

Archdiocese of Detroit

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St. Christine and St. Gemma Merge to Become St. Catherine of Siena; St. Agatha to Close Two Detroit Parishes Merge; Redford Parish to Close

Utilizing the strategic planning process for the Archdiocese of Detroit, *Together in Faith*, three Catholic parishes chose to deal with their respective findings at liturgies during the weekend of June 18-19.

In one case, two Detroit parishes, St. Christine and St. Gemma, merged and celebrated their first Mass as the renamed church community of St. Catherine of Siena. In another case, parishioners at Redford's St. Agatha were informed of the logistics involved with closing their parish at the end of August.

St. Catherine of Siena Parish celebrated its inaugural Mass at 10 a.m. on Sunday, June 19. The new parish worships in the former St. Gemma Church, 23450 West Davison. The parish Christian Service programs, including a soup kitchen, pantry, and afternoon basketball, continue at the former St. Christine site on Fenkell.

The name St. Catherine of Siena was chosen by a vote of the parish members. Fr. Mark Brauer became pastor of St. Christine and St. Gemma Parishes 10 years ago, when they were clustered. The two parish councils combined into one, as did the worship commissions, in 2003.

Churchgoers were informed of the decision to close St. Agatha Parish, located at 19750 Beech Daly, north of Grand River, in Redford, at Masses celebrated this weekend by Fr. James McNulty, temporary administrator. Fr. McNulty noted the parish staff and parish council had determined the parish was not "financially sustainable" after completing the Parish Evaluation Inventory (PEI) as part of the *Together in Faith* process.

Fr. McNulty indicated that St. Agatha parishioners had been supplied with detailed information, including a clear picture of the financial situation. The parish owes the Archdiocese of Detroit Loan Deposit program in excess of \$970,000 and has outstanding payables to the archdiocese and the Michigan Catholic Conference of over \$133,000.

The projected operating loss for the 2004-2005 fiscal year is almost \$134,000 and the projected operating loss for the 2005-06 fiscal year was \$112,000. Currently, St. Agatha Parish has a membership of 670 families, but less than one-third of the families actively participate.

"It's no one's fault that St. Agatha is closing," said Fr. McNulty. "The Redford community has changed drastically over the last 50 years. We no longer need six Catholic churches in Redford—we don't have the priests to staff them and we don't have enough money to support them." He added that the leadership in the Northwest Wayne Vicariate concurred with the decision to close the parish.

The parish was founded in 1948. The current church building was built in 1950 and has a seating capacity of 800. The grade school and high school on the campus closed in 2004.

St. Agatha parishioners have been invited to join neighboring parishes. According to Archdiocese of Detroit records, there are 13 Catholic parishes within a 4.5 mile radius of St. Agatha and 29 Catholic parishes within a 7.5 mile radius of the parish.

The closing liturgy for St. Agatha will be celebrated on Sunday, August 28. The time of the Mass has yet to be determined.

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A history of St. Agatha Parish is available at www.stagatha.org. This release and a map showing the neighboring parishes are available on "The Second Front Page" of the archdiocesan web site at www.aodonline.org. Also available on the web site is detailed information about the *Together in Faith* process.

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