



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PHOENIX

Statement regarding Saint Mary's Basilica and the Franciscan Friars of the Santa Barbara Province

The Franciscan Friars of the Santa Barbara Province have informed the Diocese of Phoenix that because of diminished priestly vocations and a restructuring of their United States Provinces, they will withdraw from pastoral leadership of Saint Mary's Basilica in downtown Phoenix. This decision was part of a long discernment process by the Franciscans, that will include other changes in assignments across their six U.S. provinces.

The Franciscan Friars have served the parish of Saint Mary's since 1895 – 127 years of founding parishes and missions throughout Maricopa County. St. Mary's Food Bank, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Mary's High School were all founded under their leadership.

On behalf of the faithful of the Diocese of Phoenix, Bishop John P. Dolan, expresses his deep gratitude to the Franciscans for their dedication and commitment to this historical first parish in Phoenix. In the Franciscan spirit they have ministered with generosity and compassion, playing a significant role in the growth and formation of the Catholic community over the past 127 years.

The Franciscans Friars will maintain their presence at the Franciscan Renewal Center, the Casa - Our Lady of the Angels Church in Paradise Valley and the Old Mission San Xavier del Bac outside of Tucson. The plan is for Saint Mary's Basilica parish to be returned to the Diocese in the Summer of 2023. Future staffing is yet to be determined by the Diocese of Phoenix.

The Franciscan Friars and the Diocese of Phoenix are committed to cooperation during this time of transition. A series of events are being planned to celebrate and mark the significant impact of the Basilica's history in the Diocese of Phoenix.

In a special way we keep Fr. Michael Weldon, OFM, the friars of Saint Mary's, the staff, and parishioners in our prayer. We are grateful for their pastoral care of the people of God and for the diligent oversight of this historic place of prayer.

May Our Lady and Saint Francis of Assisi pray and guide us in the days ahead.