



+ September 23, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ in the South Seattle Deanery,

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus promises, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” The risen Christ is truly in our midst! He invites each of us into a deeper relationship with him. I pray that each of you experiences his love and hears how he is speaking to you. Deepening a relationship with Christ and helping others know his love is how we form disciples, which is the mission of our Catholic Church.

As the Archbishop it is my responsibility to ensure mission effectiveness across Western Washington so we can live out the fullness of our Catholic faith. This means, however, that we cannot live with the status quo. Instead, must respond to Pope Francis’ call to transform churches “to give a strong Christian witness; to promote a more effective evangelization; to promote a more fruitful ecumenical spirit; to encourage a more constructive dialogue with all.” (Cardinal address, February 2015)

I began our recent strategic planning efforts to review our resources and better understand how we can best use them to support vibrant, sustainable parish communities across the entire Archdiocese of Seattle.

In South Seattle specifically, strategic planning is underway at St. Mary, St. Patrick, Our Lady of Mount Virgin, Immaculate Conception, and St. Therese parishes. Building on the deanery’s efforts prior to my arrival, the strategic planning committee examined new data to determine opportunities to strengthen the Catholic community’s mission effectiveness in South Seattle by making some key changes. Each parish has a group of Stakeholders comprised of parishioners, who are working together to gather questions and recommend a path forward based on the recommendations of the parishioners. Here is an overview of the progress to date:

- St. Mary’s parish – Stakeholders have been in conversations with parishioners and are in the process of developing a survey.
- St. Patrick’s parish – The planning has been temporarily paused until stability of leadership at St. Joseph, which is staffed by the Jesuits, has been clarified.
- Our Lady of Mount Virgin – Stakeholder conversations are focused on determining how each of the cultural communities – Italians/ Anglo, Chinese, Lao, and Vietnamese – would envision moving forward.
- St. Therese – Stakeholders are in discussions on how to revitalize the parish and around the best ways to possibly welcome parishioners from St. Mary’s.
- Immaculate Conception – Stakeholders will be regathering this fall to further their work in revitalizing their parish.

I wish to thank every volunteer and stakeholder who is working to represent their parishioners and help the community move forward. This work of accompaniment reflects Christ in our midst today.

In addition to my gratitude, I wish to share that I've appointed Bishop Eusebio Elizondo as the new lead of strategic planning. He has been involved throughout the process and has been transitioning with Bishop Daniel Mueggenborg who left us this month for his new appointment as the Bishop of Reno. Bishop Elizondo has already started in this new role and is working closely with the Director of Strategic Planning, Leigh Stringfellow, as well as many of you.

My sincere hope is that you continue to respond to the Holy Spirit and listen to our Lord. Be assured of my continued prayers for you, your community and hope that comes with this effort.

As always, I remain,

In the Heart of Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul D. Etienne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL  
Archbishop of Seattle