

Q&A - Consolidating Stella Maris to a Single Site

Stella Maris Parish, a growing community of missionary disciples led by the power of the Holy Spirit, is a beacon of Hope and Love committed to witnessing and sharing God's mercy and presence!

Q. What is happening re consolidation?

A. In a bold attempt to arrest our alarming decline in fortunes and people, the parish has begun the process of consolidating to a single church site so that we can refocus, renew and revitalize as a community of missionary disciples spreading the Gospel. Our Archbishop and Co-Adjutor are supportive of this exciting new direction for our parish, and our recent parish meetings are just the beginning of a process of consultation and planning. After COVID restrictions are lifted, the congregations at St Peter's, St John the Baptist and St Paul's churches will have the opportunity to attend a mass and other functions in their churches to honour and celebrate their faith communities.

Q. Why does the parish need to consolidate to a single site?

A. It's essentially about mission. All our churches have been in survival mode for many years. Our human resources are dwindling and scattered across several sites, which increasingly undermines our capacity to undertake our mission, pay our bills and support dynamic programs. By pooling our human resources, we have the best chance of flourishing as a growing community of missionary disciples.

Additionally, the numbers of priests in our diocese decreases each year, so it is unlikely that our parish will have the benefit of a second priest into the future.

We must consolidate to a single site to ensure we can thrive and focus on the mission evangelization and outreach and continue to serve future generations in Mainland South. It's not just about us...

Q. Why the St Michael's site?

A. All options were thoroughly and objectively reviewed in coming up with recommendations to the archbishop. In terms of mission, St Michael's offers the best opportunity to thrive for several reasons. Its proximity to a large, young, and increasing population base is promising for evangelization. It is where the vulnerable are predominantly found in our community, and to where an increasing number of new Canadians are moving. It is also located within the heart of the Mainland South shopping and service hub, and is the most easily accessed by public transportation.

St Michael's is by far the largest of the churches and has the most parking, so it can accommodate more people at mass (which will be critical in the coming months of physical distancing). For special occasions like Christmas Eve, Easter Liturgies, Special Feast days, and even well-attended funerals, St. Michael's 600 plus seating capacity will be needed. It has the newest audio-visual and digital technology to support our on-line liturgy broadcasts and music ministry. When we succeed in our mission of bringing people to Jesus, we'll need a big church! We're planning for Spirit-led success...

Stella Maris will be known for radical hospitality and St. Michael's site is best equipped for this! It also has the largest hall with the best equipped kitchen, contained within a single building. This facilitates

before and after mass hospitality based on the experiences at our churches and parishes elsewhere. There are 6 separate meeting rooms of various sizes which allow for concurrent meetings and events.

From a family perspective, this site also offers the best infrastructure for running dynamic children's liturgies and family faith formation programs, as well as adult faith formation programs.

Q. How did finances affect this decision?

A. There are barely enough parishioners to support a single site, let alone four church sites and associated halls. The churches have been in a serious deficit situation for many years and our savings will run out within 2-3 years unless bold measures are taken. The COVID crisis has made our financial situation much worse. There may be no Catholic church open in Mainland South unless we consolidate, get our finances in order, and fund our evangelization and outreach mission more fully. This is good stewardship.

Q. How was this decision made?

A. This new beginning reflects the direction from Pope Francis for the Church. It is the result of years of archdiocesan consultations and the resulting direction provided to us by Archbishop Mancini's call for parish renewal. Consolidation has been discussed in this community for the past 10-20 years, so this is not really a new initiative. The parish infrastructure and finance committees, with representation from all three former parishes, prayerfully studied our challenging situation, provided information, and made recommendations to our Interim Pastoral Council (Parish Transition Team also with equal representation for the former parishes). The Council, after examining all the factors, unanimously endorsed a recommendation we've now made to the archdiocese to make St Michael's the parish church for now. Once consolidated, we will look at the viability of the St Michael's site versus other long-term options.

With much prayer and discernment at every step (including the new Parish Leadership Team), this is seen as the only viable option. This was nobody's agenda, it's the sad but logical conclusion after a realistic examination of our situation on how to go from surviving to thriving.

Q. What will be the impact at St Michael's?

A. As parishioners from across the parish gather to make this site their own, there will be significant changes for the St. Michael's community. Many things will likely change to accommodate a larger congregation focused on mission. Membership on all ministries will be renewed and restructured. Regular events like weekly bingo, card games and social events will have to be reviewed and perhaps rescheduled. The parish hall will be available to everyone in the new larger faith community with a focus on activities related to outreach and evangelization. This wonderful mingling of brothers and sisters necessitates a significant change in the current St. Michael's church culture.

Q. Next Steps?

A. There will be more parish-wide consultation and careful planning to ensure that we follow the process which the Diocese has in place for Church closures. We need to grieve losses, celebrate former communities and come together as one single community living our faith, stronger together!