

Dear Parishioners of Saint Peter Church,

On June 19, 2024, I will assume the office as pastor at Saint John the Baptist Parish, while retaining my office as pastor at Saint Peter.

As we make this transition from two parishes each with its own pastor to a twinning situation in which you share a pastor, let me make it very clear that Saint Peter and Saint John the Baptist Parishes are still independent parishes. Each will maintain its own property, each keeps its own financial resources, each keeps and operates its own cemetery, each keeps its own staff, finance and pastoral councils, each keeps its own records, and most important of all, each keeps its own identity. That being said, there are areas of cooperation, which can mutually benefit each parish. Saint Peter and Saint John the Baptist already share in sponsoring Good Shepherd School in Northampton, along with Holy Trinity, Queenship of Mary, Assumption B.V.M. and Saint John Fisher Parishes. We also cooperate with Holy Trinity in operating Holy Apostles Religious Education Program in the former Saint John the Baptist School. Saint Peter and Saint John the Baptist Parishes will both pay an equal share in my salary and benefits which will mean a savings to both parishes, which now supports its own pastors' salary and benefits. There are other programs which I hope to develop that will be shared by both parishes.

But the twinning will necessitate some changes. I will be available to both parishes in a shared capacity. You have been used to "sharing me" for the last three years as I split my time between parish work and my work as Vicar General. Saint John Parish, to my knowledge has always had a full-time resident pastor. I will be present in both parishes but I will maintain my residence at Saint Peter Rectory.

One other change that I know many of you have been wondering about is how the Mass schedule will change. This will probably be the most significant change and perhaps the one that will take some time to get used to. Before making a final decision about the Sunday and weekday Mass schedule, I have tried to do my homework. I spoke with Monsignor Gobitas, the chairman of St. Peter's finance and pastoral councils and the chairman of St. John's finance/pastoral council. I looked at the October Mass counts to see how many people attend each Mass, in each parish, each weekend. I also discussed the changes with one of our canon lawyers to determine what is required by Church Law and finally I spoke with Bishop Schlert. While I can walk on water (haha) I have yet to be able to be at two places at one time. That has to wait until I get my glorified body at the Resurrection. Currently, Saint Peter and Saint John the Baptist have the same Mass schedule, except that Saint John the Baptist's Saturday evening Mass begins ½ hour later.

As I said I cannot be in two places at the same time, so something has to change. You may ask, "Why can't you get outside priests to cover the Masses in one or the other church so that the Mass schedules can remain the same or get a retired priest to assist on a regular basis?" There are a few things that make that solution impractical. First, every time an outside priest is called in to cover a Mass, the parish must pay him. The Diocesan fee is \$100 for the first Mass and \$50 for the second Mass. That adds up. I have known at least two parishes in the Diocese of Allentown that have been financially ruined because the pastors relied on outside priests to maintain the Mass schedule. While I will need outside priests to help when I am on retreat, vacation, or attending the annual priest convocation, my intention is to seek outside help as little as possible. Second, it is not prudent to build a Mass schedule on the help of a retired priest for the simple fact that because

of age and health issues, he may be one phone call away from being unable to continue assisting with Masses. Third and most importantly, the Mass attendance at both parishes does not warrant having six Masses each weekend. Both Saint John and Saint Peter Churches can seat 700 people! At the current level of Mass attendance in both parishes, even if we had only one Sunday Mass, that everyone attended, we would still be able to accommodate another 150 to 200 persons in either church. I don't think we need to be that drastic.

The following Mass Schedule will take effect on the weekend of June 22-23:

4:30pm Saturday Mass at Saint Peter

8:00am Sunday Mass at Saint John

10:30am Sunday Mass at Saint Peter

The Daily Mass Schedule, beginning Wednesday, June 19th, will be

Monday—No Mass

Tuesday—8:00am Mass at Saint John the Baptist

Wednesday—8:00am Mass at Saint Peter

Thursday—8:00am Mass at Saint John the Baptist

Friday—8:00am Mass at Saint Peter

Saturday—8:00am Mass at Saint John the Baptist

Confessions

Saturday—3:45pm to 4:15pm at Saint Peter

Sunday—7:15am to 7:45am at Saint John

Holy Day Mass Schedule

7:00pm on the Eve of the Holy Day at Saint John the Baptist

8:00am on the Holy Day at Saint Peter

Devotions

Tuesday—6:00pm Flame of Love Devotions at Saint Peter

Wednesday—7:00pm Holy Hour with Confessions at Saint Peter

From October to March Holy Hour begins at 6:00pm

First Friday Devotions—after 8:00am Mass at Saint Peter

First Saturday Devotions—after 8:00am Mass at Saint John the Baptist

The Mass schedule for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Holy Week will be determined after further consultation with parish finance and pastoral councils.

Your Sunday collection envelopes may be placed in the collection basket at either parish. Those envelopes placed in the collection basket at Saint John will be brought unopened to Saint Peter. I encourage you to take advantage of "On-line Giving" which will save both parishes money on the printing of envelopes and ensure that your contributions go directly to Saint Peter's accounts. Any "loose" money in the collection basket will remain at the parish where it was received.

For the rest of 2024, the Mass intentions will be offered at the Mass for which they were scheduled, at whichever church that Mass is being offered. This means that most Masses will now be offered for 2 intentions one from St. Peter and one from St. John. When the Mass book opens in September for 2025 Masses, the new Mass schedule will be used so that the doubling of

intentions will no longer be necessary. I will explain more about the Mass intentions in an upcoming bulletin.

Saint Peter's Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, altar servers, cantors and ushers will continue to serve at Saint Peter. I hope that those ministers who have covered the 8:00am Mass will be willing to serve at the 4:30pm and 10:30am Masses and continue in these ministries, which are very important.

There are many more questions that you may have or that will arise as we move forward. Don't be afraid to ask them. I probably won't have an immediate answer but will get one. Please remember that this twinning arrangement is as new to me as it is to you, so I will be feeling my way through and taking baby steps until everything is worked out.

My plan is to be available during office hours at St. Peter Rectory on the days that I have Mass at Saint Peter Church. You can drop in or call and make an appointment with Lina.

During the transition do not believe rumors that may circulate! Idle gossip and speculation are the tools of the Devil to sow discord and disunity. I will make important decisions and changes known to you either through the bulletin or from the pulpit or both. If you don't hear me say it or see it in print, it isn't true! Please welcome the parishioners of Saint John who will begin to attend Mass at St. Peter—to welcome the stranger is a Corporal Work of Mercy.

I look forward to continuing to serve as your pastor. Please have patience with me and with each other as we grow into this new reality. Let us pray for each other.

Saint Peter, pray for us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Monsignor David L. James