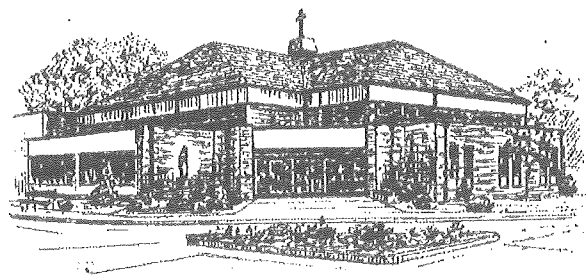


Queen of the Universe

RECTORY
2443 TRENTON ROAD
LEVITTOWN, PA 19056
(215) 945-8750
Fax: (215) 945-0413



June 1, 2014

Dear Friends in Christ,

This weekend as we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we are reminded of the joy and grace bestowed upon Mary and Elizabeth for placing their trust in the Lord and obeying His will in all things. May we be inspired by their example as we continue the work of building vital parishes for the future where spiritual fulfillment and pastoral care will be provided for generations yet to come.

In the Fall of 2010, a pastoral letter was issued to parishioners throughout the Archdiocese. It outlined the necessity of an in-depth examination of all parishes in order to gauge whether they possessed the necessary resources to remain vibrant and sustainable faith communities. This process, known as Parish Area Pastoral Planning, is designed to be as collaborative and consultative as possible. Its goal is to provide pastors, after consulting their parish leadership, with the opportunity to dialogue with members of the Archdiocesan Strategic Planning Committee in providing joint recommendations to the Archbishop for growth and sustainability within their respective geographic areas.

During the process additional steps are taken to be as inclusive as possible. In the majority of cases, the regional bishop and the dean meet with the pastors as well as their pastoral and finance councils to hear their concerns and receive their recommendations. Additionally, the recommendations of all parish mergers are brought before the Council of Priests and the College of Consultors by the Archdiocesan Strategic Planning Committee for their observations and recommendations.

While this process is expected to take anywhere from five to eight years to complete in the entire Archdiocese, certain areas, ours among them, required a study at this time. Due to a number of factors including a shift in Catholic population, a high density of parishes in our small area, as well as declines in Mass attendance, Sacramental activity, the availability of priests to staff parishes, and a review of facilities, mergers were proposed. These proposals were shared with pastors and lay leaders from all of our local parishes as well as the Archdiocesan Strategic Planning Committee, the Council of Priests and the College of Consultors. Recently, the final proposals, along with recommendations from each of these bodies, were reviewed by the Archbishop, who made the final decisions.

As a result, members of Immaculate Conception will be merging with us to form a new parish effective July 1, 2014. Everyone will attend Mass here at Queen of the Universe church. The Immaculate Conception church building will become a worship site for weddings, funerals, and feast days. Sunday Mass may also be celebrated at the worship site at the discretion of the pastor of the newly formed parish and his newly formed pastoral council. Additionally, all assets, debts, buildings, and sacramental records of both parishes will be transferred to the care of the newly formed parish. This parish will be named

Queen of the Universe. I will remain as pastor of the newly formed parish and will work toward the smoothest possible merger with leaders from both of the merging parishes.

This is indeed a bittersweet day for our brothers and sisters in faith who are also our neighbors. In the work of building up the Church and maintaining God's Kingdom on earth they must let go of something so near and dear to each of their hearts. I pray that you will trust in the Lord as we move forward together. This experience will be challenging and exciting at the same time. We are working to preserve a Catholic Church in Bucks County so that the spiritual and pastoral needs of generations yet unborn will be tended to with the same love and care you have experienced and witnessed. All of us must be willing to labor together for the Lord to achieve that goal.

Over the coming weeks, I will consult leaders from all affected parish communities to create new pastoral and finance councils, parish committees and identify the appropriate staffing of all parish ministries. A transitional team will be assembled made up of lay leaders from each of the merging parishes to assist in moving forward with building a new parish community. Additional details regarding Parish Area Pastoral Planning in the Archdiocese can be found on the Archdiocesan website.

Currently, many of our neighbors are learning of additional parish mergers in our area. Saint Joseph the Worker will merge with and keep the name of Saint Frances Cabrini Parish at that location.

In every death there is a resurrection; with all growth there is pain, but as Catholics we believe we can do all things in Christ who strengthens us. I pray that our Heavenly Father will fill you with every grace and assist all of us to work toward the strongest possible parish communities. May the peace and joy of the Lord be with you.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Father Mike". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name of the signatory.

Rev. Michael F. Hennelly
Pastor