



## Diocese of Gary

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### - Final Mass Celebrated at St. Stephen, Martyr, Merrillville -

Saturday, February 15, 2025

After the **Final Mass of Thanksgiving is celebrated at St. Stephen, Martyr Church, Saturday, February 15th, at 10 a.m.**, the building will no longer be used for sacred worship. This comes as part of a multiple year process of discernment involving broad consultation with laity and clergy from what were five Merrillville parishes. Reverend Ted Mauch, pastor of the Merrillville parishes, with the support of Bishop McClory and the Diocese of Gary, guided the parishes through this process.

Father Mauch sees the future for the Catholic community in Merrillville “United as One Parish” as filled with hope, noting that “already hundreds of parishioners have embraced new worship times and locations, coming together and sharing in the joy of a growing community. This next step of the process will require the collaboration of all so that no group, no ministry, or any tradition will be left behind.” He emphasized that it is essential for the blended community to inherit the rich legacies of all five original parishes as they are united as one parish.

#### History

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In March 2021, after the sad passing of Father James Meade (former pastor of three Merrillville parishes), the “Merrillville Process” began as an exploration of how best to serve the local Catholic community. This effort, initiated by Bishop McClory and led by Deacon Dan Lowry involved broad consultation with clergy and laity from all five established Merrillville parishes. The process included small group and public town hall meetings which produced a recommendation that proposed, over time, the Merrillville parishes would become one parish with two worship sites and a parish school. The sites also known as Saint Andrew the Apostle and Our Lady of Consolation would continue to offer Mass and the sacraments indefinitely. The blending of parishes was advocated to ensure vital ministries would continue to serve the larger Merrillville Catholic community.

This plan was accepted by Bishop McClory and communicated to the Merrillville parishes in July 2021.

In January 2022, Ss. Peter and Paul, St. Andrew the Apostle, and St. Joan of Arc formed a new parish community, Holy Martyrs Parish. On August 1, 2023, to best provide for the needs of the community and prevent financial insolvency, at the unanimous request of the St. Stephen, Martyr Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils, St. Stephen’s was fully integrated with Holy Martyrs Parish. Throughout the process the local Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Council prioritized resources and facilities of all sites to best meet the spiritual needs of the Merrillville community. In 2022 and 2023 the sites formerly known as Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Joan of Arc, at the request of the Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Council, went through the required canonical process and after a final Mass of Thanksgiving were relegated to secular but not unbecoming use and the properties were sold.

The Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Council have discerned that the expense to maintain the facilities at the St. Stephen, Martyr site have become a grave burden on the community, and the decision was made to no longer use the facilities. On February 2 a formal decree relegating the building to secular, but not unbecoming use was posted at the entrance of both Holy Martyrs church and Our Lady of Consolation church and office. After the Last Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated at St. Stephen, Martyr Church, Saturday, February 15th, at 10 a.m., the building will no longer be used for sacred worship. The Holy Martyrs Parish church building at 801 W 73<sup>rd</sup> Avenue also known as St. Andrew the Apostle will continue to be used by the Catholic community of Merrillville for sacred worship indefinitely.

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**About the Diocese of Gary**

*The Diocese of Gary serves an estimated 170,000 Catholics in Lake, Porter, LaPorte and Starke counties through 57 parishes, two missions and one Catholic student center, three diocesan high schools, one private high school and 17 parish elementary schools serving 6,318 students. An additional 5,271 students are enrolled in parish Catholic formation programs. More than two million are served by Catholic affiliated agencies including seven Catholic hospitals, residential and day care facilities for adults and children, and centers for Social Services. Learn more at [dcgary.org](http://dcgary.org).*