



November 17, 2023

St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Frenchville
St. Severin Church, Drifting
Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Grassflat
St. Agnes Parish, Morrisdale
Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Hawk Run

This letter to be read to the parishioners at all Masses November 18-19, 2023

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As you know, the Diocese of Erie has been in the process of pastoral planning since 2015. Our current focus involves reconfiguring our parish structures in response to realities including our declining demographics, Mass attendance and availability of priests. These changes will best situate parishes for building a strong future.

On March 20, at a meeting of pastors and parish leaders, we announced a preliminary plan for the Clearfield Deanery and invited your feedback. At a similar meeting on October 25, I presented my decisions for the final plan. With regard to your parishes and churches, I have revised the final decision and decided that, for the pastoral care of souls:

- St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Frenchville, will be merged into St. Agnes Parish, Morrisdale. This merger includes the secondary churches of St. Severin, Drifting, and Ss. Peter and Paul, Grassflat. Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Hawk Run, will remain a secondary church of St. Agnes Parish. This merger will be effective December 2, and a formal decree has been issued to that effect.
- With this merger, there will be one parish with five churches. St. Agnes will be the parish church, and the other four will be secondary churches of the parish. All properties, cemeteries, assets and liabilities will belong to St. Agnes Parish. One parish council and one finance council will advise the pastor on matters pertaining to the entire parish, remaining attentive to all five church communities.



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- With the full support of your pastor, Father William Barron, I have adjusted what was announced on October 25. Namely, I have decided that in addition to the Sunday Mass celebrated at the parish church of St. Agnes, one Sunday Mass (and/or any vigil Mass on Saturday evening) will be celebrated at both St. Severin Church, Drifting, and St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Frenchville. The specific times and locations for these three Masses will be determined by Father Barron.
- Permission for Sunday Masses at St. Severin Church and St. Mary of the Assumption Church will be studied for one year. I am concerned about Mass attendance, parish unity, and financial viability. To that end, I am instructing Father Barron to report to me the Mass attendance and financial status of both church communities on a monthly basis. Unpaid past assessments are to be addressed, including the Catholic Services Appeal. At the end of this one-year trial period, I will determine whether Sunday Masses will continue at either church.

It is my expectation and sincere hope that every parishioner, regardless of church affiliation, work for parish unity and vitality by consolidating resources and making adjustments for the greater good of St. Agnes Parish.

I realize that your communities have experienced several significant transitions of priestly leadership in recent years. I am grateful to Father Barron for his steady attention to your needs — sacramental, pastoral, catechetical and administrative — since he arrived in July 2022. I am also grateful to you for supporting him this past year and trust that will continue.

I ask you to pray for vocations, and for a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our diocese during the Eucharistic Revival.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Lawrence T. Persico

The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
Bishop of Erie

LTP/njr