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*Serving the Parishes of Our Lady of Mercy, Queen of Peace, Sacred Heart,
St. Benedict, St. Joseph, St. Michael, St. Thomas d'Aquin*

Sarnia Bluewater Roman Catholic Family of Parishes: What? Why? When?

What is a Family of Parishes?

As we begin the New Year of 2022, we welcome those who have been away from the church during this pandemic, and those who are new to our city. The Family of Parishes model comes by way of the Diocese of London under Bishop Fabbro. The major document "Mission-Oriented Parishes: Diocese of London, A Handbook for our Family of Parishes" which we encourage you to prayerfully read, sets forth this change and the desired outcomes ([link](#)). Across the Diocese no two Family of Parishes are the same. In our area, the Sarnia Bluewater Roman Catholic Family of Parishes is the coming together of our 7 churches (Our Lady of Mercy, Queen of Peace, Sacred Heart, St. Benedict, St. Joseph, St. Michael, and St. Thomas d'Aquin) to form one family. Why, may you ask, are we a family?

Why a Family of Parishes?

To summarize, there are two main goals of the Family of Parishes model. The first goal is to address the decreasing number of priests in our Diocese and the implications this will have in the years to come. The second goal, in light of the reality mentioned above, is to encourage, empower and support the laity in continuing their role of becoming intentional disciples for mission. Although each parish continues to be canonically distinct and responsible for their own financial well-being, they are encouraged to engage best pastoral practices and share costs where possible and beneficial.

Shorter explanations through the following messages can be found at these links:

1. Letter by Fr. Brian Jane dated July 30, 2021 ([link](#))
2. Homily by Bishop Fabbro at the Sarnia Bluewater Roman Catholic Family of Parishes mass ([link](#))
3. Interview by Bishop Fabbro ([part 1](#)), ([part 2](#))

When? Becoming a Family of Parishes

Here is a brief synopsis of how we moved towards a Mission-Oriented Family of Parishes.

- Initial directive to the entire Diocese by Bishop Fabbro regarding Family of Parishes dated June 2015 ([link](#))
- In January 2021, we were notified by Bishop Fabbro that our family would be enacted July 1, 2021
- From January to July 2021, we formed a Transition Team comprised of parishioners from all 7 parishes who met monthly by Zoom. You can find the minutes of our transitional meetings at the following ([link](#))

Organization and Catechesis July 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021

- Installation Mass of Family of Parishes Pastor ([link](#))
- Transition Team becomes Family of Parishes Pastoral Council
- Formation of Family of Parishes Finance Council
- Hire of Family of Parishes Coordinator of Family and Youth
- Establishment of Family of Parishes Central Office with support from satellite offices

- Family of Parishes Eucharistic Procession at each of the 7 churches ([link](#))
- Family of Parishes Mass with Bishop Fabbro and interview ([link](#))
- Family of Parishes Survey of the 7 churches
- Called and Gifted Discernment of Charisms Workshops
- Ongoing Alpha Online
- Ongoing Small Church Faith/Prayer Groups
- Ongoing Eucharistic Adoration re-established
- Training of Family of Parishes Lay Ministers to lead communion services in the absence of a priest
- Ongoing Catechetical Video Series (The Search, The Hidden King, The Jewish Roots of Advent)
- Truth & Reconciliation Speakers Live Streamed
- Ongoing Sacramental Preparation of Children, Youth and Adults (RCIA)
- Outreach through phone calls to parishioners of the 7 churches

When? Growing as a Family of Parishes

Organization and Catechesis - Proposed Additions January 1 – June 30, 2022

- Family of Parishes Focus Groups of the 7 churches
- In Mass – Preaching Series on Family of Parishes (video recorded)
- Establishment of Family of Parishes Vision Statement and Pastoral Plan
- Young Adult Bible Study
- New Catechetical Video Series Offerings (The Chosen, Lent themed)
- Family of Parishes Retreats
- Leadership Training for Called and Gifted Discernment of Gifts Process
- School Ministry led by Family of Parishes Pastoral Team (Clergy and Lay Ecclesial Ministers)
- Ministry to Nursing Homes by Lay Leaders supported by the Pastoral Team

Nothing substitutes for in-person gatherings and ministry. We have however, made effective use of the latest technology by televising our Rosary and Sunday Mass on Cogeco TV channel 6, posting on our Website and YouTube over 800 podcasts and videos of Masses, interviews, and other Family of Parish events with over 50,000 views. We have also made use of technology such as Zoom for most of our Family of Parishes Pastoral Council and Finance meetings, and for events such as Alpha.

Enacting our Family of seven Parishes during the Pandemic has certainly been a challenge. In-person gathering restrictions have limited our effectiveness at building community. We look forward to coming together, when it is safe to do so, in large, gathered events so we can begin to know our fellow family members.

As the New Year continues to unfold, please keep praying for the safety of everyone and that all the parishes in our family thrive in the Holy Spirit. Let us continue to reach out to one another through active listening, compassion and kindness which are always powerful healing remedies. We are all struggling with this together and can go further when we journey as one family. To the many volunteers whose ongoing and generous service has made our masses possible, and to those who have given of themselves through their time and talent in various ministries, our sincerest gratitude. Thank you!

On behalf of our staff, clergy team and Lay Ecclesial Ministers, God Bless you abundantly.

Brian Jane (Rev.)
Pastor, Sarnia Bluewater Roman Catholic Family of Parishes