



NEWS RELEASE

DIOCESE OF ERIE

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### **St. Francis of Assisi Parish merged into St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, Bradford**

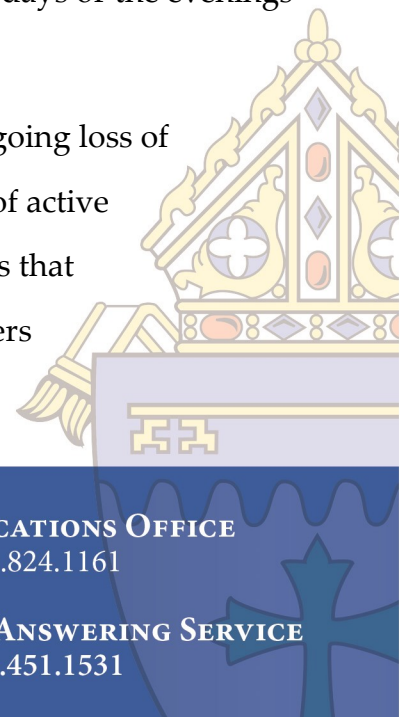
Father John Jacquel, pastor of both St. Francis of Assisi and St. Bernard of Clairvaux parishes in Bradford, announced on February 4 that the Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, after consultation with the presbyteral council, has accepted the parishes' proposed plan to merge St. Francis Parish into St. Bernard Parish. The change means that both St. Francis church in Bradford and Our Mother of Perpetual Help church in Lewis Run will become secondary churches of Saint Bernard Parish. With its mission status, St. Francis church will continue to have Sunday Masses. Our Mother of Perpetual Help, on the other hand, will lose its mission status; it will remain open to the faithful at least occasionally for public or private worship, but Mass will no longer be celebrated there on Sundays, holy days or the evenings preceding them.

The change comes as a result of several factors including the ongoing loss of population in the region as well as a significant decline in the number of active parishioners at both parishes. The decree announcing the changes notes that "determined to find a better path forward for the future, the parishioners

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of both Saint Bernard and Saint Francis parishes embarked on an extensive self-study and pastoral planning process which involved broad input from the membership of both parishes.” It also says the pastor and the parishes requested the change “with the hope and goal of renewing and energizing the Catholic community of Bradford.”

St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish was established in 1876, while St. Francis of Assisi Parish and Our Mother of Perpetual Help were created in 1946. A history of the parishes, as well as a detailed narrative of the current situation, is described in the decree announcing the bishop’s decision, available at [www.ErieRCD.org/bishop/decrees.html](http://www.ErieRCD.org/bishop/decrees.html) .

A pastoral planning process involving parishes throughout the Diocese of Erie was implemented in 2017. Since that time, several parishes have recommended further changes in their regions. The diocese has indicated it is preparing to embark on another more formal pastoral planning process in 2023, with a particular focus on Erie County, in an effort to ensure that resources, including clergy, are allocated in a way that ensures “the best possible care for souls” across the 13 counties of the diocese.

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