

Good evening.

Like all of you, I have quite a bit keep me busy, so, I wasn't exactly looking for one more thing to do by standing here and speaking to all of you, but I felt it important to share with you why I said "yes".

My answer can be summarized in three simple reasons:

1) I believe in the message and missions of this church;

2) I value **this structure** at **this location**; and

3) **I sincerely** believe in the countless possibilities for our future.

I take the message and missions of the Catholic Church to heart. So much so, that I began my career with the church 28 years ago as a seminarian for this diocese. Despite not becoming a priest, I continued to work in my own way on behalf of the Gospel message of love, hope, acceptance and justice for **all**.

That said, this building project provides us the opportunity to proclaim that Gospel message by not only enriching ourselves, by providing a more welcoming, secure and spacious facility,

but to also continue our long history of caring for the disadvantaged, and serving the community by making space available for scouts, retreats, blood drives, and food distribution for those in need.

Hundreds of people pass by our church each year, whether walking, jogging, biking, or riding in car.

They may not know of our message or of our mission, but they do know a church stands here, and that's important, because with this new facility, this parish, at this location, stands as a lighthouse to our community, saying that a group of believers who value their faith and care about their community worship here every weekend.

I read an article some time ago which said that in the 50's, compared to today, more people went to church. One could say that back then it was the “correct” thing to do. After all, you had to attend a church to be anyone in your workplace or community.

Today, life is very different. People have to **choose** and **want** to go to church.

Society's pressures make it hard for people to devote weekends to worship. It is no longer the thing you “should” do. It is a choice that takes devotion.

All of you here tonight have made that choice. I think it's fair to say that we are people who believe in the message of our church, and, I would hope, our future.

The future of this parish, and its message and commitment to being a beacon in this community relies on us ... and we need to be willing to generously give of our time, talent, and treasure toward this project and the larger message of what it means beyond brick and mortar.

So as we approach commitment weekend at the end of this month, we have to figure out how important the message and mission of St. Mary's is to us, and just how much we are willing to sacrifice in order to keep us and this church vital for future generations.

After all, at this moment, you are all sitting in this church because of the generosity of past generations who believed in the message and mission of this church.

Most of those people you will never meet and will never know their names, but they did it, because they believed and had faith in the value of our church beyond what we do here on weekends.

I would like to close with a saying I once saw in a friend's kitchen.

It goes like this:

What we are is God's gift to us.

What we become is our gift to God.

So, if I may take some liberty to apply that saying to this project...

What we are as a parish family on the corner of Broad and Fifth is God's gift to us.

What we become as a parish family is our gift to God.

Thank you.