



ST. JOSEPH & ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

A Catholic Parish Collaborative

St. Joseph Parish 114 High Street, Medford, MA 02155 | St. Francis of Assisi Parish 441 Fellsway West, Medford, MA 02155

Easter 2020

Dear Members of our Parishes,

Happy Easter! The Lord Jesus has changed our world forever by His death and resurrection. He won the victory over sin and death and reconciled us to our Heavenly Father. I hope that Christ's resurrection has renewed hope for all of us that "nothing is impossible for God." Fr. Peter and I remember you at our private Masses that we continue to celebrate during the pandemic, including Sunday Masses that are live-streamed to our website at www.medfordcollaborative.org.

Coronavirus Pandemic. I hope and pray that everyone is healthy and well in the midst of this pandemic. Our world has certainly changed since the middle of March. This invisible enemy, the coronavirus, is infecting thousands in our state, including some of our parishioners. And all of us have seen our lives turned upside down as schools and businesses have been closed to limit the spread of the virus. Let's keep praying for each other, and ask the Lord to give us strength in these difficult times.

Pandemic's Impact on our Parishes. Our parishes have been impacted by the pandemic. We have been deprived of the spiritual nourishment of gathering as a community for Masses, weddings, funerals, and social events. Moreover, the parishes' struggle to pay its bills has become a crisis. Our offertory collections since March 15 (for both parishes combined) have averaged only 30% of what is needed to pay our bills. We are cutting costs by turning down the heat and reducing staff members' compensation by half, but we're still falling short.

The Last Three Years. As can be seen in our annual Financial Report that is mailed to parishioners every October, we have struggled to meet our financial obligations. For the last three fiscal years, the deficits at St. Francis Parish have averaged \$85,000 per year, and deficits at St. Joseph Parish have averaged \$26,000 per year (St. Joseph Parish has benefited from a generous bequest, which is no longer available). When a parish falls short, we have applied for and received loans from the Archdiocese of Boston. But, we can no longer borrow money for operating costs, as the Archdiocese is also facing financial challenges. And, although we had successful capital campaigns in each parish in 2019, the funds that were pledged are designated for specific projects, not for regular operations.

Councils Consider a Plan. The Parish and Finance Councils have met several times this winter and spring to consider solutions to our financial challenges. After consulting with the Archdiocese's Parish Planning Office, the Councils think that the best solution is to merge our two parishes into one new parish. Many other two-parish collaboratives in the Boston area are also considering mergers. Merging into one new parish would enable us to streamline our operations, cut costs, and potentially rent or sell some of our buildings, while keeping both church buildings open. The new parish would have a new name, but our two churches would still be known as St. Francis of Assisi Church and St. Joseph Church.

Stronger Together. It is disappointing to know that our parishes are falling short in paying their bills, yet if we merge our parishes into one new parish, we can be a stronger Catholic community. We would simplify our bookkeeping and weekly operations, cut costs, and could potentially generate steady income by renting one or more of our buildings. Meanwhile, both churches would remain open, and all or most programs would continue, although some programs might be in different locations. ***Our mission as a Catholic parish would continue - to worship God, to learn and grow in faith, and to serve one another and our local community.***

Proud History of Our Parishes. Both St. Francis of Assisi Parish and St. Joseph Parish have long histories of faith and service that they can be proud of. There are a number of people in each parish who continue to be so generous with their time and/or their financial contributions, and they are the foundation of our parish communities. Yet, we have to put our parishes in a stronger, more stable position for the future. Our staff and our councils have spent too much time and energy in recent years worrying about how to pay the bills, and not enough time focusing on our mission. Merging the two parishes into one new parish, while keeping both churches open, is the best way to strengthen the financial stability needed for our mission. Meanwhile, St. Joseph School, celebrating its 90th year, will continue to teach and form its students; admission for new and returning students is still open for September 2020.

Prayer. I ask everyone to pray for this proposed merger of parishes. We have the great privilege as a Catholic community to join in the Lord's mission, to proclaim the Good News of His death and resurrection, and to love one another as He has loved us. So, we need to be good stewards of our resources in order to continue this privileged mission.

Your Feedback. I am sorry if you are surprised or disappointed to hear about our financial problems. I have tried to be transparent about the finances through our annual Financial Report, and also through the weekly offertory collection as reported in the bulletin. Our staff works hard every week to serve you, even as it has been reduced in recent years in order to cut expenses. Before the pandemic, we had been planning to have "town hall" style meetings to discuss this proposed merger with parishioners. Unfortunately, those meetings can't happen now with the restrictions on public gatherings. But, our Parish and Finance Council members and other volunteers will be calling parishioners to answer questions and receive feedback on this proposed merger. Since it will be difficult to reach every parishioner by phone, we invite you to submit your questions or feedback by calling our office at **781-396-0423** or sending an email to medfordcatholic@gmail.com.

Please pray for me in this decision that I will have to make soon, and let us pray for each other as we plan for the future of our Catholic community. We will keep everyone informed as the process develops for this proposed merger. Please check our website for regular updates. I remember you all in my daily prayers and private Masses.

Sincerely in Christ,



Rev. Paul V. Sullivan, Pastor

St. Francis Parish & Finance Council Members:

John Amerena – sparky-am@msn.com
Susan Campbell Trainor – jnltrain@comcast.net
Kathleen Conneely – ekconneely@gmail.com
Arthur Lauretano – aalauretano@gmail.com
Mea Mustone – meamustone@yahoo.com
Michael Nigro – mapnigro@gmail.com
Lee Wright – elleright@aol.com

St. Joseph Parish & Finance Council Members:

Patrick Brookhouser – peb36@georgetown.edu
Aaron Carter – rednora@me.com
Richard Grant - rgrant24@comcast.net
Donna Lee – dlee510531@aol.com
Steven Napier – snapier8228@gmail.com
Steve Serino – ssminow123@yahoo.com
Richard Toomey – Richard.j.toomey@gmail.com