Looking Ahead

The Franciscan Parish at St. Clement

Message from Fr. Al

Thank you for taking the opportunity to read and reflect on what follows below. Listening to many of you and witnessing to how some of us are approaching and building a new faith community, I am guided by the words of St. Francis when he spoke to the friars by saying, *"Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible. Let love and faith guide your actions, and be open to new possibilities and growth."*

The Order of the Friars Minor grew at a faster rate than any previous religious order at that time; it had not experienced similar organizational growth and had little time to prepare. This led to disturbance, discomfort and confusion among the friars and forced Francis to return early from his journey.

So too, The Franciscan Parish at St. Clement is experiencing rapid growth that for some is uncomfortable and resulting in questions, "How do I fit in? How do we become one new faith community? What am I being called to let go of so that I can welcome others to share in building this faith community? Do we keep doing things the same way or are we being called to find a new way? How am I responding to differences? Do I welcome others or do I resist? Am I controlling or peaceful? How do I come to understand different liturgical responses than my legacy custom?"

All of these questions and so many more carry feelings that we hold deeply in our hearts. This truly is a difficult time inviting all of us to change and find new ways of living the Franciscan Gospel message in a new way.

I invite each of us to read and reflect on the following, asking for the gift of patience, insight and charity, as together we build our new faith community.

Your Franciscan brother,

Pastor, Franciscan Parish at St. Clement

How do we move from amalgamation to integration?

The amalgamation of our two parishes was the necessary union into one larger parish now referred to as The Franciscan Parish at St. Clement Church. All parishioners from both legacy parishes were joined effective July 1, 2026, and immediately became full parishioners with shared responsibility in the membership and leadership of this parish. The integration is not complete and is a journey. Love & faith must guide our individual and collective actions; patience & persistence, too.

What is a Franciscan Parish?

Franciscan Friars live as brothers in fraternity. Franciscans emphasize "family" more than "hierarchy." Franciscans see themselves as "set among the people."

As a Franciscan parish, we will emphasize our relationships as sisters and brothers to one another in our parish ministries, including worship and other outreach and service activities.

What does this mean for our parish committees and organizational leadership?

Parish council, worship committee, and finance committee are being appointed on a temporary basis. Leaders and members on these committees will be a representation of both legacy parishes; the new members will serve for a period of about one year.

It is my hope that these "new" committees will begin meeting in August, following a pastoral conversation with the various members and leaders.

An education committee will be established in conjunction with the schools' leaderships.

How can we enable success?

First, we can continue to pray for our parish and our members and leaders. We know the power of prayer, and I ask for your continued prayers for our community.

Additionally, to help each group, I have asked Sr. Therese Gillman, OSF, to facilitate our initial meetings because she is familiar with both legacy communities and is a qualified facilitator/mediator. She will also help us develop an organizational and committee structure along with standard agendas.

What will be the role of the clergy, sacramental ministers, and pastoral teams?

Fr. Manuel, the deacons, and I will form our own group and meet monthly. The deacons will not serve as standing members on the parish council or worship committee but may be involved as agendas merit. My intent is to increase the involvement of the laity in the faith life of the community.

It is my hope that sometime in the future, and once schedules are established, we post in the bulletin the presider and deacon schedules.

How is it going for Sunday (and Saturday 4pm) Liturgies?

First and foremost, my appreciation to the music ministry under the direction of Jill Kreinbrink. I have heard a lot of positive feedback about liturgical music. Thank you to all choir members for your service!

Expansion of the opportunities for laity will include greeters, altar servers, communion distribution, lectors, ushers, Mass coordinators, communion to the sick, and other roles.

We recognize that training and an organized scheduling system is needed due to the increase in the number of ministers. This will happen after the committees are announced.

For English language Masses, the Petitions (and 1st and 2nd Sunday readings) will be proclaimed by the laity. I invite you to consider attending the Spanish language Mass at 12:00 PM, even if you don't speak Spanish, where additional traditions and customs for our Franciscan Parish might delight you. I also invite you to our weekday Masses held daily in the chapel at 7:30 AM.

How can I best express my voice?

A subcommittee of the Transition Team is planning a parish-wide conversation where we can listen to each other regarding how each of us is experiencing this integration. I really encourage your participation in this event, which will be held on a weeknight in October. This is being planned by: Sr. Therese Gilman, Kay Brogel, and Mary Beth Asbach. Your voice matters; consider writing down your thoughts and sharing them with one of those three people.

Where can I invest my Time and Talent?

Another subcommittee of the Transition Team is planning for a September opportunity to learn about and sign up for ways to share your time and talents with other members of the parish. The logistics will be posted once details are confirmed. All your gifts and sharing of time that help build our faith community are truly treasured! This event is being planned by: Greg Hyland, Jill Collet Riester, Diane Smith and Deacon Don Meyer.

What is happening with sacred goods and property from St. Francis Serpah church?

After checking with the Archdiocese for clarity, it was stated that we are free to do with the sacred items as we see best to aid Catholic worship in other places besides St. Clement.

After 167 years, sacred items from St. Francis Seraph Church are finding new homes. Many of these items will indeed come to St. Clement Church. In the gathering space in the back of the church, you will find a possible rendering of what a subset of these items may look like inside the church.

Additionally, some items have moved to other communities or locations. For example, there are a few churches with greater needs than our own, including a church in the northern part of our archdiocese that suffered a devastating fire. A congregation in Colombia accepted some furniture from the Friars chapel. Trinity Church Supply was able to connect us with others with specific asks. A service out of Pennsylvania will help us with finding homes in mission churches for vestments and other liturgical items. Archivists from the Archdiocese and Friars helped us document the history. The Cathedral and Seminary are hopefully accepting some larger items with no other apparent home.

One consideration that is being discussed by some members is the possibility of preserving some of the stained-glass windows, especially those from the nave of the church. Before moving forward with this suggestion, a significant amount of information is needed including input from you, the parishioners. Another significant factor involves understanding the total cost of removal and installation cost projection. The cost of this is unknown, and by doing this, the parish would need financial assistance. This could be achieved through grants and private funders. The opportunity to remove them is time-sensitive due to the sale of the property. This is still only an idea.

When will the bulletin and website be updated?

Information in the bulletin articles is updated each week; the deadline for the bulletin is Tuesdays at noon so that it can be printed by the service in time for Saturday Mass. My gratitude to Amber Pavlina, our parish secretary, for helping with this.

Some structural updates to the standing sections of the bulletin will come after the committees are announced.

Our Facebook page is a great place for online interaction, if you're on social media. The website also contains links to the bulletin as well as photos and other items.

We'll continue to evolve these expressions of our parish identity as we integrate.

What is the plan for staffing?

We have had several staff meetings already. Recognizing that our parish community has increased significantly, a process is being developed for reviewing current positions, determining the gaps and outlining an organizational structure that will be our foundation for the future. This is only in the thought process phase for now and will be shared when a draft organizational structure is ready and the staff have been consulted.

Fr. Manuel will be joining our team at the end of August, with additional duties at the Archdiocese. Fr. Jud is waiting to hear about his future new assignment. Bro. Tim is continuing to diligently work on several highly important projects at St. Francis Seraph Church.

Where can you find me?

Three weeks ago, I changed residence from the Friary at Pleasant Street to the Friary at St. Clement. I am still bi-locating with many office transition responsibilities. It is my hope that by the end of August my permanent location will be at The Franciscan Parish at St. Clement Church. I look forward to landing in one place and serving you fully as pastor.

During this time of transition, and I say, challenging transformation, I ask your patience, charity and gentleness with each other as together we navigate these uncharted waters.

Peace and good,