

ST JAMES' CATHOLIC CHURCH

17 The Scores,
St Andrews, Fife,
KY16 9AR
Scotland

16 June 2018

Your Grace,

PROPOSED UNIFICATION OF PARISHES & CLOSURE OF THE BUILDING OF CHRIST THE KING, PITTENWEEM

Following your letter of 14 May, which I read at all Sunday Masses on the Solemnity of Pentecost, I met with the parishioners (around 40 in total), as per your request, on Thursday 7 June to consider the above proposal. I also received a number of formal, written submissions regarding the proposal. In the light of these, I hereby present my response to you, as requested in your letter.

Regarding the proposed unification of the parishes into the one, canonical territory of 'St James' (reverting back to a pre-1950s arrangement) there was no objection.

Regarding the proposed closure of the building of Christ the King, Pittenweem, the majority of people strongly felt that it should be rejected. It is difficult to summarise the many opinions and feelings expressed but I would summarise the discussion into three main areas:

1. Extreme sadness and disappointment: The parish of Christ the King is a small, rural parish with difficult transportation links for Sunday Mass elsewhere and it was felt that - small as the parish may be - it has a deep and active spiritual life. The closure of a rural parish has a deeper impact upon the lives of the people than it does elsewhere and it would be keenly felt by those who, lovingly, give of their time and efforts to maintain the life of the parish community. There are also many practical considerations that would appear not to be taken into account such as the ready availability of parking at Pittenweem (a difficulty at St James' and, to a lesser extent, Crail), and the fact that the proposed closure would leave the western side of the parish without the presence of a church. Those who are infirm or elderly would find it much more difficult to get to Mass on Sundays. Likewise, it would make the regular church goers during the week (for devotions etc) feel like they were just 'Sunday Catholics'.

2. Lack of rationale: many people expressed surprise and confusion as to the apparent lack of rationale for the closure. No reasons were given. A previous pastoral letter had stated that the parishes that were financially viable would remain open. This has led most people to assume that the main reason for the proposal was a financial one. And yet, it does not explain why one church would be closed and another remain open (Crail). Would you be able to elucidate the reasons as to why this decision was taken? Otherwise, it appears that transparency has been somewhat lacking in this decision.

3. A sense of realism: while the news of this proposal has deeply saddened most of the parishioners and those most committed to the parish are against the proposal, it has not come as a complete surprise. They have been waiting for many years to hear of concrete decisions being made and are accepting of the fact that there is a much larger context than their own local situation with which

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you have to deal. No one expressed any doubts as to your good intentions, nor the enormity of the task that lies before you, only the wisdom of the concrete decision being made.

Your Grace, in addition to this letter I enclose copies of all formal submissions sent to me and a bullet-point summary of our meeting in case these are of use in your further deliberations. In the meantime, please be assured of our continued prayers for you and the whole Archdiocese in the difficult weeks and months that lie ahead.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Fr Michael John Galbraith

Parish Priest.

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St James' is a parish of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh,
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