



The Episcopal Diocese of Long Island

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Transcript from Video Announcement Regarding Parish Closures

February 25, 2022

The Right Reverend Lawrence C. Provenzano

Bishop of Long Island

Soon after my ordination and consecration as Bishop of Long Island in September of 2009, I very naively made the statement that I would endeavor never to close any of our parishes. In the 12-and-a-half years that I have served as the bishop diocesan of Long Island, we have closed about ten parishes. Or what I should say is that parishes ended their active ministry. And the parishes either were closed and repurposed. Or they were closed for a time and then reestablished worshipping congregations to minister to communities that were in need of the church's care.

What I didn't realize 2009, that I clearly realize now, is that it was a 150-year tradition of this diocese to close parishes, or to end congregational life in a particular neighborhood or town, in order to use the resources and sometimes even the people to reestablish worshipping communities in other parts of the diocese. It is why we have so many double-named parishes, particularly in places like Brooklyn. It is always a painful thing when a congregation ends its active ministry. It is always a difficult thing, particularly for me as Bishop and for the Diocesan Council, and for the members of the staff of the diocese.

I'm sharing all of this with you today because we are at one of those points in which the Diocesan Council, a week ago, has made the decision to end the ministry of three of our congregations in the diocese: St. Mary's, Carle Place; Holy Trinity, Valley Stream; and St. Andrews in Mastic Beach. In each case, the congregational gatherings on Sunday have fallen well below the canonical threshold for keeping a parish established and running. But in each instance, the congregations also have been aware of the fact that they are not able to any longer minister to the wider community,

Some aspirationally hope for some more time and it's been a painful transition. But in each case, Diocesan Council, looking at the data, has made a good and faithful decision. We're all very mindful of the pain that is caused when members of those congregations, the remnant congregation, sometimes anywhere between seven and a dozen people, feel as if the diocese has somehow abandoned them or that they have failed. But in fact, in the long history of the Diocese of Long Island, those are not seen as failures, but opportunities for us to pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is doing in the midst of our ministry in Brooklyn and Queens, in Nassau and Suffolk.

The Right Reverend Lawrence C. Provenzano, Bishop

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And so over the next couple of months, St. Mary's, Carle Place; Holy Trinity, Valley Stream; St. Andrew's in Mastic Beach, will end their active and visible ministries in those communities. Determination of what might happen with the buildings: how the space might be repurposed for continued ministry, maybe even the establishment of new congregations in those various places, is yet to be seen and discovered during the period of time of discernment, both by Diocesan Council, the staff of the diocese, and the people of the communities we hope to serve. In one instance, St. Andrew's in Mastic Beach, particularly the Native American communities who I think were probably the first landowners upon which St. Andrew's sits. Those conversations are ongoing.

In the meantime, Sisters and Brothers, I ask for your prayers, your patience, your kindness in welcoming members of St. Mary's, Holy Trinity, and St. Andrew's into your congregations as they look for new church homes, but to also be patient with a process that is a long tradition of the ecclesiology of our diocese.

We need to be where God's people need the Church. And we need to understand that our ministry is not just to those who sit in the pews or pay a pledge, or try to attend an annual meeting, but more importantly to the wider community the Church is called to serve.

And so Sisters and Brothers, I ask for your prayers for the staff of the diocese, for the parishes, that now will end their active ministries for those lives, who will be so affected by these transitions and to pray hopefully for all that is about to happen in Carle Place, in Valley Stream, in Mastic Beach for the building up of the Beloved Community, for the building up of the body of Christ and for the ministry that God has placed us in the midst of this geography of Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk. God bless you all and know that you are all in our prayers.