



Roman Catholic

Diocese of Tucson

Office of the Bishop

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August 28, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters of St. Frances Cabrini Parish,

As you know from prior communication from me, I have been concerned about the decreasing membership of St. Frances Cabrini parish and the resulting financial implications. I also enjoyed very much celebrating the Masses on the weekend of August 14-15 and visiting with many of you following those Masses.

Every parish's situation is unique and yours includes a rich and noble history of parish life. Indeed, your St. Vincent de Paul Chapter is the model for many to follow. However, your close proximity to other Catholic parishes—some with schools and others with extensive Spanish language ministries—leaves me to doubt that many who have moved to other parishes would now return. I also admit that my vision includes not only a deep concern for your parish but also for our Diocese as a whole. In every age the Church has been called to follow the population. At present we anticipate the need for many new parishes in Pinal County as the population there is growing exponentially and, unlike your situation, there are no parishes near these booming developments.

In recent years we have seen parishes closed across our nation. To see parish property closed and sold, as we saw with the Benedictine Convent in recent years in Tucson, is painful for many. Not wanting to go in that direction I reached out to the Parish of Our Lady of La Vang, which has been working toward the purchase or building of a new church. After extensive communication with the leadership of both parishes I now believe that a merger, with Sr. Frances Cabrini under the full leadership of Our Lady of La Vang's pastor, Corporate Board, and Parish Councils, will result in a "win-win" situation for both parishes. Indeed, in a meeting on Sunday, August 22nd with your joint Parish Council and Finance Council, the recommendation to me for this merger was unanimous. St. Frances Cabrini will remain an active Catholic parish with at least one weekly Mass in English for parishioners who wish to remain, while Our Lady of La Vang will now have a facility that meets their growing needs. It is important also to note that parishes ordinarily are territorial in nature--with defined boundaries. Our Lady of La Vang is an exception in canon law as it is a personal parish responsible for all Vietnamese Catholics living in Tucson. Unlike St. Frances Cabrini it does not have responsibility for a defined territory. In this merger, Our Lady of La Vang's pastor will continue the parish ministry to the Vietnamese immigrant population, largely refugees of America's involvement in Vietnam, while continuing the parish outreach to Catholics living within the territorial boundaries of St. Frances Cabrini parish.

While change always brings challenges, I believe that as the coming months unfold we will find blessings and new life. At this time I anticipate that the merger will become formal on or about December 1st of this year. As that time approaches I kindly ask that you keep in prayer the members of your parish along with the current members of Our Lady of La Vang Parish. I also humbly ask that you remember me to Our Lord and His Blessed Mother.

May God bless you abundantly.

Very sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

+ *Edward J. Weisenburger*

Most Reverend Edward J. Weisenburger
Bishop of Tucson