



## DIOCESE OF GALLUP

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### **Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

It is with sadness - but deep gratitude to the Franciscan order - that I announce that the Franciscans will turn over pastoral care for the mission at St. Michaels to the Diocese of Gallup, effective July 1, 2023.

The Franciscans have been vital to evangelization and cultural preservation efforts throughout the Southwest and in our own Diocese since the very beginning of our founding - indeed, the first bishop of Gallup, the Most Reverend Bernard Espelage, was a member of the Franciscan order.

Like many religious orders, communities, and dioceses throughout the United States, the Franciscans have not been immune from the challenges that come with a downward trend in vocations throughout the past half-century. All six provinces throughout the country are finalizing a merger into a single entity in 2023, and with this restructuring come changes, both positive and negative - including restructuring in our own diocese.

We are sad that one of these changes will include the pastoral withdrawal of the Franciscans from St. Michaels, but hopeful that this transfer will help the order to focus on a reorganization that will help it to flourish and continue evangelization efforts in the United States in the 21st century. The Franciscans will continue to serve in our diocese at missions in Ft. Defiance, Chinle, Ganado, and Tohatchi.

The people of our Diocese, the parishioners in St. Michaels, and I are eternally grateful for the historical and continuing efforts of the Franciscans have served and continue to serve in the Diocese of Gallup, as they live out the Gospel message to bring people to an encounter with the living Christ.

On January 31, 2023 at 5:00 pm at the St. Michaels Parish, I invite you to attend a listening session, where you may voice any questions, comments or concerns you may have about the pastoral transfer of St. Michaels to diocesan priests. Fr. Peter Short, Vicar General for the Diocese, and Fr. PJ Pabatao, OFM, will be present to hear and answer questions.

Please join me in praying for the continued success of the Franciscan Order, for our Diocese, and for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life.

In Christ,

Bishop James S. Wall