

Campus Connection Update
Fall 2016

We are inaugurating a Capital Campaign this fall for our Campus Connection Project. Since this will be an important moment in the life of our parish, I am dedicating this column to the background of the project in order to provide you with a context for what we are planning.

Background to the Project:

(1) This project began three years ago (2013) when the Facilities Working Group (FWG) surveyed our many parish stakeholder groups and studied our physical plant and our need for space to carry out our mission of worship, education, and outreach more effectively.

(2) In the spring of 2015, the FWG presented its plan to the parish at meetings after every Mass.

(3) During the summer of 2015, a survey was sent to every household of the parish.

(4) The results of that survey showed support for the project, but it also raised questions about its financial feasibility.

(5) Accordingly, during the fall of 2015 we began a silent campaign to see what kind of financial support there was for the project.

(6) Then in the spring of 2016, we resized the project in light of what we thought we could reasonably raise in support of it.

(7) I then canvassed the Finance Council, the Parish Council, the School Board, and those who had already pledged to the project to determine their interest in the revised project.

(8) With their approval, we presented the project to the entire parish after every Mass this past spring.

(9) Since then we have hired a Fund Raising Counsel and developed a Campaign Committee, headed by Rebecca Lobo Rushin and Jaimie Kalamarides, which has been completing the silent phase of the campaign and preparing for the public phase I will announce next week.

The Campus Connection Project: If we can meet our financial goals, we will construct a Parish Life Center that will connect Church and School. The Parish Life center will provide us with the space we need for parish and school gatherings and meetings. It will have handicap accessible bathrooms and an elevator that will give easy access to the church for all. It will provide music rehearsal space for St. Mary's School and our Parish Choirs. It will also house the Parish Offices.

In addition to the Parish Life Center, we will construct a road that runs in back of the church and school and one that runs in front of the school that will enhance traffic flow. There will also be an indoor passage way from the North Parking Lot through the School and the Parish Life Center to the Church, which will give easy access to the church without going outside. There will also be a small addition to St. Mary's School that will house a library and art space, which will allow us to remove the portable classrooms and give us more parking.

The Project and Our Mission: The purpose of this project is to enable us to carry out our mission of worship, education, and outreach more effectively so that St. Mary's Parish will remain a dynamic parish. (1) The project enhances our worship by making the church more handicap accessible and providing us with gathering space before and after Mass for fellowship. (2) The project enhances our educational mission by providing needed space for St. Mary's School, our Religious Education Programs, as well as for parish and school meetings and study groups. (3) The project enhances our mission of outreach by providing space for our many ministries to meet, plan, and stage outreach projects.

Past and Future: I am aware that some have concerns about this project and its financial feasibility; this is legitimate. I have learned much from them. A project of this scope is daunting, but St. Mary's has been growing and changing for a long time. The parish was founded in 1902, when there were 300 Catholics in Simsbury. In 1904 the first church was built on Plank Hill Rd. In 1936 the present church was constructed. In 1957 the School was build. In 1982 the Parish Center was built, and the church expanded. In the 1990s the present Parish Office space was purchased, and the church was refurbished.

I am grateful to so many of our parishioners who have devoted their time and talent to this project over the course of the past three years. I am also grateful to so many of you who have already pledged your financial support to this project (approximately 1.520 million). We now come to the public fund-raising part of our work. Since I would not ask you to do what I have not already done, I made the first major gift to the silent phase of the campaign more than a year ago in August of 2015. I believe in this project because I believe that it will enhance and invigorate our mission of worship, education, and outreach, now and in the years ahead. With your support it will.

Father Matera