



Most Reverend Michael W. Fisher
Bishop of Buffalo

September 12, 2024

My brothers and sisters in Christ, peace be with you. As we walk together on the Road to Renewal, I want to address you, our beloved parishioners, with a message of compassion and hope.

I know that many of you are experiencing profound emotions at the news of parish mergers and closures. For some, this is a time of grief and uncertainty, while others are adjusting to the changes that come with a renewed structure. It is understandable to feel the weight of this transition, but I want to remind you that, even in times of change, there is always hope in Christ.

We embarked on this journey not to diminish the vibrancy of our Catholic faith, but to reinvigorate it. The challenges we face as a Church are real: a decline in attendance, fewer priests to serve our communities, and the painful wounds caused by past scandals. These difficulties can lead us to feel that the Church is shrinking. But let me assure you that this journey is about renewal rooted in the Gospel, a renewal that Christ Himself models for us.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, showed us the way to welcome people, heal their hurts, and embrace them in times of trouble. He never turned away from those who were grieving, suffering, or anxious. He reached out to the marginalized, healed the broken-hearted, and sat with those who felt lost and abandoned.

For those of you whose parish is closing, I want to acknowledge the depth of your sorrow. It is never easy to say goodbye to a place that has been your spiritual home. The memories, the sacraments celebrated, the community built—all of these are precious gifts. But I encourage you to remember that our faith is not confined to a building. The Church is the people of God, the Body of Christ, held together in faith, hope, and love.

To those whose parishes will continue onward, welcome your new brothers and sisters. Welcome them with open arms, open hearts, and open minds. You may discover they have something special to offer in their new home.



Most Reverend Michael W. Fisher
Bishop of Buffalo

As we move forward, we are being called to something greater. We are building a Church where every person, regardless of where they come from or what they have experienced, can encounter the love of Christ in a meaningful way. We are called to be places of healing and reconciliation, places where the wounded can find rest and renewal.

Our parishes are being shaped into communities that will be able to better respond to the needs of the world around us. We saw this sense of community in the real collaboration among clergy and laity who worked together to present alternative ideas, many of which greatly influenced more than two dozen changes to plans first proposed this spring.

This is not the end of our story, but the beginning of a new chapter. Christ is leading us, just as He led the disciples after the Resurrection, to go forth and make disciples of all nations. We walk together as one family of faith, and we will continue to pray, support, and uplift each other through every step. I invite you to lean into this time of renewal with hope, trusting that God is guiding us toward a future filled with grace, love, and new opportunities to encounter Him.

I thank you for your commitment of faith, your commitment to the Church—past, present and future. I also ask you to continue to support our schools, faith formation programs and outreach ministries. We build up ourselves, by building up others. And I pray that we all remain courageous as we continue our Emmaus journey, as we seek to renew our Church, and reignite our spirit. May God Bless You.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ Bishop Mike