



NEWS RELEASE

DIOCESE OF ERIE

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## **Diocese of Erie announces final change to Erie County parish restructuring plan**

*St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Cambridge Springs,  
to merge into Our Lady of the Lake Parish, Edinboro*

The Diocese of Erie has published a final change to the parish restructuring plan for Erie County parishes announced by The Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, on April 11. St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Cambridge Springs will merge into Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Edinboro, effective July 9, 2024.

As a result of feedback provided by pastors, parish leaders and the general public, the plan now incorporates St. Anthony of Padua Parish. Bishop Persico, with the unanimous support of the Presbyteral (Priest) Council, has issued a decree stating that St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Cambridge Springs, will merge into Our Lady of the Lake Parish, Edinboro. Our Lady of the Lake remains the parish church, while St. Anthony of Padua becomes a secondary mission church, meaning it will continue to have Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday each weekend.

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St. Bernadette Church, Saegertown, which had been a secondary *mission* church of St. Anthony of Padua, now will become a secondary church, meaning it will remain open to the faithful at least occasionally for public or private worship, but Masses will not be celebrated there on Sundays, holy days or the evenings preceding them.\*

The preliminary plan for Erie County, announced in August 2023, proposed partnering St. Francis Xavier Parish, McKean, with Our Lady of the Lake, Edinboro. The new arrangement means St. Francis Xavier Parish will remain a stand-alone parish.

The history of both St. Anthony of Padua Parish and Our Lady of the Lake Parish is detailed in the decree that is now available at [www.eriescd.org/bishop/decrees.html](http://www.eriescd.org/bishop/decrees.html). Parishioners are awaiting the news of clergy assignments as a result of the restructuring plan, likely to be made within about six weeks.

In light of feedback to the preliminary plan, the possibility of the merger between the two parishes came to light. The announcement was postponed until meetings could be held with St. Anthony of Padua Parish, as it is not located in Erie County. Bishop Persico and Father Rouch met with the pastor, Father Mark Nowak, and parish leaders of St. Anthony of Padua Parish on April 30 to discuss the arrangement with them. The pastors of both Our Lady of the Lake Parish and St. Anthony of Padua Parish announced the changes to their parishioners at Masses on the weekend of May 4-5.

In a series of letters written to the members of parishes in Erie County last summer, Bishop Persico shared a number of sobering statistics, including that parishes in Erie County have seen a combined 45 percent decrease in weekend Mass attendance since 2010. In addition, he wrote, “since 2012, the number of active priests serving throughout the diocese has dropped from 130 to 92. Our best estimate is that number will be only 60 by 2031.”

In the letters, which are available at [www.eriescd.org/planning.html](http://www.eriescd.org/planning.html), the bishop expressed confidence and hope in the future “if we truly trust, discern and bring the Holy Spirit into the process.” He asked parishioners to bring the moment to prayer along with prayers for more vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life.

\*When reporting on or considering this information, please keep the following in mind:

**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.

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