



DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of the great blessings God has bestowed on us here in the Diocese of Oakland is our rich ethnic diversity. The Polish Catholic Community in the East Bay certainly forms a visible part of this colorful tapestry.

The major way that the Diocese has responded to the cultural needs of these different ethnic communities is by the establishment of cultural pastoral centers. The facilities of old St. Anne's Church in Union City have, up until now, been such a center for the Polish community in Southern Alameda County, providing a venue for weekly Sunday Mass, religious instruction of children, and other gatherings of various kinds. While I know this has resulted in spiritual and cultural advantage for you, unfortunately, the buildings have reached such a state of disrepair that they have become far too unsafe for use. Moreover, the serious financial needs of the Diocese do not make it possible for us to rectify the situation. Consequently, after much thought and consultation, I have decided that we have no alternative but to close these facilities permanently. This will take effect on December 30th of this year.

This decision notwithstanding, I wish to reassure you of my concern to meet your spiritual needs as Catholics. The pastor of St. Anne's Parish in Union City has given assurance that he will do the best he can to make his parish facilities available for the major religious festivities and celebrations of your community. He also welcomes your children to enroll in the parish's Faith Formation Program. I do want your children to be prepared to receive the sacraments of the Church – especially First Communion, First Penance, and Confirmation – with the young people of the broader parish communities of the Diocese.

For those of you who wish to have a weekly Sunday Mass in the Polish language, such services will continue to be available to you in Martinez, San Jose and San Francisco. While I regret that we cannot continue to offer this service in the Southern part of Alameda County, these three locations throughout the Bay Area are strategically placed to make it possible for all Polish-speaking Catholics here to have access to Mass in their own language, even if that may involve a little bit further drive for some.