



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

March 8, 2022

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

Dear Parishioners:

Through the letter you received 2 weeks ago from Archbishop Lucas, our Sunday petitions and if you have visited the www.journeyoffaith.org website, you are well aware of the pastoral planning that is taking place in our Archdiocese. This planning will be completed by the end of this calendar year so that it can then be prepared to be implemented and begin being implemented on July 1, 2023.

This letter is 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. I understand that none of us like change, but the realities we face make it necessary.

In this letter I would like to address three of these critical realities:

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

As the Archbishop's letter indicated, Mass attendance in our Archdiocese has decreased by 42% since 2003. I have included with this letter the Mass Counts by year since 2010 for our Parishes as well as the Mass counts by month for the past 10 months in each of our 7 Churches. As you can see, we were not immune from this decreased Mass attendance. On a typical Sunday we are missing about 2000 of our registered parishioners from Sunday Mass.

As of today, we have 105 active Priests serving in our Archdiocese. By 2032 we will be down to 80 active Priests. This is due to the number of Priests that can retire at age 70, our number of seminarians and the reality of Priests that unexpectedly get sick or even die. The projection of 80 active Priests in 10 years does assume that we will on average ordain 2 new Priests a year.

Lastly, we have seen a dramatic population shift from rural areas in Nebraska to the urban centers in Nebraska. Rural Nebraska today has a lower population than it did in 1890. The peak of the rural population was around 1927. Whereas urban areas have seen dramatic growth in population. Specific to our area, Cedar County saw over a 16% decrease in population (**over**)

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as of the most recent Census data of 2015. Knox County experienced just over a 10% decrease in population as of the most recent Census data of 2015.

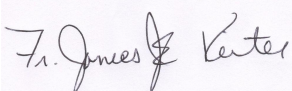
These three particular realities: decreased Mass attendance, decreased number of Priests and the population shift have brought us to this need of Pastoral Planning on a level that is Archdiocesan wide. This planning will impact every Catholic Parish and Church in our Archdiocese.

I understand that this may seem daunting and even scary but I would also encourage you to see the “light”, the goodness that can come from all of this. First, remember the words of Jesus, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life.” John 14:16 We can also find hope from Pope Francis’ Encyclical – The Joy of the Gospel – that was given us in 2013, “I dream of a... missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.”

You see, we are called to be disciples. We are specifically called to be missionary disciples. Our baptism calls us to go forth and live our life of faith by encountering Jesus and helping others experience Jesus, grow in our Catholic faith and help others grow in their Catholic faith, love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and love our neighbor as we love ourselves and help others live out this greatest commandment and the second like it. If we actually begin to live out who we are by our baptism, amazing things are going to happen.

Yes, we have the sad realities we are facing which will mean changes from what we might be used to, but what we can become if we truly live out who God has created us to be, will be amazing and joy filled.

Sincerely yours in Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. James E. Keiter". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light purple rectangular background.

Rev. James E. Keiter
Pastor

Enclosure

Current Realities

Declining Mass attendance in the Archdiocese of Omaha:

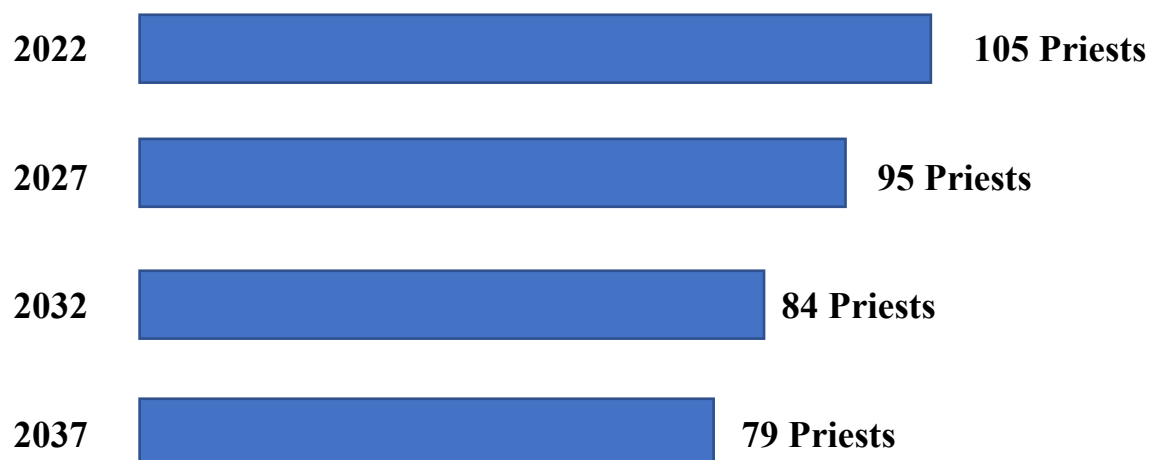
- Our Mass attendance in the entire Archdiocese dropped 28% from 2001 to 2019
- Since 2019 our Mass attendance in the entire Archdiocese has dropped 23%

Mass attendance over the years at Our Catholic Family of Parishes:

St. Rose	Holy Family	All Saints
2021: 378	2021: 429	2021: 330
2020: 237	2020: 322	2020: 249
2019: 412	2019: 581	2019: 394
2018: 407	2018: 525	2018: 418
2017: 373	2017: 536	2017: 410
2016: 407	2016: 566	2016: 402
2015: 393	2015: 571	2015: 428
2014: 395	2014: 552	2014: 485
2013: 419	2013: Missing	2013: 357
2012: 365	2012: 644	2012: 362
2011: 458	2011: 629	2011: 402
2010: 450	2010: 617	2010: 424

Mass Attendance	IC	SR - 5:30 PM	SJ	SB	SR - 8:30 AM	SS.PP	SJB	SH	Totals
April 17-18, 2021	111	164	68	111	206	211	105	110	1086
May 8-9, 2021	120	143	86	126	216	243	169	150	1253
June 12-13, 2021	141	237	66	79	179	237	159	125	1223
July 10-11, 2021	154	206	76	100	168	205	154	122	1185
August 14-15, 2021	133	148	101	130	176	198	99	105	1090
September 11-12, 2021	119	116	85	100	240	188	114	115	1077
October 9-10, 2021	124	115	53	117	263	215	160	90	1137
November 13-14, 2021	131	189	135	107	144	235	168	81	1190
December 11-12, 2021	115	129	61	111	191	186	135	115	1043
January 8-9, 2022, 2022	112	106	68	98	190	176	132	110	992
February 12-13, 2022	179	219	73	103	172	195	152	105	1198

Archdiocese of Omaha Priest Projections



- Using 80 Priests as the number of active (serving in parishes) in the Archdiocese of Omaha assumes on average, 2 Priestly Ordinations per year.
- We currently have 65 Priests serving in the Urban area (Omaha) and 40 Priests serving in the Rural Area.
- By 2032 we will have 55 Priests serving in the Urban area and 25 Priests serving in the Rural area.
- The Urban area is considered Douglas and Sarpy Counties. The Rural area is considered the other 21 counties of the Archdiocese.

Population Shift

- The population of the rural counties in our Archdiocese in 1890 was 107,667
- The population of the rural counties in our Archdiocese in 2017 was 94,064
- The population in Douglas and Sarpy County (Omaha) in 1890 was 164,883
- The population in Douglas and Sarpy County (Omaha) in 2017 was 743,059

These numbers come from the US Census Data at the UNO Center for Public Affairs Research