

Pastor

Rev. JC Merino
frjc.littleflower@gmail.com
908-464-1585 ext 111

Parochial Vicar

Rev. Matthew Dooley
pvicar.lf@gmail.com
908-464-1585 ext 113

Deacon

Michael Montemurro
mmontemurro.lf@gmail.com

Pastoral Associates:

Teresa Johnson
Office/Business Manager
officemgr.lf@gmail.com

Genevieve Emanuel
Religious Formation/ Family
Ministry
religiousformation.lf@gmail.com

Dan Grossano
Outreach & Ministries
pastoral110.lf@gmail.com

Giovanni Longo
Music Ministry
lfmusicministry.lf@gmail.com

Carolee Aresco
Technology & Media
lftech.lf@gmail.com

Eileen Baker
Peggy Squazzo
Isabel Cabrera
Reception
littleflower.frontdesk@gmail.com

Office Hours:

Mon - Thu - 9am - 5pm
Fri - 8:30am - Noon



A Heartfelt Thank You

With hearts full of gratitude, I extend my sincerest thanks to everyone who contributed to the resounding success of our annual "Christmas is Calling You Home" event. Shout out to Genevieve, Giovanni, Gina, and Teresa whose leadership, creativity, and countless hours of hard work were instrumental in bringing this event to life. To the hospitality volunteers generously giving their time and talents, your commitment to fostering a sense of belonging and joy within our parish family is deeply appreciated.

This year's celebration was truly exceptional, and we owe its success to your tireless efforts. From the beautifully decorated halls to the joyful carols sung by our LF Adult Choir, every detail reflected the love and care you poured into this event.

As we reflect on the blessings of this Advent season, we are reminded of the importance and of the joy of coming together as a family community. Your participation in "Christmas is Calling You Home" has strengthened the bonds of fellowship within our parish and created lasting memories.

An Invitation to Advent Penance Service

The season of Advent is a time of expectant waiting and joyful preparation for the coming of our Lord. As we anticipate the celebration of His birth, we are also called to reflect on our lives and make room in our hearts for His grace.

In the spirit of this holy season, we extend a loving invitation to you and your family to join us for our Advent Penance Service. This is a special opportunity to experience the healing power of God's mercy and to renew our relationship with Him and with one another.

Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we encounter the boundless love and forgiveness of our Heavenly Father. It is a time to lay down our burdens, confess our sins, and receive the peace that only God can give.

We encourage you to take advantage of this beautiful sacrament during this Advent season. Let us prepare our hearts to welcome the Christ Child with open arms and joyful spirits.

May the spirit and the joy of our Advent journey continue to shine brightly in your hearts and homes. We wish you and your families a blessed and joyous holiday season.

Merry Christmas!

With love and prayers,
Fr JC Merino

My dear Little Flower,

I am encouraged by the positive and supportive response to the recent feasibility study regarding our efforts to purchase a priest residence here in town. This letter will offer a summary of the survey and respond to concerns expressed by some of the respondents. Thank you to all who participated.

- **80** people responded via written survey and or participated in an interview. This is a good number of participants for the size of our parish. Here is the summary:
- **95%** of respondents rated the running of the parish under Fr. JC Merino as Excellent or Good. This is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our priests and staff, and it gives us great confidence as we move forward with the project.
- **85%** of respondents rated the case statement and the proposal to raise funds as an Excellent or Good idea. This shows that our parishioners understand the need for a local priest residence and are willing to support this effort.
- **78%** of respondents indicated that they would make a 2-year pledge or a one-time gift to provide fiscal support to the campaign. From these respondents, **49** families or individuals indicated gift levels that total **\$290,500** in pledges. That is nearly half of our goal from less than 20% of the anticipated number of gifts! This is a strong and positive response, and it indicates that we have the foundation necessary to meet our goal.

We recently received the necessary approval from the Archdiocese to conduct our capital campaign.

Based on these positive results, and in consultation with our Parish Finance Council, our objective will be to move forward with a capital campaign. The expected timeframe will be to start the preliminary phase in the early months of 2025 and to complete the active phase by Spring 2025.

Thank you to all the families and individuals that participated in the Feasibility Study. Your support provides us the confidence and foundation necessary to conduct a successful campaign effort.

The study also provided valuable insights into the concerns and questions of our parishioners. Please allow me now to address some of the good questions and concerns which were presented to us through the survey.

- Why is the parish not considering renting a property to serve as the priest residence before purchasing one?
- Why can't the priests live locally in one rectory, such as at Our Lady of Peace?
- With the declining number of priests, it is anticipated that there will be priests and pastors of different parishes living with one another in one residence at some point in the future. Therefore, is it prudent to purchase a property?

Why is the parish not considering renting a property to serve as the priest residence before purchasing one?

Renting a property would be a short-term solution that does not address the long-term needs of our parish. A priest residence is an asset that will provide stability and continuity for our parish for many years to come.

Why can't the priests live locally in one rectory, such as at Our Lady of Peace?

It is our belief that having a local priest residence in Berkeley Heights will foster for the priests a sense of belonging to the community and a sense of home that rental arrangement in another rectory will not provide. Additionally, with a local priest residence creates a sense of unity among the people they lovingly serve.

With the declining number of priests, it is anticipated that there will be priests and pastors of different parishes living with one another in one residence at some point in the future. Therefore, is it prudent to purchase a property?

While it is true that the number of vocations to the ministerial priesthood is declining, we believe that it is still important for our parish to have its own priest residence. A priest residence provides a sense of stability and community for our priests, and it allows them to be more present and available to our parishioners.

I hope this letter has answered some of your questions about the feasibility study and the proposed priest residence. Fr. Matthew and I are grateful for your continued support and encouragement. I invite you to read the full report which can be found on the parish website.

The priests of Little Flower parish look forward to working with you to make the priest residence project for the Church of the Little Flower a reality.

Your parish priest,
Fr JC Merino