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to cultivate that spiritual growth in your own life which, through you, helps others. More information will be provided that weekend. Stay tuned.

On a separate note, anticipating the Christmas season, there is a difficult question that needs answering. Namely, where will Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses be? As part of the 'All Things New' initiative, upon parishes merging, there was to be a primary church and a partner church. With that, Christmas and Easter Masses were then to be celebrated at the primary church.

Because we have not yet received an official decree merging our parishes, and have only one priest to serve our four parishes, our communities currently operate in an enigmatic state. Having only one priest, it has been decided to not have regularly scheduled weekend Masses at Saint Andrew's and Saint Michael's. However, with four locations, this does not preclude the possibility of celebrating Masses at these other locations on special occasions provided this makes no imposition on our new, regular Mass schedule.

Without the decree, we are not yet required to operate by that primary and partner church mode of operation. This means that we are not obliged to hold all Christmas and Easter services at a primary church. This conclusion was verified by Brenda Kresky, the Director

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of the Planning Office at the Diocese. And so, in this context and having received confirmation from one of our beloved retired priests that he is available to assist us with the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day liturgies, **I announce that, in addition to any Masses celebrated at the Church of Saint Mary, we plan to also have Christmas Masses at the Church of Saint Michael, Saint Andrew, and Saint John the Baptist.** Times have not yet been chosen but will be determined in reference to the schedule from previous years.

Obviously, if something should happen such that this retired priest or another is no longer available on that date (e.g. – illness, injury, etc.), priority will be given to our ordinary Mass schedule at Saint Mary and Saint John the Baptist, though I do not expect this to be the case. This announcement does not require the communities of Saint John the Baptist, Saint Andrew and Saint Michael to celebrate Mass at their location. It simply provides these communities the option to do so. That decision, along with times, will be confirmed after consultation with the parish trustees of these respective parishes.

My friends, this time of change has been difficult for many of us, largely because of the changes and their implications. Even I am surprised to make this announcement. This decision was arrived at only after: first receiving a confirmation from the diocese that it would be permitted, then (unbeknownst to them at the time I

received this reply from the Diocese) the good people of Spring Hill inquiring whether it would be possible to have a Christmas Mass at Saint Michael's, and then this retired priest confirming he was willing and available to help make it happen. I assure you that arriving at this decision feels more providential than planned. And indeed I hope it can be received as a consolation to many during what has been a challenging time and process.

I remain available by phone, email and in-person for any questions or concerns you might have. Expect a schedule of holiday Masses and Reconciliation services to be made available in the coming weeks.

Thank you, and God bless you.

Our Lady, Queen of All Consolation, pray for us.

In Christ,

Father Mitchell Bechtold

FATHER MITCHELL'S PASTORAL BULLETIN

Sunday, October 4, 2026

**To the parishioners of the Church of Saint Mary,
serving the communities of Melrose, Meire Grove, Greenwald & Spring Hill
on the church campuses in Melrose & Meire Grove**

The Holy Father's prayer intention for October: "Let us pray that the mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses."

Greetings.

On the weekend of October 24/25, our parishes will be having a stewardship weekend. This will be an opportunity to (re)introduce you to the ministries at our locations and inform you about the current and forthcoming faith enrichment opportunities in the parishes.

The traditional, biblical, and time-tested model for stewardship is: Time, Talent, and Treasure. You can expect that emphasis on this weekend. However, I want to use this as an opportunity to spotlight the current and forthcoming faith-enrichment opportunities here in the parish. You and I are called to be good stewards of that which has been entrusted to our good care, like a parish and our community. Even still, we are called to steward well the care of our own soul through prayer, study, and service. This added emphasis is to help you in that effort as well. These will just be some local opportunities