

April, 2007

Dear Parish Families:

In the year 2010 parish families of St. Mary's and St. James will face monumental events:

- Father Ken Klink will turn 70, the age most priests retire.
- The 10-year timeframe to build a new church on the 9 acres of land donated to the parish by Marilyn and Phil Fahey will be closing in.
- Our combined parishes will likely be linked with Verona and Paoli.
- This would mean only one mass in Belleville for the 700-800 people who attend regularly—*if* a church big enough is available. (Currently, St. Mary's Church seats 240 people.)
- If a new church is not built, we will need to travel to Verona for mass. (We are not currently on track to have sufficient funds to build a new church.)
- In 2010, St. Mary's Church will celebrate its 100th year anniversary.

**On Sunday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, at 2:30 p.m., a town meeting will be held at St. Mary's to discuss the future of St. Mary and St. James Churches.** All parishioners are urged to attend this important meeting to determine where we are headed.

As you know, parish members worked hard since 2001 to develop a plan to build a new church. Countless open meetings were held by the church councils and the building planning committee. Under the dedicated leadership of Gary Loertscher, the planning committee conducted a thorough study of the needs of the St. Mary and St. James parishes. Based on that study, a practical conceptual design that meets the needs of the parishes for decades to come was created. The plan was presented, additional input was collected from parishioners, and a pledge campaign was conducted to determine the level of commitment. Our Catholic community responded in a generous, supportive way. Still, enough funds were not available. The building plan was again revised so that only the construction of the church, assembly area and offices would be built, with the idea to add the classrooms and kitchen in the future. An extensive fundraising plan was implemented.

Today, the church has accumulated a little over two million dollars in cash and almost one million in pledges. We need to continue to fulfill our current pledges and be aware that an additional million dollars or more will have to be pledged to complete phase one of the project.

History records detailed by Jerry Remy show that St. James Church was built in 1869 and the original St. Mary's Church was built by a nucleus of 20 families in the area who raised the \$7,480 needed and the church was dedicated in December of 1910 by Archbishop Messmer of Milwaukee. Almost 50 years later, in 1956 the St. Mary's structure was deemed too small and in poor repair so the current A Frame church and a partial hall were built. The remainder of the parish hall was added in 1969.

**Now the time has come for us to make a difficult decision.** As our ancestors recognized the need to move forward, it is now our turn to prepare for the future. Since 1969 we have become comfortable in our minimal financial support to our church, because no one asked us to give more. At this point in time, we need to decide if we are willing to give what it takes to complete the building project or not. **Our sense is that people think they are choosing between the status quo and a new building. That's not the choice. The status quo is not an option for the future. The choice is between having weekly worship in this area – or not.**

As Father Klink stated in a letter to the parish in the Autumn of 2003, "Expanding our facilities is not my brainchild...that part of me that cares 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 at least a passing acquaintance with us/if we want our children and grandchildren to come to religious education classes at home."

Your attendance at this meeting is vital. Please join your fellow parishioners at St. Mary's Church on Sunday, May 6<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m. Enclosed is a note card for you to write any questions that you might have. A box will be provided in the back of each church. You may drop the note cards off anytime before May 6<sup>th</sup> or bring them with you to the meeting.

Sincerely,

The Church Councils of St. Mary and St. James  
The Building Committee  
The Fundraising Committee  
The Finance Committee