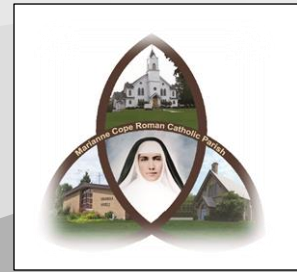


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August 11/12, 2019

Dear Parishioners,

As the old adage goes, "We make plans and God laughs."

Just a few short weeks ago in early July I wrote and spoke to you about the sale of the Good Shepherd property to the Rush-Henrietta School District. With this sale we also have a lease-back for our use of the property (Chapel, Church, office building and rental house) for up to three years, June 30, 2022. Our intent has always been to stay on the property until the renovations at Guardian Angels are complete, making for an easier transition during that time.

It seems now, that circumstances have changed, and new decisions need to be made. With the input of staff, Trustees, Pastoral Council and Finance Council members we find ourselves in the position of having to vacate the church and chapel at Good Shepherd within the next couple of months. This decision is predicated on the following facts:

- ✓ As with many churches these days, our attendance is waning and therefore our collections are decreasing. When I came here two years ago attendance was just over 1000 each weekend, now we are at about 800. You can see the collection amounts in the bulletin each week. We have been running about a \$10,000 a month deficit and though we are doing OK at this point, we cannot continue functioning without some cost saving measures.
- ✓ As we move into the winter months our costs escalate with salting and snowplowing costing us upwards of \$30,000 for the season, depending on the severity of the season. This does cover all three of our Church properties, but a good portion is at the Good Shepherd site each weekend.
- ✓ We also continue to bear the cost of utilities and repairs for our use of both the Church and the Chapel, as well as the office building and rental house, which is also significant.
- ✓ With the sale of the Good Shepherd property and buildings we have lost approximately \$90,000 a year in rental income. This income offset the expenses we had. Now we must bear our part of the utility and plowing/salting with nothing to offset these costs.
- ✓ The school district has to meet New York State guidelines for buildings and codes for schools so some significant work will be done on the school building including a new security system and re-keying of the doors. Though we will have keys, we will not have the ability to leave the doors unlocked/propped opened for confessions and Masses. This would cause us to have someone at the door to let people in from 3pm

to approximately 5:30 on Saturday and again from 9:00 to 11:00 on Sunday, and that person(s) would not be able to attend the Mass.

All of this being said, it seems best for us to vacate both the Church and Chapel before the winter begins. It will also be important that we ritualize our leave-taking in a significant way. Moving from the Good Shepherd site is a significant loss to our parish and especially to the many parishioners for whom this place holds special memories and meaning in the journey and formation of their faith lives. Although it is a time of sadness and loss, there is hope and promise as we are a pilgrim people and, as of old, we journey forth in the hope of Jesus Christ and surrounded by this St. Marianne Cope community of faith. We hold what has been in our hearts and use it to move us forward to what is next.

Here is a potential timeline for the move:

- ✓ **October 19/20** Final weekend Masses are all at Good Shepherd Chapel – as a symbol of unity as St. Marianne Cope Parish.
- ✓ **October 21** Closing Ritual/Evening prayer at Good Shepherd Church and procession to Guardian Angels where the prayer will conclude and a social will follow.
- ✓ **October 26/27** To symbolize our unity all weekend Masses will be at Guardian Angels
- ✓ **November 2/3** 8:00am Sunday Mass is at St. Joseph's and 4:30 Saturday, 9:45 and 11:30 Sunday are at Guardian Angels going forward. In addition, we will continue using St. Joseph's Church for two daily masses each week. Guardian Angels will also be used for two daily Masses. Weddings and funerals will be at both Churches as people request them. There is no plan to vacate St. Joseph's for the foreseeable future.

~~ We will work with the Henrietta Town Historian regarding the Good Shepherd cornerstone and will hopefully incorporate that into our closing ritual.

~~Artifacts will be removed from the Church and Chapel after October 21st.

I will keep you posted as we move forward with plans. Please hold these lightly as circumstances may change but this is our best thinking at this point. We will move forward together helping one another through the good times and the more difficult ones as we move to the renovation phase at Guardian Angels. We have moved through changing times in the past and have shown our resilience, commitment and faith in God who leads us on to the "next right step."

God bless us all,

Sister Sheila

Sister Sheila Stevenson, RSM
Pastoral Administrator