



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Mailing Address
POST OFFICE BOX F
ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA
18105-1538

4029 WEST TILGHMAN STREET
ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA 18104
(610) 437-0755
Fax (610) 433-7822

June 26, 2013

Dear Parishioners of Saint Joseph and Saint Mary Parishes,

In 2005, the initial work for the Second Synod of Allentown began. Among the topics recommended during that initial phase was the restructuring and consolidation of parishes. As a result of that work and the subsequent work of the Synod, a regional committee was created to make recommendations for the parishes in Ringtown and Sheppton. Those recommendations were received by the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests, however, due to circumstances at the time, the recommendations made to Bishop Cullen were not acted upon and the process was halted at that phase.

Since 2008, however, a number of factors have changed within the region which required a further examination of the original recommendations: Saint Mary and Saint Joseph Parishes may see growth in the number of parishioners because of the restructuring of neighboring parishes, the expansion of the Humboldt Industrial Park, and the implementation of the long-awaited plan to build a large cargo airport in the area; the successful outcome of the recent parish capital campaigns; the renovations that have been done or have been proposed for both Saint Mary and Saint Joseph Churches; and finally, the stable fiscal status of both parishes. Moved by the overwhelming desire to provide for the spiritual care of the faithful, and desiring to address the ability of the faithful to fulfill their duty to proclaim the Gospel, and after consulting with the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests, I happily write to you today to inform you that Saint Mary and Saint Joseph Parishes will remain independent parishes under the care of one pastor or administrator. This presents a truly unique situation for your parishes.

This decision has been made after much deliberation. Throughout the process from 2005 until now, a large number of persons have been involved in gathering and analyzing information, surveying parishioners, and looking at the present and future needs of the Ringtown and Sheppton parishes.

As you begin a new chapter in the history of your parishes, please continue to support the Church with your prayers, your good works, and your charitable sacrifices. While remaining two separate parishes, the sharing of a pastor or administrator, nonetheless, offers your parishes the opportunity to cooperate with each other on many levels achieving goals you would not be able to achieve alone and illustrating to the world the bond of charity that exists between parishes. Remain vibrant in your faith so that you can meet the challenges of promoting the Gospel in a

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world that is much different from that which your ancestors encountered when they founded these parishes. However, you will not be facing this challenge alone. Please know that I will also support you with my prayers and remember you in my daily Masses. I ask you to join me in fervent prayer to the Triune God and to Mary, Mother of the Church, our Diocesan patroness, that the good work God has begun in you will, through His grace and your faithfulness, bear much fruit.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ John O. Barres

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Allentown