



Diocese unveils final parish reconfiguration plan for parishes in Clearfield County

CLEARFIELD — Pastors and leaders from parishes in Clearfield County met with the Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, Oct. 25 as he unveiled a new configuration of Catholic parishes for the area. The changes affect several parishes and secondary churches and will result in three less locations where Saturday evening or Sunday morning Masses are offered, beginning Dec. 1.

“We’ve worked hard, together, to determine the best use of our resources, including our clergy, to allow us to maintain and form communities where we can grow in our faith and in our relationship with Jesus Christ,” Bishop Persico said. But he also emphasized the realities facing the diocese, noting that parish configurations may change again in the not-too-distant future.

“We currently have 92 active priests in the diocese, but we expect that number to be closer to 60 within about seven years,” he said. “Even as we emphasize welcome, evangelization and renewed parish life, we have to pay attention to the realities found in demographic and population trends, as well as church attendance, as we move into the future.”

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During the presentation, several key definitions were reviewed, which are helpful to those reporting on the changes.

Please note several key distinctions:

A **parish** refers to a community of people while a **church** refers to a building.

A parish can have secondary churches, with or without mission status.

A **secondary mission church** is permitted to have Mass on either Saturday evening or Sunday morning.

A **secondary church** (without mission status) does not have a weekend Mass, but is still available for weddings, funerals and in some cases, a weekday Mass.

The changes, effective December 1, 2023, are as follows:

St. Timothy Parish, Curwensville, will remain a parish church.

St. Bonaventure Parish, Grampian, will merge into St. Timothy Parish, Curwensville, becoming a secondary mission church of St. Timothy Parish. **St. Bonaventure Church** will still have a weekend Mass.

Christ the King Parish, Houtzdale, will remain a parish church.

Immaculate Conception Parish in Osceola Mills will no longer be partnered with **St. Agnes Parish in Morrisdale**, but instead, merge into **Christ the King Parish, Houtzdale.**

Immaculate Conception Church will become a secondary mission church of Christ the King Parish in Houtzdale, meaning that although it is no longer a parish, it will still have a Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday morning.

St. Agnes Parish, Morrisdale, will remain a parish church.

St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Frenchville, will merge into St. Agnes Parish, Morrisdale, becoming a secondary mission church. **St. Mary of the Assumption Church** will have a Saturday evening or Sunday Mass.

St. Severin Church in Drifting will remain a secondary mission church but now of St. Agnes Parish, Morrisdale, rather than St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Frenchville. It will continue to have Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday morning.

Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Hawk Run, will remain a secondary church of St. Agnes Parish, but now without mission status, meaning it will no longer have a weekend Mass.

Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Grassflat, will remain a secondary church without a weekend Mass, but now of St. Agnes Parish rather than St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Frenchville.

Included with this release is a two-page listing of the final configurations, including the parishes and churches that will not be directly affected: St. Francis Parish, Clearfield; St. Basil Parish, Coalport; and Holy Trinity Church, Ramey.

A preliminary plan for Clearfield County was first released on March 20, at which time parishioners were invited to offer feedback through surveys made available online and as hard copies. In addition to the official responses submitted by each parish, 374 individuals from Clearfield County parishes submitted their thoughts.

“The feedback is an essential component to the process,” said Bishop Persico. “The insights provided by parishioners helped us formulate a stronger plan than what was originally proposed.”

During the presentation, Bishop Persico reminded pastors and parish leaders that the driving force underpinning the parish reconfiguration remains the “best possible spiritual care of

souls in the diocese,” explaining one essential aspect of that responsibility is to ensure every area of the 10,000-square-mile Diocese of Erie has access to Mass each weekend.

A series of implementation guides and other resources are being updated not only to help parishes manage the logistics of the changes, but also to help with the spiritual aspects of the reconfiguration.

“My primary concern is that you, as pastors and parish leaders, accompany the people in your parishes spiritually during this interim period,” Bishop Persico said.

Last week, Bishop Persico made a similar presentation to parishes in McKean, Potter and Warren counties. Parishes in Erie County, which represent slightly more than 40 percent of the Catholic population in the 13-county diocese, received a preliminary plan in August; the period for feedback on that plan ended October 9. The pastoral planning committee will soon begin refining the plan for Erie County, which is expected to be announced next spring and implemented next summer.

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