

The Worst Thing About Parish Closures Isn't Lost History, It's Something Much Worse

by [Brantly Millegan](#) - May 9, 2017



This is, of course, a painful process.

The reason a parish closes is practical: there aren't enough people attending to support it anymore. But that doesn't mean there aren't hurt feelings, sometimes a sense of betrayal, or even occasionally full-on organized resistance. I get the sense from reading about these things that many people are pained most by the loss of communities they held dear. And that *is* a real loss to mourn.

But the loss of a particular local community, however painful, is not the worst thing about parish closures. The worst thing is what it signifies: if a parish closes, it means that there are fewer practicing Catholics in that location, which means **the loss of souls**.

It's not that major cities have too many parishes for the number of people living there. It's that a small minority of the population are practicing Catholics. And this has eternal consequences.

The dogma of Original Sin teaches us that all human beings come into this world "by nature children of wrath." (Ephesians 2.3) Due to the Fall of Adam, the default state of the human race is enmity with God and an ultimate fate of eternity in hell.

But we also have an even greater hope that we can receive *forgiveness of sins and new life in Jesus Christ*. The key part there is “in Jesus Christ,” for “**there is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.**” (Acts 4.12) And as his divinely established Mystical Body, **the Church is the means by which this salvation is communicated and applied to individuals.**

So we don't want new people in the Catholic Church just so our beloved traditions continue. We don't want new people in the Catholic Church just so we can have social support, as important as these things are.

We want people in the Catholic Church for the salvation of their souls and the glory of God.

A lost earthly community is hard but temporary. Lost souls are for eternity.

And this means *everybody*. We don't just want our kids to remain Catholic, or to have enough converts to keep things going the way they are. The unique offer of salvation by Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church is for all people.

So when you hear of parish closures, yes, lament the lost history and local communities that have been so dear to so many. But lament *more* for our collective failure of effective evangelization and what it means for so many souls. This includes a humble examination of what this failure means about our own souls.

Then let it spur us on to **greater holiness, more prayer**, and a **greater zeal** to share with others the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Because souls depend on it.