

As you already know from the statement of Bishop John some months ago, the parish of Saint Charles was to be amalgamated with the amalgamated parishes of Saint Mark and Saint Mary. The time line of the amalgamation was not decided at that time.

The time has now come and Bishop John has put into place the process of amalgamating our parishes. This will happen in conjunction with other amalgamations and re-assignment of priests.

In the case of our parishes, Father Barry Lomax, parish priest of Saint Mary/Saint Mark has been assigned a new appointment elsewhere in the diocese (still to be made public) and I am to be appointed parish priest of the amalgamated parishes. This will also entail the closure of Saint Mary's church.

The premature leak of this news precipitated the announcement in Saint Mark/Saint Mary last weekend. I imagine as a result many of you know this news – or some version of it – already.

The timetable for amalgamation is not yet worked out. Summer holidays will affect this, but the plan is that all will be in place by autumn at the latest.

The date of the closure of Saint Mary's church is still not decided.

We are in the fortunate position at the moment of having two priests – Father Gavin and myself – to manage this transition and maintain the current Mass schedule.

However, over the course of the coming year we will begin the process of working together on the way forward, not the least of which challenge will be the working out of the Mass schedule in anticipation of my being within the next year, the only priest of the newly amalgamated parish.

I appreciated this will be a challenge for us all in the current parishes but I am sure with generosity and the continuing development of parish leadership on so many levels, we will develop a new sense of parish, Church and Mission.

Stay with us Lord, on our journey.