



BASILICA OF ST. MICHAEL

— THE ARCHANGEL —
OFFICE OF THE RECTOR

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October 4, 2026

Dear Parishioners,

As I reflect on my first ninety days as your Rector, my heart is filled with gratitude. Thank you for welcoming me to the Basilica of St. Michael the Archangel and for the prayers, encouragement, and patience you have offered during this transition. It is a privilege to be your priest and to share in the life of this parish family.

These first few months have been a time of listening, learning, and beginning the practical work that accompanies a new assignment. Every parish has its own story, traditions, and hopes. St. Michael's has a particularly rich inheritance, entrusted to us by generations of faithful Catholics. Our responsibility is to care for that inheritance while helping today's people encounter Jesus Christ and find a spiritual home in His Church. I want to thank all the parish volunteers and the many people who serve in various ministries. You all have been a great help during these first three months.

Basilica Staff

One important part of these first ninety days has been strengthening our parish staff. Losing Mike has been a great loss to the Basilica community and the wider Pensacola community. Let us continue to pray for the repose of his soul and to offer masses for him. As I began the difficult task of looking for a music minister, I learned there was a great need not only for the Basilica but for the future of liturgical music within the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. I chose to invest in our music department. As the first fruit of that investment, we welcome Mr. Matthew as our Director of Music Ministry. He brings decades of experience in liturgical and organ music. In the months ahead, you will hear and experience the music helping you enter into the sacred mysteries where heaven and earth touch. More is in store in the coming months. Maureen is returning to retirement. I want to thank her for all her hard work during a time of multiple transitions. We welcome Mrs. Mariana as our new parish secretary. She brings decades of parish office experience to the staff.

Our support staff has added Mrs. Morgan to help keep the office and rectory clean, so the staff and I can focus on you, the people. Mr. Fred has joined us to help keep the parish hall clean and the gardens and lawns looking sharp. Each brings gifts that will support our parish's worship, service, and daily operations. Please join me in welcoming them and praying for them. I am also grateful to our continuing staff and volunteers, whose knowledge and dedication are especially valuable during a time of transition. Much of their work happens quietly, but its impact reaches every part of parish life.

The Parish Property

Our buildings have also required attention; I want to thank the many people who gave generously to replace the three air conditioning units in the church. The new units have helped keep the place comfortable and the moisture level low, which will help preserve the church's organ and its structure. We are having the organ evaluated, and a plan is in the works for its ongoing care, maintenance, and preservation.

We are paying particular attention to the HVAC and mold issues in the parish office/rectory. We are addressing these concerns responsibly, with attention to the underlying problems and the property's long-term care. Maintaining a healthy, functional office/rectory and preserving parish facilities are part of our stewardship of what has been entrusted to us. As the scope of necessary work and associated expenses becomes clearer, I intend to keep you informed. Your generosity deserves careful management and clear communication.

The Parish Office

We are also improving how you, the people, connect with parish staff. We have installed a new phone system. It is an important part of helping you find the assistance you need. Whether someone is arranging a baptism, seeking information, or reaching out during a difficult moment, that first contact should reflect the care of the Church. Our parish office hours will change beginning October 6. The new office hours will be: Tuesday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (the office will be closed 12:00 p.m. to

1:00 p.m. for lunch); and Fridays, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. I am making these changes because the parish office has been in high demand due to the growth we have experienced over the last year and the many moving parts happening in the background. I hope this will give you more flexibility and opportunity to come to the office as needed.

Parish Branding

Alongside these improvements, our updated branding is intended to give parish communications a consistent, recognizable appearance that reflects the Basilica's sacred identity and historic character. Parish branding refers to the parish's public image, including stationery, the website, and marketing materials. The Basilica shield remains the same, but the updated look on our website and parish materials offers another opportunity to make information clearer and more welcoming. Parents seeking Baptism for a child, engaged couples preparing for marriage, and newcomers looking for a parish home should be able to understand their next steps with confidence. We are improving our sacramental forms and guidelines to help you all stay informed and help us, the parish staff, receive the information we need for a more streamlined experience.

Parking

Many people have shared with me that many young families with children have joined the parish in the last year or two. This is wonderful! Young families and children bring joy-filled life to the parish. Seeing many expectant mothers moves my heart. I also don't want them to have to walk many blocks to get to Mass. Behind the Basilica, I have designated the first two spots for expectant and new mothers. You will see signs designating those two spots. I hope this can make the trip to Mass a little easier for families as they experience change and less sleep.

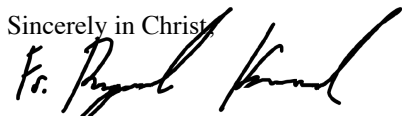
Paid parking will return to the downtown area, including Palafox Street in front of the Basilica. Chase Street will remain free. This will not affect Sunday services, as parking will remain free on Sundays and Mondays. During the week, registered parishioners who attend daily Mass can receive a parking decal valid Tuesdays through Fridays from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The city will not issue tickets during our Holy Days of Obligation, special evening liturgies, and funerals. The city will not make exceptions for weddings. I hope this helps, and I'm glad Chase Street will remain a free parking zone.

Only the Beginning

Above all, my desire is that the Basilica be a place where reverent worship, meaningful relationships, a deepening life of prayer, and faith belong together. I want those who have worshipped here for decades, those who have just arrived, and those returning after years away to find a community that helps them grow in faith. The Eucharist must remain the heart of everything we do.

Ninety days is only a beginning. There is much to learn and much to accomplish, and I am grateful to undertake this work with you. Thank you for your faithful presence, your support of the parish, and your willingness to offer your gifts. Please continue to pray for me, as I pray for you. Through the intercession of Our Lady and St. Michael the Archangel, may the Lord guide our work and draw our parish family ever closer to Himself.

Sincerely in Christ,



Very Rev. Raymond Herard

Rector

Basilica of St. Michael the Archangel

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