

Father's Notes

October 6, 2024

I first want to offer a word of gratitude for all who worked hard to make the Mass of Installation such a wonderful experience. Our staffs, our liturgical ministers (altar servers, musicians, etc.) were amazing and my heart was moved. Thank you also to those from our parishes who attended the Mass. I'm truly blessed.

This week I'll address the question that inevitably has come to the minds of many in this Archdiocese: Is my parish closing? The Archdiocese has said that's not the approach they're taking or their intention. Nonetheless, as I've said when asked, I believe there are some parishes that perhaps already needed to close, and thus, I personally won't be surprised if the three-year discussion within their respective family of parishes leads to that acknowledgement and perhaps begins the process of some form of closure. This would more likely happen in an area where there are several parishes, close together, that do not have Masses that are sufficiently attended. In whatever way resources are a scarcity, it makes sense to combine them and even seems responsible.

But I also realize that closure of a parish is very hard for the faithful of that parish. Imagine you're a person who was married in that parish, whose children were baptized in that parish, and whose spouse's funeral was celebrated in that parish—your life, would likely be so strongly attached to that place and the meaningful events that occurred within. I can appreciate how hard it would be to learn that your parish is being closed. Why ours? Why not another parish?

And yet, considering Christianity from a biblical and historical perspective, we were first a people on the move, adapting and adjusting. It was less about the places, and more about the message and the people. There's an important principle in that, and yet, I get how hard it would be for those whose parish would eventually close.

And by the way, in contrast to that biblical model, a "house church" where we function as a church community without an actual building of our own, there's something very helpful and even meaningful to the fact that we have these two places that we've dedicated to God: St. Philomena and St. Thomas. We love these places, dedicated to God and built for the good of God's people. They are home to us and function in helping us to do what we do together.

Is our parish closing? I don't see it happening, but I do see us eventually doing things differently, learning ways that we can integrate our parish programs, activities and liturgies. Exploring what this looks like over the next 33 months, there will be much to discuss and for us to pray about.



Father Todd O. Strange (*Pastor*)

+ St. Philomena Parish & School (*Des Moines, WA*)

+ St. Thomas Parish (*Tukwila, WA*)