



All Saints | Holy Family | St. Rose of Lima
OUR CATHOLIC FAMILY OF PARISHES

March 16, 2022

To: Parishioners of Our Catholic Family of Parishes
Fr: Fr. James Keiter
Re: Pastoral Planning – Letter 2

Dear Parishioners:

Last week, you received the first of two letters that you will be receiving from me as part of making sure you are aware of the realities/facts that are facing us in the Church and why this planning is so necessary and critical. In that first letter I addressed three of those critical realities:

1. The decrease in Mass Attendance
2. The decrease in Priests
3. The population shift and decrease in our rural population

These three critical realities require us in this Pastoral Planning to make changes locally and as an Archdiocese. An example of what these realities mean, is with fewer Priests, covering more territory, not every Church will be able to have a Sunday Mass.

This is the second letter and in this letter I would like to address the following:

- What does it mean to have a flourishing Parish?
- How can we all be a part of the change?
- What are the consequences, good or bad, depending upon what we do?

What does it mean to have a flourishing Parish?

The word “flourish” is a verb which means, to grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way, especially as the result of a particularly favorable environment. So, by definition a flourishing parish is a parish that grows or develops in a healthy and vigorous way especially as the result of a particularly favorable environment. So what is this particularly favorable environment for a Catholic parish? I believe the answer is Acts 2:42, *“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.”*

Put simply, the folks of the early Church devoted themselves to getting together and sharing life. They got to know each other. They got to know each other’s stories (communal life). They helped each other learn about their faith (the teaching of the apostles). **(over)**

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They celebrated the Sacraments together (the breaking of the bread) and they prayed (prayed intentionally for each other). We as the Church today are being called back into a life like the early Church – a life of Apostolic Mission. We are being called by our Lord to change.

We can choose to keep things as they are which will only lead to further decline in Mass attendance, continued decline in our vocations and number of Priests and unfortunately force the closing of churches.

Or, we can trust that our Lord Jesus absolutely has a plan. As I said in my first of these letters, “what we can become if we truly live out who God has created us to be, will be amazing and joy filled.” As I also mentioned in my first letter, I know and understand that change is often met with fear and uneasiness. It is difficult for all of us, but as Pastor, I am praying and asking each of you to be part of this change together. No one is alone, we are all in this together.

Together, we need to trust Jesus and be part of the change by first allowing Jesus to transform our hearts and minds to understand who He desires us to be as Church. It’s often the case that we get stuck simply on what we desire. What is it that Jesus desires? He desires us to live a life where our Catholic Faith is at the center of all we are and do. Meaning, Jesus is at the center of our life. Jesus desires us all to be focused on the Mission of the Church. What is that mission? The mission is to know Him, love Him, serve Him and ultimately spend eternity with Him in Heaven and help others in our communities learn to do the same.

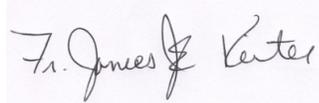
Having adoration in all our Churches, getting bible studies going, inviting people into small groups, having marriage enrichment days, parent nights, having FOCUS missionaries serve in our parishes and constantly inviting you, our parishioners to delve into your relationship with Jesus is all part of living out our mission. However, it can no longer be lived out by a handful. It necessarily needs to be lived out by all of us to impact a change that ultimately brings people back to Mass, back to Church, increases vocations to the Priesthood and Religious life, strengthens the vocation of marriage and sets our world on fire!

You see, a flourishing Parish / Church has a desire and excitement to celebrate the Sacraments, particularly the Holy Mass. A flourishing Parish / Church has healthy families that are joyful and peaceful. A flourishing Parish / Church is one in which the people are seeking to deepen their Faith and are open to witness and share their Faith with others. A flourishing Parish / Church doesn’t keep proposing inactive solutions to problems that have been around a long time. A flourishing Parish / Church doesn’t have hardened hearts and minds but rather an openness to the amazing plan Jesus, our Lord, has in store for us.

Yes, change is uncomfortable and can cause fear, but together we can accomplish becoming who Jesus really desires us to be.

Please join us at one of the Town Hall meetings this Sunday, March 20th. St. Rose, Crofton at 2 PM in the Parish Hall; St. John’s, Fordyce at 4 PM in the Parish Hall; Sacred Heart, Wynot at 6 PM in the Parish Hall. Each Town Hall is the same so choose which one works best in your schedule.

God Bless You!



Fr. James Keiter
Pastor