

October 1, 2011

Dear Parishioners,

Summer has gone fast and as we move into the busy fall season, I wanted to bring you up-to-date on the matter of the new parish boundaries and the decision to relocate the church to a new site. As I indicated to you last spring, I asked [redacted] (Lay Director), [redacted] (Lay Director), [redacted] and [redacted] to form an initial steering committee to review the diocesan decision and provide some guidance on next steps. Over the last four months, this group has met and discussed the issues surrounding the diocesan decision. In addition, we have communicated with the diocese and have obtained further clarification on some of the open questions that remained after the announcement of the decision.

Before discussing some of the clarification we have obtained from the diocese, I would like to say that I recognize many of us are upset with the diocesan decision regarding the parish. While it is not the decision many of us would have made for the future of the parish, we do need to recognize that our parish has been growing for some time and with the new [more populated] parish boundaries, we may see significant growth. The parish would need to face the issue of long-term facility planning even without the diocesan decision. With respect to education space, we already have an issue and need to find a solution. These are never easy decisions, but I would ask that you pray and reflect on the future of the parish and how we preserve the history as we undertake the task of developing the new site. Ultimately, each of you will need to make personal decisions related to your involvement in this process and whether you will financially support the development of the new site. It is important that all of us, as the foundation of this parish, be involved to maintain a strong foundation far into the future.

The additional information and clarification we have been provided by the diocese with respect to the decision regarding parish boundaries and relocation of the church are as follows:

1. The diocese has clarified that the current church sanctuary may remain on the current site and be used by the parish while development and construction of the new site is undertaken. There is no need to relocate the current church sanctuary. The disposition of the current church sanctuary will be determined—in collaboration with and with permission of the diocese—by the parish pastor and members. Normal maintenance will be performed, however, no additions or expansion of the church sanctuary/education/administration buildings will be made.

2. The site on _____ is available, but the parish is free to explore other sites that may be more centrally located within the new parish boundaries. In other words, the parish may choose a different site, acceptable to the diocese, for the construction of the new church sanctuary. The parish will be responsible for the cost of site acquisition. Typically, the property for a new location is purchased by a diocesan entity and is the last debt burden paid by the parish, however, the parish may wrap the property cost into the overall construction cost of the new site.
3. The parish will need to reach out to the households that are currently located in the new parish boundaries and the households that are built in the future. We need to find ways to encourage these new families to register within the parish and get involved in parish life. The new parish boundaries include the developed areas between _____ South, _____, so there are many new Catholic households in the parish. Late in 2012, we may find a temporary location to hold a weekend Mass within the new parish boundary, but the current site will continue to be the home location for most Masses and other parish activities.
4. We have discussed with the Bishop the issue of additional priest resources in the parish. This request will be considered and is always based on the needs of the entire diocese.
5. As we know, our parish continues to grow and we are in need of education space. We will explore alternatives for the fall of 2012 that may include using space at one of the elementary schools located within the parish jurisdiction, i.e. Horace Elementary or Kennedy Elementary. The Catholic Schools Network has also extended an invitation to use space at a Network facility.

You may recall that the original decision indicated that we are to form a building committee by December 2011 and a fundraising committee by June 2012. The steering committee has identified other issues that must be addressed: building and site planning, finance, fundraising, outreach/welcome/integration, education, liturgical. I will be working quite closely with the pastoral council, steering committee, and other parish organizations to do strategic planning.

I have asked some of you to consider getting involved and encourage others in the parish who wish to be involved to let me know of your interests. We want to be open and transparent about this process, so certainly want to hear your suggestions on how to improve communication to the entire parish. At this time, we will provide periodic updates through bulletin inserts and will schedule future town hall meetings. Meetings of any of the groups formed to address various tasks will be open to any parish member. We need your input and advice.

While these tasks are numerous, we can achieve success in a manner that is respectful of the parish history and the current parish members. This is most assured if we lead this process. Please help me lead.