



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, New York 14624
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COPY

October 1, 2015

Reverend and dear Father Maloney:

I am writing to you, and through you to the good and faithful parishioners and the dedicated staff of Holy Cross Parish in Ovid, Saint Francis Solanus Parish in Interlaken, and Saint James the Apostle Parish in Trumansburg, regarding our mutual commitment to the future of a vibrant Catholic presence between Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. As I review current data about the three parishes and consider where trends are guiding us, it becomes apparent that the truly positive and productive way the Catholic Church can remain alive and thrive within this area is through union into one faith community. Thus, I encourage you and your faith-filled parishioners to enter wholeheartedly into the work upon which we must embark.

The following are some of the reasons for the conclusion that one faith community better serves our mission as disciples of Jesus Christ:

- 1) **Small numbers at Sunday Masses:** Whereas your weekend Mass attendance as recently as 2000 was a combined average of 617, it now has declined to 378, a 39 percent decrease. Masses at Holy Cross Church and Saint Francis Solanus Church average 50 attendees, while Masses at Saint James Church average 65 to 90.
- 2) **Aging congregations:** The congregations have few families coming forward to enroll their children in religious education classes and prepare for the Sacraments.
- 3) **Financial challenges:** Even with the increased generosity of parishioners this past year, Holy Cross Parish is not able to cover expenses. While Saint James Parish has healthy savings, offertory income is trending downward, with a 15 percent decrease over the last three years. The savings of Saint Francis Solanus Parish have decreased by more than half during the past two years.

I am confident that together we can face this reality with courage and with confidence; in faith, we know that we will be accompanied by Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who endured His own times of trial throughout His earthly life. We can create a future of renewed life and increased vitality. Based upon the experience of other parishes within the Diocese of Rochester which have clustered and then merged, the following actions will assist you in forming one community of faith:

The Reverend Father Bernard M. Maloney, OFM Cap.
Saint James the Apostle Church
17 Whig Street
Trumansburg, New York 14886-0709

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- Create a **single pastoral council** to provide counsel to you as you set pastoral directions and priorities for the mission of Word, Worship, Community, and Service;
- Have the three finance councils meet together at least quarterly over the coming year, knowing that there will be a **single finance council** once the parishes merge;
- Create a unified staff operating out of **one office**, including consolidated financial and administrative functions;
- Determine which two of the worship sites will remain open for weekday and weekend Masses. **No church will be closed and whichever church is not used regularly can still be used for weddings and funerals.**

The staff at the Pastoral Center stand ready to assist you in whatever ways you require. I have asked Mr. Eric Patchke, Manager of Buildings and Properties, and Ms. Jamie Ott, Risk Manager, to do an assessment of your facilities. Ms. Karen Rinefierd, Coordinator of Leadership Formation for Parishes, will work directly with you and your planning team. My hope is that the work done over the coming year will lead to a fruitful merging of the parishes by June 30, 2016.

I write to you with a sincere shepherd's heart, genuinely concerned for the faithful entrusted to our pastoral care and with profound gratitude for your dedicated priestly ministry and for all who assist you in fulfilling the supreme law: the salvation of souls.

Assuring you of my prayers, and I asking continued remembrance in your good prayers, I remain, with cordial regards,

*Oremus
pro invicem!*

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Salvatore R. Matano
The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Rochester

cc: The Reverend Father Brendan Buckley, OFM Cap.
The Reverend Father Daniel J. Condon, Chancellor
Ms. Karen M. Rinefierd, Coordinator, Leadership Formation/Parishes