



St. Nicholas Catholic Church · P.O. Box 133 Carver, MN 55315 · (952) 448-2345 · www.stnicholascarver.org

June 30, 2020

Dear St. Nicholas Parishioners,

It has been a joy and an honor to serve as your pastor for the past two and a half years. I have been blessed to come to know you and the parish of St. Nicholas with its long and amazing history. I cannot believe how quickly the time has gone! Now I am heading to a new assignment that the Archbishop has asked me to take as pastor of Annunciation Church and School in south Minneapolis. I write to say goodbye, and to let you know what lies ahead for the parish.

On July 1, Deacon Jim Bauhs will begin serving as the parish life administrator of St. Nicholas. Many of you may know him because he has served at parishes in our area including Guardian Angels, St. Hubert's in Chanhassen, and St. Joseph's in Waconia where he will continue serving as deacon. Fr. Rolf Tollefson, pastor of St. Hubert's, will serve as his supervisor as the parochial administrator. That means that he has the canonical authority for the parish, but he will most likely delegate many, or most things to be handled by Deacon Bauhs. Fr. Tony VanderLoop, the new pastor at Guardian Angels, will live at the St. Nicholas rectory, at least initially, but he will not have any pastoral responsibilities for St. Nicholas. Guardian Angels and St. Nicholas will work out a fair financial agreement for his living arrangement. Daily administrative details of the parish will be handled by Lynn Arnal at the Guardian Angels parish office as she has done.

The Archbishop has asked that St. Nicholas recommend to him a plan for St. Nicholas' future by December 31, 2020. Deacon Bauhs, along with the Archdiocesan Parish Planning team, will lead this process. I ask that you offer him your full support and participation in this process. Many challenging questions and concerns must be addressed—and important decisions made.

One option, which has been discussed for many years, would be simply to merge with Guardian Angels and become one parish, perhaps with two sites, or maybe only one. There are a variety of ways that this could be practically realized—and much discussion and discernment would be warranted to flesh out exactly what this would look like.

Another option would be to simply close the parish and discern what is best to do with the property, and financial assets, etc. Parishioners would then simply join whatever area parish best suits them as they continue living their Catholic faith.

Another option, *perhaps*, would be to become a special place of devotion and no longer formally a parish. Such an arrangement would not have regular Sunday Mass, faith formation, sacraments, parish programs etc. But special festivals, funerals, etc. might be allowed to take place. I am hesitant on suggesting this option too strongly, however, because of the long term administrative, leadership, and fiscal challenges that such an arrangement would present.

Other ideas will most likely surface as well, and some kind of mix of above options could perhaps be possible. Going into this process, I urge all to be prayerful, faithful, sober, realistic, and open from the outset. Significant change of some kind is coming.

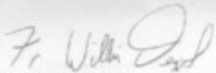
One option that does not appear realistic is keeping things going as is. There are a number of factors stacked against this option including limited financial and volunteer resources. As pastor of both parishes, I have found it very difficult to try to serve two separate communities well. And in my experience, it seems to make little sense to make independent efforts to try to build up two struggling parishes so close to each other. Both inevitably suffer.

There is also the question of the Prayer Garden, and what happens with it should the parish close, or merge, and the site be no longer in use, or sold. It is certainly beautiful, and so much time, effort, and love has been put into it. It is a place where many Latino people and other immigrants come from across the Twin Cities to connect with the Catholic faith of their home countries. It will take prayer, discussion, and thoughtful discernment from many stakeholders such as the parish, the prayer garden committee, immigrant Twin Cities Catholics, and the Archdiocese. Prayer, teamwork, understanding, and cooperation will be needed by all.

Looking to the future, one disappointment that I have felt in my time here is that both Guardian Angels and St. Nicholas have been missing out on much of the new growth that has been happening in our Chaska/Carver area over the past 25 years. New homes are being built at a strong pace. Both parishes have beautiful, but old, limited facilities, in need of attention, and lacking modern amenities that can appeal to young families moving into the area.

A larger question to consider would be to plan a future with one parish in our Chaska/Carver area at a new location with new facilities, on a plot of land large enough for parking, ball fields, and a new school and church facility to meet the needs of our growing area. Holy Family High School could also benefit from a strong feeder school. Yes, that is dreaming big for sure, and would require a huge effort, but as I leave as your pastor, I fear that we have not dreamed big enough for what the Catholic Church, could, or should be in our area. May the Lord lead us on to ever bolder, brighter, and greater vision for what He wants us to do for Him. I will pray for all of you, and I ask you to please pray for me. May God Bless you all! St. Nicholas, Pray for Us!

Your Servant in Christ,



Fr. William Deziel

Pastor

cc. Archbishop Hebda, Bishop Cozzens, Very Rev. Charles Lachowitz, Father Rolf Tollefson, Fr. Tony VanderLoop, Deacon Jim Bauhs, Prayer Garden Leadership, Guardian Angels parishioners