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Hope*

*Joy
Love*

APRIL 4, 2021
Easter Sunday



OF MANY THINGS...



Christ is risen, Alleluia!!!

We join today in praying and trusting that the risen Jesus will bless us during this unique time in the history of our parishes. It is an exciting time as our two parishes of Sacred Heart and St. John of the Cross prepare to merge into one new Catholic faith community. However, this can also be a time of stress and fear. We sincerely believe that the risen Jesus has a strong message for us to take from this particular Easter season:

"Rejoice! I am with you! Do not be afraid! Trust me!" We hope that you believe that message as well.

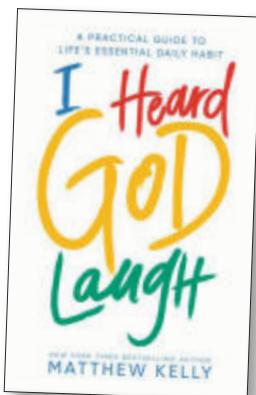
There was never a more stressful and fearful time in the history of the Church than those days, months and years after the death and burial of Jesus. What would the future bring? What will it be like to be the new community of the disciples of Jesus? Can we even do that? Like us, those early Christian disciples were facing an unknown future. And three days later, God gave them an answer. God was *doing something new!* In fact, God was *making something new* of that frightened community of believers. In those days immediately after the resurrection of Jesus and after the coming of God's Holy Spirit to them in an entirely new way at Pentecost, the disciples felt overwhelmed as they faced the various tasks before them. But, they also felt hopeful and empowered by the very same real presence of the God that Jesus had revealed to them in his life, his teaching and in his death and resurrection.

We have every reason to believe that God will continue to be as faithful to us today as God was to that early community of believers over 2000 years ago. This is God's Church and God wants us to be a fruitful and vibrant community continuing the mission and ministry of Jesus. This time of change, as we look forward to merging into one new parish, is an opportunity for us to allow Jesus to lead us into a brighter and stronger future as the Catholic community of Southbury and Middlebury.

As we renew the promises of our baptism this Easter may we each be aware of how God is continuing to be faithful to us in these days!

Easter Blessings!

Monsignor Joe Donnelly, Father Symolon, Sister Pat Torre, Ami Conlan



Our gift to you...

Available at all Masses on Easter Sunday or included the March GIFT home packet. Additional copies may be available at the parish offices.

Jesus calls us to New Life. As we enter into this Easter Season we are invited to deepen our relationship with God and with one another. There is no better way to do than to embrace our life in prayer.

Matthew Kelly's book is filled with stories of his own experiences of prayer and guides us in finding our way. Whether you are a seasoned pray-er or fraught with worries that you don't prayer 'right', this book offers practical everyday suggestions for feeding our soul.

You may want to read this book on your own, or with others. You can bring this book to a small group that you belong to, or you may want to call a few friends to read it together. If you would like to join a group and don't know where to begin call the parish office.

Our reading a book together is a great way to participate and pray in the process of becoming one community in faith. This Easter Season, may each of us deepen our life our prayer, nurture our souls, and be for others the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of the Risen Christ.



FAQ: MERGER PROCESS

Will St. John of the Cross close? The plan calls for both churches—St. John of the Cross and Sacred Heart—to remain open.

When will this be effective? The Archbishop has approved St. John of the Cross and Sacred Heart Parishes to begin the planning process to merge. It is expected the official merge will be effective late spring 2021.

Will our mass schedule be changed? Yes. A revised Mass schedule will consider the best way to serve the needs of the community while also reflecting the restructured resources of both churches, most importantly the fact that there will be a single pastor to serve the combined parish.

Will our parish name be different? This has not yet been resolved and involves Canon Law requirements. The Archdiocese is considering a name that reflects the combined community while keeping the current names of Sacred Heart and St. John of the Cross to identify the campus locations. We will keep our parishioners informed as this process continues.

Will both churches be available for celebrating Sacraments and Funerals? Yes. It is anticipated that sacramental life will be available in both locations even as the merger seeks to consolidate and streamline other parish resources.

Who will be the new pastor? Reverend Lawrence Symolon will become the pastor of the new faith community. Monsignor Joseph Donnelly, currently pastor of Sacred Heart, will retire in June 2021, and is actively working with Fr. Symolon and a transition team, comprised of staff and members of both parishes, to plan and implement a smooth leadership transition.

Will Parish offices in both towns remain open? As we begin the merger process both offices may remain open, although on a modified schedule. As the merger evolves and progresses we will develop the best plan to serve our new community.

What happens to the financial resources of our parish? The financial resources of both parishes will be combined and the Finance Councils, along with Archdiocesan guidance, will provide oversight of these processes.

