

St. Mary, Our Lady Queen of Families Parish†

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My Dear Friends in Christ:

When I arrived at our parish in July of 2012, we celebrated our first Mass as St. Mary Our Lady Queen of Families Parish. This unity was the end result of the merger of the Ascension, St. Leonard, St. Dorothy, and St. Clement parishes. These mergers were necessary due to a number of reasons including declining numbers and increasing financial obligations. The end result of this process left us with one parish, two worship sites and a \$4,200,000 debt which, because of your generosity, the rental of the old St. Clement school building, and the sale of the St. Leonard property currently stands at about \$1,700,000. When this final merger was completed, there existed the understanding that in the future, yet another consolidation of worship sites might be necessary.

Today, I have both joyful news and for many of you, potentially somber news to share. First, the joyful news. As you may know, the departure of Michigan Math and Science Academy from the former St. Clement School has negatively impacted our ability to service our debt, operate two worship sites, and plan for needed maintenance and repairs. However, through the Archdiocese of Detroit, we have been approached by National Heritage Academies, a nationally-renowned charter school operator, who has expressed a desire to purchase the St. Clement School building and athletic field. The St. Clement property consists of several parcels and the parish will retain ownership of the church site and the cemetery. In addition, the terms of sale will include provisions for the parish to lease back part of the school or parking area if the need arises. This sale will be finalized this coming summer in the amount of \$1,800,000. In addition to this sale providing a significant benefit to the families of our surrounding community, the sale will result in reducing the remaining parish debt to approximately \$200,000, due to costs incurred with the sale process. At the time of my arrival, in my wildest imagination I could not have foreseen the debt would be essentially paid off in just seven years. As your Pastor, I can also honestly say the thought of managing so much real estate and shepherding a parish community through significant debt was not a selling point when I took my vows 32 years ago. The journey, however, has been worth it and I feel as though a significant weight is being lifted from our Parish Community. Again we learn that the Lord does not ask us to do that which we cannot accomplish with the help of His guiding hand.

And so, one challenge is met - and another one is before us; time for the potentially somber news. The Archdiocese has indicated that now is the appropriate time for us to reduce to one worship site. First and foremost, I want to state emphatically that no decision has yet been made as to which site will close. Furthermore, the decision to move forward has not been made in haste, nor will the decision regarding how to move forward. In summary, the factors necessitating the decision to consolidate our parish to one worship site are many, not the least of which is to help the people of St. Mary, Our Lady Queen of Families prepare for the current mission of the Archdiocese of Detroit to Unleash the Gospel. Lastly, the sale of one of our worship sites will provide the necessary funding to repair and restore the remaining site and help prepare it and us for this very important work.

This effort will involve all of us on many different fronts, including the following:

1. I have chosen a transition team of parishioners who attend services from both sites to examine budgets, operating costs, and engineering assessment reports on buildings, parking lots, and machinery.
2. An intercessory prayer team has been chosen whose sole purpose is to pray for the success of the work we are undertaking.
3. We will also be praying at every Mass for a successful transition and we are working to develop other times for prayer in addition to our regular Masses.
4. We have included a prayer card with this letter and I ask that we offer this prayer daily for our parish during this discernment process.

Of course, in addition to your prayers, we want to hear your thoughts and concerns. To this end, we have set up a special email address for you to use (stmary.qna@gmail.com). Also, there will be boxes in the vestibules of the churches for those who do not use email. We will do our best to answer all questions. We wish to make this experience as transparent as possible because it is a significant decision which will affect the life of our parish well into the future. We will use every opportunity to share our progress and to give everyone the chance to be heard. We have developed a timeline for this procedure with the hope of having a final decision by this coming fall and the implementation of this decision in the coming year.

I want to emphatically state once more that no decision has been made regarding either site. In fact, provisions have been made to preserve the option to retain either site. I ask for your patience, your prayers, your participation, and your understanding as we begin this new direction for the future of our parish. I am confident that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit we will emerge from this experience even more deeply rooted in our faith and better prepared to Unleash the Gospel as together we build the future in faith.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Robert A. Bauer