



Saint Michael the Archangel Roman Catholic Church

807 Chestnut St. • PO Box 177 • Emlenton, PA 16373
724-867-2422 • info@stmichaelrcchurch.org • stmichaelrcchurch.org

3/25/2023

Dear Parishioners,

For the last few weeks it was announced that on Wednesday, March 22 an Oil City Deanery meeting would be held to continue the process of pastoral planning. The first part of the meeting by Bishop Persico was a recap of the process and a summarizing of the problem captured in the statistics listed below.

Diocese of Erie (13 counties in Northwest PA)				
Year	Total Population	Weekly Mass Attendance	Parishes	Active Priests
1990 [Installation of Bishop Trautman]	875,200	120,000	127	210
2012 [Installation of Bishop Persico]	855,252	52,113	117	130
2022 [Most Recent Statistic]	813,513	26,770	93	92
2030 [Projection]				60

After emphasizing that changes to parish structures will continue to occur in the future, the following changes were **proposed** for the Oil City Deanery at this time in order to reduce the number of priests in the Oil City Deanery from ten to eight.

- **St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Emlenton merges into Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarion. St. Michael the Archangel Church becomes a secondary church.**
- St. Michael, Fryburg; St. Joseph, Lucinda, and St. Mary, Crown become partnered parishes. St. Ann Church, Marienville becomes a secondary church.

What does the mean for St. Michael?

- **Merge:** The *parish* of St. Michael the Archangel, Emlenton ceases to exist. All property, buildings, assets, liabilities, and responsibilities of the parish become part of Immaculate Conception Parish, Clarion.
- **Secondary Church** (non Mission status): The church building remains open but there is no Sunday or Holy Day mass offered in the church. The church is available for weddings and funerals. A mass is offered at the church on its feast day. Other masses and events can be held at the church at the discretion of the pastor.

Detailed Pastoral Planning Information: <https://www.eriecd.org/planning.html>



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These planned changes listed above are a *proposal*. Each pastor or administrator is to give an official parish response to the proposed plan. Therefore a **joint meeting of pastoral council and finance council is scheduled for Wednesday, April 19 at 6:00pm** to formulate the parish response. It is an open meeting for anyone interested in attending.

Each person can further provide their own response to Bishop Persico. Attached is a copy of the questionnaire provided by the Diocese that you can use to submit a response. It can be completed in paper form or you can go to the Diocese of Erie pastoral planning page <https://www.eriecd.org/planning.html> to complete your reply. All responses need to be received by Bishop Persico by April 21, 2023.

After the responses are received they will be reviewed by the Bishop and his planning committee. The final plan will be presented at an Oil City Deanery meeting to be held this summer.

When I heard the proposal for St. Michael I was gobsmacked. Knowing the reality of the diocese and the quiet conversations I have had in the background I was mentally prepared to not receive what we proposed last summer of being in a family arrangement with other parishes. I have expressed on several occasions that this process tends to happen in stages. I guessed that we would be merged at this point but keep the Sunday mass for a few more years and then go from one to zero. Well, that is not what was proposed.

I am sad. I anticipate that everyone reading this is grief stricken for our beloved parish - our gathering as a church FAMILY united as the Children of God around the One Eucharist. It is OK to be sad, to be angry, or to be disillusioned. The proposal is just that - a proposal. It can be modified but I need to be a realist with you. The bishop does not have enough priests to assign everywhere and he is now at the point of making painful choices. I simply suggest that any responses to the Bishop concerning this proposal include your best thinking of how to solve this present problem.

In our gospel today we hear "Jesus wept." (Jn 11:35) at the grave of Lazarus. May Jesus in his sorrow be with you today. I am also here to be with you as well and I am available if you need to talk.

Peace in Christ,

Fr. Johnathan Schmolt
Parochial Administrator