



Roman Catholic
Diocese of Tucson

Office of the Bishop

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May 18, 2021

My Dear Brothers and Sisters of St. Frances Cabrini Parish,

I pray this letter finds you well. Much like St. Paul writing to communities near and dear to his heart, I approach you today with sincere affection and gratitude for the faith and good works—most especially your St. Vincent de Paul Council—for which your parish is well known.

I met with your pastor and parish boards leadership in a joint meeting several weeks ago. I wanted to talk to them and, in turn, hear their thoughts, concerns and hopes for your parish. I outlined what most of them were already aware of, namely that the parish membership has decreased and parish income has not met expenses for several years. Certain key donors kept the parish financially viable in previous years but that situation has changed. Longtime savings are being depleted to maintain essential parish expenses. The situation is further complicated by the larger parishes near to St. Frances Cabrini, some of which have schools or other ministries typically offered by much larger parish communities. I have grown especially concerned as this situation has unfolded in the last two years.

At the meeting referenced above with parish leadership I explained that I very much do not want to see the closure of the parish. Many of the remaining parishioners have been there for decades and my goal is to be able to continue to serve them. One new model for parish life in similar circumstances can be seen at Holy Family Parish in Tucson, which also found its community decreasing substantially along with an inability to meet financial obligations. In their case the Latin-Mass community, St. Gianna's Oratory, established itself at the Holy Family parish site while the Latin-Mass community provides a weekly Sunday Mass in the Ordinary form for the remaining original parishioners. It is a model that has worked well. In asking myself if that might be possible for St. Frances Cabrini I could not help but think of the Parish of Our Lady of La Vang, a sizable and predominantly Vietnamese-American congregation in Tucson. In recent years they have been hoping to buy a nicer church facility or perhaps build a new church. My thought is that if they were to transfer to the St. Frances Cabrini location—with their pastor, Corporate Board, and parish councils in full leadership—an English Mass could be arranged weekly for the remaining long-time English-speaking parishioners of St. Frances Cabrini. Upon reflection I believe it has the potential for being a wonderful “win-win” solution for both communities.

At this time I am continuing to speak with leadership at both parishes. However, as I do not wish to rush this process, I am appointing Fr. Balaswamy “Bala” Kommathoti as Parish Administrator while maintaining his residence at Sts. Peter & Paul Parish in Tucson. Fr. Bala will be responsible for general pastoral care, Masses, and parish administration until a permanent future plan is established for the parish.

At this time I humbly ask for your prayers that the Holy Spirit will inspire us to a clear understanding of the best future for each parish community. In return, be assured of my prayers for you.

May God bless you abundantly.

Very sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

Most Reverend Edward J. Weisenburger
Bishop of Tucson