staff of the Diocese, I accept the recommendation for the one site to be at Saint John the Baptist effective November 28, 2021, the First Sunday of Advent. At that time both Saint Lucy Church and Saint Joseph the Provider Church will be closed. A closing Mass will be scheduled at both churches in November.

I have directed Father Michael Balash, Diocesan Director of Worship and Vicar of Clergy and Fr. David Misbrenner, Diocesan Curator of the Patrimony to work with Father Korda in incorporating artifacts from the Saint Joseph and Saint Lucy Churches into the Saint John the Baptist Church. In addition, I wish to announce that for the time being the Palermo Center will remain open so as to allow for continued fellowship and a source of potential revenue for the parish.

The decision to close church buildings is always painful and heart wrenching because those sites represent a spiritual home and refuge filled with much family history. Nevertheless, like any family, we must live in reality. We cannot give what we do not have.

At the end of the day, our faith is not about a building, but a community centered in Christ Jesus. Jesus said, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20). In whatever church or place we gather in his name; Jesus is always present. With all due respect to our church buildings which we come to know and love, the Catholic experience is all about encountering Jesus and growing in relationship with him as a community of believers who every day strive to move forward together with the destination of heaven.

Since 2012 when the parishes were merged, you all have worked hard to form community in the name of Jesus Christ. All three churches rely solely on the dedication of volunteers for their maintenance and cleaning. I was honored to meet some of these individuals during my walk through of all three sites. I am humbled by your commitment.

While the work of becoming one is seldom easy, it does have a way of stretching us into a deeper experience of the Kingdom of God. It is my hope that you will continue to work together as brothers and sisters and joyfully testify to the light of Christ.

I invite you to join me in seeking the grace and strength of Christ, the Good Shepherd. I know he is praying with us and for us now, "That all may be one." (John 17:21)

Sincerely in Christ,

+ David J. Bonnar

Most Reverend David J. Bonnar
Bishop of Youngstown

