

Ordinary Time 27C 2016

Campus Connection

In today's second reading we heard a portion of St. Paul's letter to Timothy in which the great apostle prepares for the time he will no longer be present to the church. Paul is in prison, and knows he will soon be put to death. But before he dies, he prepares for the future. He reminds Timothy that it is his turn to bear his share of the suffering the gospel entails and hand on the faith to the next generation, just as Paul handed it on to him. It is in light of this reading that I want to speak to you about the St. Mary's Parish Campus Connection Project that we have been studying and talking about for some time now, and the Capital Campaign that we are publicly announcing today to make it a reality.

Last week I wrote a column about this project in which I talked about its background and purpose. Briefly stated, this is a project that has been studied and refined by many dedicated parishioners over a period of three years. It has been presented to the entire parish community and its leadership groups on two different occasions: first, in the spring of 2015 and then in the spring of 2016. When completed, it will consolidate our campus activities in one place, thus the name, the St. Mary's Parish Campus Connection. This project will provide our Parish and School with needed meeting and gathering space, enhance our traffic flow, and make our parish more accessible to those who presently find it challenging to enter

our church and/or use its rest rooms facilities. These are the things we have spoken about in our many public meetings, and which I outlined in detail in last week's bulletin. But today, I want to explain the "why" of this project and how all of us can participate in it.

What is the relationship between this project and our mission as a community of faith, which gathers every week to hear the Word of God and celebrate the Eucharist so that we can return to the world and proclaim the gospel? Our mission is threefold: First, to celebrate the Eucharist every week until the Lord comes again; second, to instruct ourselves and others in the faith; third, to reach out to others by proclaiming the gospel and assisting the poor in their need. Can we accomplish this mission without the Campus Connection Project? Of course we can. Buildings do not carry out our mission; *we* do. But can we do it better and more effectively with modern, centralized, and functionally appropriate facilities? I believe we can.

The project we envision prepares for the future so that we can continue to carry out our mission more effectively in the years ahead. First, making our church more handicap-accessible and providing space where we can gather before and after our celebration of the Eucharist can make us a more vibrant Eucharistic community. Second, providing adequate space where we can educate ourselves, our children, and others, can help us grow in our faith. Third, providing adequate

meeting space where our many ministries and outreach programs work can provide us with a more effective way to reach out to others. Are we fulfilling our mission at the present time? I believe we are. Can we do it better? I believe we can.

So how can you help as we plan for our future? First, continue to be the active and committed members of this parish you are, *even if you question the merits of or disagree with this project*. We are a diverse parish community with many points of view; and I welcome and celebrate that. All are welcome here.

Second, pray that the Spirit of God will guide us so that what we do will be for the good of this parish and the glory of God's name; for, as the Psalmist reminds us: "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it."

Third, if you are moved to do so, and to the extent you can, offer your financial support for this project. Previous generations gave us the gift of the facilities we enjoy today, and now we have an opportunity to do something for future generations so that we can hand on the gospel to the next generation, as Paul instructs Timothy in today's reading.

The Capital Campaign we are announcing this week will continue through December. However, we are not beginning from scratch. The silent phase to this campaign has been underway for more than a year, and I am pleased to report we have received pledges totaling 1.6 million from 86 gifts for an average pledge of \$ 18,898. Since I could not ask you to do something I have not already done, I made

a major pledge to this Campaign a year ago, in August of 2015. While I realize that not all of us can give at the same level, all of us can do something; all of us can pray for God's guidance and counsel.

In the weeks ahead, you will be contacted by fellow parishioners who have already made a pledge and will invite you to do the same. Whether you can make a pledge or not, whether you support the project or not, please receive your fellow parishioners warmly and courteously since they are generously giving of their time to make this project a success for all of us. It is our task, as St. Paul tells Timothy, to guard the rich trust that has been handed on to us. With the help of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us, we will do this and hand on the faith to a new generation.