



Diocese of Worcester
Office of the Bishop
49 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

May 28, 2026

Dear Friends in Christ,

For more than twenty years, beginning with the announcement of parish clusters, our Diocese has been responding to changing demographic realities affecting many of our parishes. As was noted in a 2006 announcement, “dwindling population, aging facilities and accumulating debt, as well as the clergy shortage,” all pointed to the necessity of parish reduction and consolidation beginning in 2008 in the City of Worcester. At that time, I indicated that, after a period of time, we would return to reevaluate the pastoral needs of the City of Worcester.

Recently celebrating the 75th anniversary of our Diocese has offered an opportunity for reflection. During the 1950s and early 1960s, many churches were built to serve the rapidly growing Catholic population during the post-war expansion of Worcester and Worcester County. At that time, local neighborhood churches were essential because people did not yet experience the mobility that is common today. Since then, many Catholics have moved away from these neighborhoods, and some parishes no longer have the population or resources necessary to sustain parish life as they once did. This reality becomes evident when reviewing the experience of many parishes over the past decade.

A parish must be able to provide vibrant liturgical life, faith formation, pastoral outreach, and opportunities for fellowship and service. These elements help foster a living and active community of faith that can effectively invite others into a relationship with Christ and carry forward the Church’s mission of evangelization.

The plan being announced today seeks to strengthen parish life in North Worcester so that our parishes may more effectively serve the needs of today and of the foreseeable future.

In September 2025, a process for parish renewal began in North Worcester. Since that time, representatives from the four parishes — Our Lady of Providence, Our Lady of the Rosary, Saint Christopher, and Saint Joan of Arc — have carefully reviewed financial reports, demographic information, and analyses of each parish’s strengths, challenges, and opportunities. They listened to presentations from each parish team, toured parish facilities, engaged in thoughtful discussion, and prayed together throughout the process. In April, these representatives presented their recommendations to me, and based upon those recommendations, the following changes will take effect on July 1, 2026:

- Saint Joan of Arc Parish will remain unchanged.
- Our Lady of the Rosary Parish and Saint Christopher Parish will be merged into Our Lady of Providence Parish.
- Saint Christopher Church will close.
- Our Lady of the Rosary Church and Saint Bernard Church will serve as worship sites for all Masses of Our Lady of Providence Parish.
- Father Jonathan Slavinskis will continue as pastor of Our Lady of Providence Parish.

At moments such as this, we are reminded that our hope rests ultimately not in buildings or structures, important as they are, but in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who continues to guide His Church into the future with fidelity and love.

Although these changes directly affect particular parishes, I ask every parish to welcome with generosity and compassion those who may be seeking a new parish home. I also ask for continued prayers and support throughout the Diocese of Worcester for all who are experiencing these transitions — especially those who grieve the loss of a beloved parish church that has been central to their lives of faith.

I am deeply grateful to all who participated in this pastoral planning process, including representatives from each parish and the members of our diocesan pastoral planning team. Their thoughtful recommendations sought to respond faithfully to the concerns, hopes, and insights shared throughout the process as together we considered a vision for the future.

With every prayerful best wish, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert J. McManus". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross symbol at the beginning.

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester