



April 10, 2021

My sisters and brothers in Christ:

No doubt most are surprised to hear the news from Bishop Mueggenborg about St. Patrick – especially families who have been a part of the parish for many years.

Recently, parishioners John Hale, Jenny Farrell and Laura Ash joined me to meet with the Bishop, Archdiocese Strategic Planning Director Leigh Stringfellow, and her associate Deacon Sam Basta. We were called to talk about St. Patrick's future in a confidential discussion on Zoom. Archbishop Etienne, Bishop Mueggenborg and the Strategic Planning team received the St. Patrick Synod white paper and full Synod report in January. I was asked to select three stakeholders who would represent the interests of our community. The Holy Spirit guided me to these three.

From the outset of the meeting, it was clear this decision was years in the making. The groundwork was laid in deanery pastoral planning meetings in 2018-2019 with a stakeholder's group from our parish community. This led to a South Seattle deanery recommendation of possible closure or merger back in February 2019. As you heard from the Bishop, St. Patrick's will be merging with another parish bordering our parish boundaries—either St. Joseph, a Jesuit parish, or Sacred Heart, a Redemptorist parish with an ASL signing pastor. The decision about which parish to merge with will be one for the community to discern collectively and decide together.

Bishop Mueggenborg was asked about the recent St. Patrick Synod and said something quite illuminating. He acknowledged how well the Synod work was done, but informed us that since our parish has been in decline for over 20 years, our Synod would have had to happen 10 years ago to prevent this decision from happening. He also encouraged us to take what we learned in the St. Patrick Synod and let it guide us in joining our new parish community.

Now we must face the next steps together. In the coming week, I will be asking several of you to be part of a larger stakeholder team to help guide these efforts forward. We will hold our **first parish-wide meeting on Zoom with Bishop Mueggenborg and his team on Monday, May 10th at 6:00 PM** to discuss why we were selected for merger, discuss what this all means and how we will proceed. This will be a chance to share the research and factors that led to the recommendation, and to share our thoughts and concerns. This also is a chance to lament as a community as we wrap our heads around this decision.

While change is difficult, we must remember a parish is a community of believers, not a building. It is a group of people coming together to spread the Good News of Jesus.

Please know that I continue to pray for you, and I ask that you pray for this process. We ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us to come together in Christ's name to carry out his mission for the Church.

May the peace of Christ be with us all as we make this pilgrim's journey to a new promised land together.

Peace...

Deacon Dennis Kelly
Pastoral Coordinator