Will the Pastoral Associates and Deacons remain in the new parish? As of now we expect that the current pastoral staff will remain in place and will be part of a combined team to serve the new faith community. The Deacons are managed by the Archdiocese and their assignments will be determined during this process.

What is the overall goal of this process? This process was begun to create a vibrant faith community to meet the evolving needs of the Middlebury and Southbury communities. It reflects an overarching process that was initiated in 2017 when parishes across the Archdiocese of Hartford were reorganized and restructured. These changes reflect several challenging realities, such as a pronounced shortage of priests, in addition to factors such as shifting demographics and changes in parish utilization. The goal is to create a combined parish that will be stronger and more sustainable than the current structure allows.

What other changes can we expect? Many elements of the merged parish are “behind the scenes” issues that will not directly impact the experience of our parishioners. Other aspects will be more visible. For example, we will move towards having a single parish council and single finance council. We will implement one combined Faith Formation (religious education) program. Other parish ministries will be similarly combined. The intent is to have stronger and more efficient sustainable resources to carry us into the future.

What is a merger between parishes? A merger of two (or more) parishes combines the resources of existing parishes to create a new, combined entity. Typically, the existing church buildings continue to be used, while the pastoral leadership and administrative functions are streamlined to be more efficient and sustainable. In all cases these actions are taken to best position the local church to meet the current and future needs of the community.

Send us your questions to:
ami@shcsby.org



Transition Team Update:

Happy Easter! As you may know, the process has begun to merge Sacred Heart and St. John of the Cross Parishes. The Transition Team hopes to keep you informed as the process progresses. We encourage and invite you to share your thoughts or questions as we move forward to restructure and build a new faith community.

We invite you to ask questions, get answers and have input. Included in this bulletin is a FAQ sheet to answer frequently asked questions; a link to a brief, anonymous, 8 question survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SHCSJCSurvey> for your valuable input in to this process; and invitation to connect directly with the Transition Team.

We hope this Easter Season is filled with reflection, prayer, growth and peace. So many transitions in this unprecedented time of the pandemic; please know you are in our thoughts and prayers and we are always here to support and serve you beyond the intent of this communication.

Peace and Hope,

SHC-SJC Transition Team

Monsignor Joseph Donnelly, Reverend Lawrence Symolon, Deacon Michael Walsh, Sr. Pat Torre, DW, Ami Conlan, Karen Capodanno, Joseph Connolly, Elizabeth DePalma, Robert Loiseau, and Annette Williams



Merger Process General Announcement

Archbishop Leonard P. Blair, of the Archdiocese of Hartford, has granted permission to implement a planning process for the eventual merger of Sacred Heart Parish in Southbury and St. John of the Cross Parish in Middlebury. The anticipated retirement of Monsignor Joseph Donnelly from Sacred Heart in June 2021 and the ongoing pastoral plan to restructure and consolidate the two parishes presented the opportunity to begin a process to create a new faith community to best serve parish members and the local community.

This merger is the result of ongoing restructuring that will ultimately strengthen parish communities throughout the Archdiocese positioning them for future growth and sustainability. It is hoped that the result will be revitalized parishes throughout the Archdiocese that are better equipped to meet the spiritual and pastoral needs of future generations. The recommendations and resulting mergers are an outcome of the Archdiocesan-wide Pastoral Planning initiative, which began in 2017.

Reverend Lawrence Symolon Pastor of St. John of the Cross will become the pastor of the new faith community. A transition team with members from both parishes has been established to begin this process and over several months will work with parish staff and parishioners from strategic committees to work thoughtfully and responsibly in building the new parish community with campus locations in both towns. The process is designed to be as collaborative and consultative as possible. The Archdiocese will provide ongoing guidance and support during the transition process. Updates will be available through parish websites, bulletins, emails and other media outlets.



Dear G.I.F.T. Friends,

I am not often caught by surprise, but the final G.I.F.T. Session rally in the parking lot, celebrating teaching my last G.I.F.T. Session, definitely changed all that. I was literally blown away by what I found when I innocently came out to see what all the noise in the parking lot was about. I cannot believe that no one leaked the news of your planned greeting for me there. I deeply appreciate all of you who were able to take part in it. Walking around the parking lot amid the cars, people, signs, balloons and resounding horns was an overwhelming experience from which I have yet to recover! It was so good to see so many of you even behind our masks. I deeply appreciate your taking the time and the creativity to be part of it, somewhat officially kicking off my impending retirement. I know that we will have other opportunities to spend time together over the next three months before I leave Sacred Heart. For now, you have my profound gratitude. It makes me so aware of how richly I have been blessed to be your pastor these past 18 years.

Love,
Father Joe



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