

Six Catholic parishes merging, St. Joe's and IJP remain open

BY CHRONICLE STAFF

The Archdiocese of Chicago is setting a new path for Catholic parishes in the South Suburbs, merging two parishes with St. Joseph Church in Homewood and two parishes with Infant Jesus of Prague Church in Flossmoor to form new parishes.

The announcement to take six parishes and form two groupings was made Monday, Jan. 24. The changes will take affect July 1.

St. Anne Church in Hazel Crest, St. Emeric Church in Country Club Hills and St. Joseph in Homewood are coming together as a new parish. St. Joseph will serve as the parish church. The new pastor will be Rev. Edmond Aristil who is now pastor of St. Emetic.

Infant Jesus of Prague Church, St. Lawrence O'Toole Church in Matteson and St. Irenaeus Church in Park Forest will form a second grouping. Infant Jesus of Prague will serve as the parish church. The new pastor will be Rev. Kris Paluch, current pastor at St. Christopher Church in Midlothian. Infant Jesus of Prague School will serve as the parish school.

Before making the decision, each parish appointed a three-member team to conduct meetings and be part of discussions on how best to serve the Catholic community. Their feedback reports were submitted to the Archdiocesan Standards and Recommendations

Commission, which includes representatives from across the archdiocese. The commission reviewed the feedback reports and other information, including demographic data, financial summaries, and parish and grouping trends.

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, archbishop of Chicago, the archdiocese's auxiliary bishops and Presbyteral Council discussed the commission's recommendations.

Each newly constituted parish is going to get a new name. Rev. Aristil and Rev. Paluch, with parish leadership input, will set the timeline for fully transitioning a mass schedule.

"All Catholics are members of the body of Christ. We all look forward to getting to know our fellow Catholics," said Tom Brabec, one of three representatives from St. Joseph Parish who served on the Renew My Church committee studying how best to work through the changes.

According to the archdiocesan statement: "Over the next few months, the archdiocese... will work with local leaders to ensure uniting faith communities and staff are supported through this time of change."

"All parishes will embark on the next phase of renewal to become stronger, more sustainable and capable of reaching more people in their work of making disciples of Jesus Christ, building communities and inspiring witness," the archdiocesan statement said.

District 153 raises substitute pay rate, offers stipend for staff recruitment

BY MARILYN THOMAS
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The Homewood District 153 school board approved an increase in its substitute teacher salary, and a \$1,000 stipend for staff members who recruit new employees.

With fewer college students majoring in education, the pool of prospective teachers is limited. As the district vies for new personnel, it must remain competitive, Superintendent Scott McAlister said when making the proposals at the Feb. 14 board meeting.

The board agreed to increase the daily rate for a substitute teacher to \$125 a day, a jump from \$114. Persons with an associate's degree can serve as a substitute teacher.

The board also agreed to provide a staff member with a \$1,000 stipend for

each person recommended for a position with the district. The stipend would be split -- \$500 at the time the person is hired, and \$500 if the staff member returns for a second year with the district.

McAlister said over the past several years, new staff members have come from school districts "that are geographically close to us." He believes District 153 teachers can be great recruiters among their peers and could convince other teachers to look at District 153 for employment.

"I'm a firm believer in that the best recommendations come from persons who work here. They have a vested interest in bringing great people in," he said. He calls the stipend "a small investment in our most valued asset, which is people."

Board member Jim Schmidt said this proposal was "innovative."

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