

February 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With the arrival of Ash Wednesday and the 2010 Lenten season, I am reminded that this marks the beginning of my fourth year as pastor of this beautiful parish, and I find that I humbly and gladly recommit myself to that call. It is the people of this parish who enliven and challenge me. The men, women and children of St. Mary's sustain, nourish and encourage me in my ministry as pastor.

I am privileged to serve among wonderful people in a sacred place that truly is among the architectural gems of our home city, a beacon of light for our faith community and fellow citizens. The men and women who worshiped at St. Mary's before us - many of whose descendants are among us today - were careful stewards of our church, ensuring that future generations would find a spiritual home that was both inspiring and inviting. We face a similar challenge and responsibility today.

The Rev. James Mackey and a group of concerned parishioners saw the needs and potential of St. Mary's parish. He commissioned this concerned group to assess the needs of the parish and to develop a plan to address those needs, thereby assuring a bright future for the parish, its mission and its congregation. This led to the creation of a Facilities Committee, chaired by Bill Coyle who identified the needs as:

- Interior and exterior renovations to the church, and
- Construction of a parish center that would provide needed space for the community to "be church" - build fellowship, offer a place for educational/catechetical needs and a gathering space for activities and celebrations.

After years of planning and re-planning, we received the go-ahead from the Diocese of Albany. We invited church members to view and have dialogue about our building proposal through numerous focus groups. Though response was more limited than we had hoped for, we received a clear vote of confidence from those who weighed in, and were excited to launch our "Foundation for the Future" capital campaign. The church engaged Klote and Co. to guide our efforts, with Bob Ryan as the campaign manager. We acknowledge that there were some missteps in the beginning of the campaign. We have made some changes to address these issues.

After a Christmas holiday hiatus, we are ready to resume the campaign with renewed vigor, hope and confidence. Our campaign steering committee, now headed up graciously, generously and capably by Theresa LaPoint, is composed of the following dedicated and faithful parishioners: Vincent and Mary Palacino, Peg and John Greenslade, Betty Lortie, Joan Mills, Joan Grishkot, Maria Polidore, Danielle Woodward and Steve Bethel. It is my honor to serve alongside them. This committee is working closely with the Facilities Committee, the Finance Committee and our Pastoral Council. Other parishioners have and will continue to give generously of their time and talents, phoning families and individuals to arrange appointments to discuss the campaign, its objectives and what each of us can do to assure the long-term growth and viability of our church. If you have not yet

received a call, you will.

The campaign has been moving slowly but steadily, and we are excited by the dedication shown by so many. Although funding so far has reached \$1,145,950, we have a long way to go. Your church needs your support. If you have not yet pledged a sacrificial offering, I urge you to prayerfully consider taking that step. Please call Theresa LaPoint, (792- 0989 Ex. 26) if you would like to speak to her about making a pledge.

Over the next several weeks, you will hear more about the specific needs of our capital campaign and why so many wholeheartedly believe this campaign marks a turning point in the history of St. Mary's. We will attempt to be persuasive because we believe so passionately in the bright hope that is embedded in this work. We also recognize that people of good will and integrity can have honest differences of opinion. Our goal is to raise a substantial sum of money, yes, however more importantly, we will further execute our mission by eventually offering a beautifully enhanced worship space to all who choose to worship here and a parish center in which we might gather to celebrate all that unites us as a community of believers.

I am grateful and thankful to those who already have pledged to support our Foundation for the Future. The gifts we receive today and in the coming weeks will ensure that St. Mary's stands strong for generations ahead. It is my hope and fervent prayer that our gifts of time, talent and treasure flow from a heart of gratitude to the Lord, to whom all praise and honor belong.

Psalm 127:1 - *Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.*

Let us strain together toward what is ahead, ever mindful of the Lord we serve and the legacy we create. We invoke Our Lady's intercession and help.

May our Lord bless and keep you .

Faithfully yours,

Rev. Joseph Manerowski