

A Message from Fr. Michael

Dear Parishioners,

I want to thank each of you for your warm welcome. As I am beginning my third month as Pastor, I can report that the move and transition have gone smoothly and everyday it feels more and more like home. I am very happy to be here, thank you for that.

I am writing to you today as a means of allaying confusion, clarifying terms, and most importantly, stating my vision for our parishes as I see it today. It has come to my attention that there is some question as to the nature of the relationship between our parishes—is it a linkage, not a linkage, a merger, etc.—and so I want to address that question head-on.

Having spent the past five years forging a “linkage” between my two previous parishes in Endicott, I was surprised to read in your church bulletins this past summer that the relationship between the Church of St. Michael & St. Peter’s and Our Lady of Hope was *not* linkage since I was led to believe by Bishop Lucia that linking the parishes was my task. I asked for clarification from Msgr. Jim Lang, Vicar for Parishes for the Diocese of Syracuse, who stated that while *technically* a linkage, the Bishop preferred to use the term “two parishes served by a single Pastor.” The following is my understanding of the meaning of these terms.

“Two parishes served by a single Pastor” connotes for me that the churches served remain entirely independent of each other, two monoliths whose only commonality is that priest assigned to provide the pastoral care of the parishes. A “Merger” is when two or more parishes combine to form one entity by merging both its financial resources and its sacramental recordkeeping. While some mergers require that one or more of the parish sites close, not all mergers are like that. While this is *not* a merger, and while it is far too early even to discuss merging the parishes, in my vision, *if* we were to merge, neither church would close. Like the recent merger of St. Joseph the Worker and Immaculate Heart of Mary Parishes in Liverpool, both churches remain open and are very much alive even though, from a financial and recordkeeping standpoint, they are now one entity. However, the relationship between St. Michael-St. Peters and Our Lady of Hope is not a merger, and it is far too early even to discuss that.

A “Linkage” therefore, is a hybrid between the monolithic separateness of parishes served by one Pastor, and the combining that happens in a merger. I have chosen, for the overall and future health of the parishes, and for my own personal well-being, to treat my assignment at St. Michael-St. Peters and Our Lady of Hope as a linkage. As such, some of the things we do, we will do in common since the benefit to all is greater. Likewise, some of the things we do, we will continue to do separately, again because it

provides greater benefit to all. We have already combined the daily Mass schedule, and with the modification of the weekend Mass schedule—and now the leadership of one Music Director for both parishes under Tom Andino—we have already begun to link in various ways. The next big change you will see in that regard will be the creation of a single bulletin for both parishes, beginning sometime before Lent, to improve communication between our communities. There may be other things that we could come together on. I will be calling a meeting (after the holidays) of members of both parish staffs and representatives of our parishes' committees to help answer the question of what things should be combined and consolidated, and what things should remain separate, keeping in mind what serves the greater good of all, regardless of parish affiliation. My overall hope is that, in forming this linkage, each of us will feel that we have gained a community and family rather than feeling that we have lost anything.

I admit that, beyond what the Bishop has asked me to do, I am taking liberties here to use the experience I have from my previous assignment to strengthen our parishes for the future. The more we can do together the stronger we will be, and the better prepared we will be for the future. I ask you to trust my leadership and the wise counsel of our parishes' lay leadership as we move forward. And so, as a long answer to a short question—what is the relationship between St. Michael-St. Peter's and Our Lady of Hope?—we are two linked parishes, two distinct families whose mutual cooperation will help to strengthen both communities now and for years to come.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

Fr. Michael P. Galuppi, Pastor