

Basilica of Saint John the Baptist

627 McKinley Avenue NW
Canton, Ohio

St. Peter Catholic Church

726 Cleveland Avenue NW
Canton, Ohio

April 2015

Dear Friends,

Over the last three years, the communities of the Basilica of Saint John the Baptist and St. Peter Church have celebrated social events and liturgical services. We marked the Christmas season with a Twelfth Night Party and the fall season with a Chili Cook-Off. We developed a common prayer line whereby we could pray for our sick as one community of faith. In 2013 Bishop Murry presided and preached at our combined Good Friday service. We have celebrated Advent and Lent communal penance services. We have combined our yearly RCIA programs. In 2013 and 2015, the youth of our two parishes have gathered to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. This year we collaborated on an Ash Wednesday mass schedule and observed as one faith community the liturgical events of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday Easter Vigil mass.

In a recent meeting with both pastors, Bishop Murry expressed his wholehearted support of our collaborative endeavors. He encouraged us to foster and strengthen the communal ties among the parishioners of the Basilica of Saint John the Baptist and St. Peter Church. During a special meeting between both Parish Councils, on April 12, 2015, this plan was discussed and agreed that this direction will benefit the future of St. Peter Church and the Basilica of Saint John the Baptist.

With the bishop's knowledge and approval, we want to intensify the prayer life of both parishes by consolidating our separate weekend mass schedules into one combined schedule. **Beginning the weekend of June 6 & 7, our two parishes will continue to celebrate its own Saturday 4:00 pm mass. On Sunday morning, however, the early mass will be celebrated at 8:00 am at St. Peter Church; the 11:00 am mass will be celebrated at the Basilica of Saint John the Baptist.**

A further reason for a revised mass schedule is one which everyone is painfully aware. Our new schedule addresses the possible future scenario where one pastor will be serving both parish communities. Often there are Saturday weddings and funerals in addition to the regular weekend masses. We need a schedule that accommodates these added weekend responsibilities when only one priest is assigned.

To strengthen the progress of our collaboration, we will consolidate, under the direction of one person, the same work presently being done by two people, one person in each parish. By employing one staff person, we reduce the financial burden of each parish. Our two parishes, for example, already employ the same company to care for our two parish cemeteries.

The pastors have signed a contract with Ms. Maureen Wood to jointly serve both parishes as Director of Religious Education. The change in the Sunday mass schedule allows time in between masses for CCD classes. Ms. Wood combines our efforts to teach our youth in a single religious education program. With a larger number of teenage students, she will be able to develop a better and more exciting Youth Ministry program. Adult education opportunities will be offered for all. We also hope to establish a larger, more active group for all our Senior Citizens.

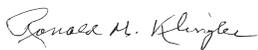
Both church music programs will now be under the direction of one Organist and Director of Music, Mr. Robert Sullivan. The parish choirs will meet with Mr. Sullivan to decide an agreeable schedule. Utilizing their best judgment, a plan can be formulated for occasions when a combined choir is preferable.

As pastors, we want to be extremely clear on one point. From time to time, each of us has heard comments such as these: “Our parish is going to close”; or “One day we will be combined into one parish”. The truth is this: St. Peter Church and the Basilica of St. John the Baptist are acting in a collaborative process. We will work together for our mutual benefit where we are able, but we remain two separate parish communities. Both parishes will remain open. Both parishes will have their own individual Parish Council and Finance Committee. In other words, we are NOT merging parishes.

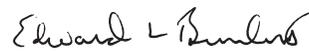
Each parish remains responsible for its own financial well-being. At whichever weekend mass one attends, Sunday of-fertory envelopes can be placed in the collection basket. These envelopes will be separated and forwarded to the proper church. Loose coins and bills will be divided equally.

We have outlined in this letter a direction for the future of our parishes. Change is difficult; it disrupts our comfortable routine. However, we firmly believe that this course of action bears the seeds of future growth and stability. We will be united in prayer as one religious community. We will be unified in Christian charity as we witness to Christ’s presence in the broader civic community.

This is certainly our vision for the future of our two parishes. It is our prayer for all the parishioners of the Basilica of St. John the Baptist and St. Peter Church.



Very Reverend Ronald M. Klingler
Rector, Basilica of Saint John the Baptist



Reverend Edward L. Beneleit
Pastor, St. Peter Church

