

## CLARIFICATION FOR MOVING TO THE FUND-RAISING STAGE

Less than 2 weeks ago, on August 27th, the planet Mars was closer to planet Earth than it has been in nearly 60,000 years, when Neanderthals lived. And, astronomers are able to tell us that it won't be this close again until the year 2287 ... which is only 284 years from now ... lots less than 60,000.

Astronomy is a pretty exact science able to pinpoint where the planets will be/have been thousands of years on either side of 2003. Meteorology the science of understanding the weather strikes me as a less exact science ... often unable to tell us with any degree of certainty whether it will rain on our family reunion (tomorrow/today) ... it's only in a drought year such as this that we can guess it probably won't.

For the past 2½ years, committees of 30 folks from both St. James and St. Mary have been meeting at least once a month to consider the needs of the Catholic community in this area ... now ... and 50 years from now. It does not seem far off-the-mark to suggest that the committee has been trying to do something not unlike both astronomy and meteorology ... some things they feel they can predict with a high degree of certainty and some with a lesser degree of certainty.

Adding to the uncertainty is the fact that it's been my bias for 22 years here to do things democratically to enfranchise every member of the congregation who wishes to have a say/vote. So I insisted against professional advice to have a vote on whether we should move on to a fund-raising stage.

We all know that democracies are messy ... and there was some confusion about the vote. Some thought they were voting to build a building (whereas the vote was only to move to a fund-raising stage to determine whether we can gather enough funds to build) and it had been determined that all non-returned ballots would be counted as "no" votes.

Upon further review (as they say in the NFL), it was decided that such a policy gave too much influence to those whose intentions are not clear so the decision was made to move ahead to the fund-raising stage.

The original position which was taken by good people who wanted to do the right thing could have been clung to; it would have been consistent; but, as the great American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of a little mind."

So the decision to move ahead in light of an ambiguous vote was not a decision made in a smoke-filled room; it was a decision made to move ahead to meet our needs ... and the needs of our children and grandchildren ... as intelligently as we can.

Those of you who pay attention to what's going on in the Catholic Church know that parishes are being linked.... that St. James and St. Mary will be linked (my guess in not more than 5 years) to Verona and Oregon.

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Obviously, if the Roman Catholic Church ordained married men and women, we wouldn't have only 1 priest serving 3 growing communities but we have to play with the cards we've been dealt. Clearly we have to do a better job of agitating for change, but the bottom line is: If we want to have a Mass here on weekends in the next few decades, we have to have a building that accommodates 600-800 people for the single Mass we'll have each weekend.

As we speak, the villages of Evansville, Footville, Brodhead and Albany are served by one pastor. I don't think any of us has the silver bullet in his/her pocket to change the direction of that trend.

That's where we are in autumn of 2003. The planning committee and the parish council insisted that I overcome my natural aversion to talk about buildings and money and "stuff." So there it is. Expanding our facilities is not my brainchild. Part of me could care less if we build because building will make more work for me. That part of me that cares about what people in 10 or 15 years will be thinking of those who were supposed to be thinking ahead in 2003 knows that we have no choice but to build if we want to keep a Catholic presence here in our corner of Dane and Green counties/if we want to worship here once a week/if we want the priest who has our baptism, wedding and funeral to have a least a passing acquaintance with us/if we want our children and grandchildren to come to religious education classes at home.